

Health and home place: Close contact participatory research with Gypsies and Travellers

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This chapter describes and analyses the methods, values, and processes essential for rigorous, academic yet participative community research with and for an excluded and marginalised group – the Gypsies and Travellers of the UK. A case study of research was used which described the work of an independent researcher commissioned by a number of statutory and voluntary sector (NGO) organisations to conduct an assessment of the health and (caravan) site needs of transient (travelling) Gypsies and Travellers around the city of Leeds. The research was conducted within a national and local political context whereby the acute health and site needs of Gypsies and Travellers were being raised by politicians and Gypsy and Traveller organisations.

The method of close contact qualitative research interviewing was chosen for the research. Participative methods deployed emphasised the development of equal, respectful, culturally sensitive and trusting research relationships with Gypsies and Travellers. The process of the research is described in terms of flexibility, opportunism and constant reflections on data and methods. Practical examples of research encounters and ‘special moments’ are used to illustrate theories and methods.

Established methods of participative community research are extended to develop processes which capture ‘really useful knowledge’. The role of an engaged researcher in a highly politicised research environment is explored in terms of collecting and reporting on robust data in the context of solidarity, rejection of deficit theories to explain Gypsy and Traveller lives, and using research results and reports for political lobbying by Gypsy and Traveller organisations and their allies.

In this chapter I will outline the difficulties and joys of researching ‘with’ what are perceived to be a ‘hard to reach’ and at times a ‘hostile’ group outside the norms of society using methods of close contact qualitative and participative research. British Gypsy and Traveller culture is almost unknown in society as a whole. Prejudice, racism and indeed institutional racism against them are almost accepted by society as ‘common sense’ (see Acton 1997; Clark & Greenfields, 2006).

I will detail why I think the political and historical context I work in is important, as I feel, that context is a vital and much overlooked concept, which is an important asset, not only to understanding but also to changing perceptions and in the implementation of any research results. I will review the research process, partnerships and the implications of power relationships within the research. When evaluating the research process, I will also look at the emotional investment of both the researcher and the 'researched' and the necessity of commitment and engagement in this close contact qualitative and participative research. I will give a short review of the Gypsies and Travellers who took place in the research in order to encourage an understanding of the culture and difficulties for this ethnic minority and conclude with the political use made of my final report.

The research

This research (see Horton 2004) was commissioned, originally, as two separate pieces of qualitative research to provide a snapshot of the health and site needs of transient Gypsies and Travellers whose home place is their caravan and who were travelling in Leeds between May and November 2004. The combined research budgets were tiny and there was pressure for 'results' over process. In the course of the research it was found that the health and site needs of Gypsies and Travellers are interconnected and therefore the research methodology was adjusted slightly by allowing the semi structured interviews to cover both subjects and the final reports were combined and published as one report. In addition to the lack of resources, which for a freelance consultant is not easy, a small budget can create the impression in the minds of some of the members of a research steering group that the research is merely a 'small, local, qualitative piece of work' rather than a serious academic work, which provides immense value for money. This perception is something that the steering group need to deal with positively by encouraging context setting.

Forty-nine semi structured in-depth interviews were held with Gypsies and Travellers. A small number of interviews, some by telephone were carried out with stakeholders from the statutory sector and voluntary sector (Non-governmental organisations – NGO's).

The steering group for the research

The steering group was organised as a partnership of two voluntary organisations (NGO's), one who promoted 'health for all' in south Leeds and the other who existed to promote the exchange of information for Gypsies and Travellers. A Primary Care Trust (PCT) (which is a management body within the National Health Service) and Travellers Education Service (a statutory service within the local school system, which encourages participation of Gypsy and Traveller children of school age) and there were two representatives from the Local Authority Gypsy and Traveller liaison team.

'Partnership working' of this kind has its problems for research. There are inevitable tensions and power inequalities between different institutional cultures and members and professional interests (See Byrne, 2001).

The Steering group was interested in the status of the research and chose me because they felt I would access and involve the Gypsies and Travellers and build trust but perhaps, a university would have been their first choice. Often steering groups need persuading of the value of qualitative as against quantitative research. The 'evidence based' culture particularly in the public sector crudely prioritises statistical reports. Crude 'value for money' notions again forefront actual numbers of people interviewed rather than attempting to understand sampling techniques or the quality of close contact in depth research. I produced in the end a research report which I felt followed the principles and values of an engaged researcher who built trust with Gypsy and Traveller people I worked with as well as carrying out the largest health and site survey of transient Gypsy and Traveller people in the UK

Working with a steering group for this type of research I feel inevitably produces tensions placed within a research and political culture not of our making. The Leeds experience suggested

1. That where a Steering Group is sceptical of using participative and democratic research methods then the debate between researcher and Steering Group can be a useful learning experience for the Steering group.
2. A researcher can find ways of mobilising the skills and contacts of the Steering Group to resource and support the research. The Leeds steering group produced a really effective summary of the report for circulation to agencies and Gypsies and Travellers, using their contacts with designers and printers with the relevant experience.
3. A participative community researcher can gain the support of a Steering Group by demonstrating the support and trust generated by the process of the research with the group s/he is working with. Certainly the feedback Steering group members were getting from Gypsies and Travellers and those working with them about the research helped relationships.

In controversial areas of community based research, 'partnership' steering groups who commission research, are often formed to smooth out conflict and try and make sure uncomfortable truths do not emerge. Effective research with and for oppressed minorities like Gypsies and Travellers, who are developing their own organisations and movements, is inevitably and justifiably conflictual, rather than aimed at a false consensus. British Gypsies and Traveller people and their organisations are currently 'changing their worlds' and they are part of what Sidney Tarrow has called 'contentious' social movements (Tarrow, 1998, p.6). Engaged researchers, like me, whilst insisting on rigorous research standards and methods are part of this 'political' process. Having a background in radical community

work practice allows a useful role to be developed which is valuable to the group one is working with and for. As Popple has argued:

We can therefore, simultaneously hold different and apparently contradictory and inconsistent interpretations of the world – one determined and shaped by the dominant ideology, and the other determined by our everyday experiences in communities which gives us ‘common sense’ knowledge. In this paradigm community workers are situated in a pivotal position within the civil society, for although they are often employees of the state and are required to play a part in maintaining the social system, they are not necessarily in agreement with its ideology. Accordingly community workers have opportunities to work alongside members of communities as they articulate their contradictory understanding of the world and their situation within it. This theory also proposes that community work is concerned with moving from the terrain of ideas and discussion and into transforming action to change people’s material situation (Popple, 1995, p.46).

Ownership and participation

A young woman member of the largest local transient extended Gypsy family was also an official member of the steering group. Her membership gave the final report some credibility that some Gypsy and Traveller participation had been included in the design of the research. Unfortunately her transient lifestyle and family commitments prevented her from fully participating and she rarely attended research meetings. She was however a direct link into her extended family and travelling group which proved to be extremely useful in the initial stages of the research. Her difficulties in playing an active part in the Steering Group does highlight the tensions between informal effective ownership of community research by disadvantaged and oppressed groups, and more formal membership of steering groups. Other research I have been involved in with Gypsies and Travellers has built in advisory workshops where people can comment on the process of research and raise issues but also contribute materially to research by suggesting avenues of research or people to contact.

The Leeds research lacked consistent formal involvement in the Steering Group from the transient Gypsy and Traveller population – but after all that is why they are transient, constantly travelling, refusing to relate to gadjo formalities which they feel can entrap them.

The crucial issue of trust perhaps can augment formal involvement. The small world of Gypsies and Travellers would have closed their caravans and encampments to me if they had not felt that the research and the researcher were in solidarity with their interests and way of life.

Perhaps also the issue of ownership does raise the question of whether Gypsy and Traveller research should be carried out by Gypsy and Traveller people to be authentic. I believe that 'close contact' can be achieved in research terms through solidarity and political understanding. The debate will no doubt continue, but pragmatically in the UK the most effective political campaigns have combined the skills and research resources of gadjo academics and research workers with Gypsy and Traveller organisation. The only Professor of Romani Studies in the UK Thomas Acton is a gadjo (Romani word for a non-Gypsy), not a Romani Gypsy, and revered by the Gypsy and Traveller people and their organisations.

Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds

I was commissioned to undertake the research because I am a freelance community development consultant therefore I am not attached to any institution and have an independent status and ethos. More importantly I have a track record and good reputation for my work with Gypsies and Travellers in Leeds and elsewhere in the region. I am open and honest about my values and principles and the value framework of my work.

The research was commissioned for several interconnected reasons, which had primarily come to the forefront of professional agendas because of recent changes in United Kingdom legislations. There were increasing concerns about the needs of travelling Gypsies and Travellers who, not only had unmet needs, but it was clear, that both locally and nationally, service providers knew little about meeting their needs in a culturally acceptable and sensitive way. There was also recognition that the lack of official site provision meant that the enforcement of the law in evicting people who encamped on public land was costing the City Council and therefore the local taxpayers a vast amount of money (see Morris & Clements, 2002; Robinson, 2006).

A range of research over the last few years has demonstrated that the health of Gypsies and Travellers, who are recognised as an ethnic minority in UK law, is much worse than the general population in the UK and Ireland. This is shown in reduced life expectancy, higher infant mortality, and a range of chronic health conditions and high rates of disabilities (see Horton, 2004; Parry et al., 2004). Research in Bristol suggested in 2003 Gypsy men have a life expectancy of more than a decade less than the general male population (see Chamberlain, 2004). Earlier research in Ireland had suggested three to twelve years less (see Barry, 1989), and a massive 27 years less in a study of the UK in 1988 (see Pahl & Vail, 1988). Gypsies and Travellers have worse health than working class people in general, and worse than other ethnic minorities in England (see Chamberlain, 2004). Studies have also demonstrated the poor site and living conditions are the main explanations for poor health along with a lack of culturally sensitive health service provision (see Goward, 2006; Horton, 2004).

The research group were transient Gypsies and Travellers who were without 'legal' stopping places or conventional sites in which to stay, even on a temporary basis, and who were travelling around the City of Leeds in West Yorkshire, which is a major urban city with a small semi-rural hinterland. They park their caravans and live on what is generally termed 'illegal', and what I would prefer to refer to as 'unauthorised' places, like the grass edges of roads, under motorways, industrial waste sites or even large car parks. The number of caravans in these entourages of extended families varied between 5 and 20 caravans travelling together. They stay for a variety of reasons, some to visit relatives as the large extended family is important in the culture, some searching for work and some just travel for the joy of travelling in the same way as people travel for holidays. They stay for varied periods of time from overnight to a week. In some cases they can find a site which is 'tolerated' and the local authority or landowner may 'turn a blind eye' and allow them to stay for a few weeks and perhaps as long as one month. For many the real reason that they continue travelling around is that they have no choice and they are in search of a permanent, safe homeplace without resorting to their fear of living in a bricks and mortar house.

One large extended family whose members I interviewed in depth had been travelling around Leeds for thirty years without finding a permanent homeplace. They travel as independent units, providing for their own daily needs but rarely have access even to a basic necessity like running water. National and local authorities and indeed the general public perceive Gypsies and Travellers, in particular those who travel around, as an unhealthy, problematic group of people, who create environmental vandalism and who are, at the very least, to be avoided and even feared for their stance of remaining outside society. In fact as Richardson has pointed out the only things talked about as far as Gypsies and Travellers, particularly in the British media are concerned, are dirt and mess and their 'illegal' status (see Richardson, 2006). The Gypsies and Travellers experience racism every day of their lives and are stereotyped in ways, which make members of the general, unthinking society treat them as 'outcasts'. Anti-gypsyism is commonplace throughout Europe, Turkey and the United States and Canada (see Hancock, 2002).

Gypsy and Traveller people are still fighting for the right to be different. Clark and Dearling argue for valuing cultural diversity not conformity and assimilation.

Gypsies and Travellers are an obvious example of people who are discriminated against both on grounds of 'race' and 'lifestyle' (Clark & Dearling, 2003, p.44).

This local and national historical and political context in which research is carried out is vital to understanding what sort of methodology process is needed, how the results of the research should be presented, how it can be taken forward and any recommendations implemented.

Any research must obviously be handled with sensitivity to the political and historical environment and may be difficult where there is a long legacy of distrust (McKee, 1997, p.1172).

It is also important that the result of qualitative research is grounded in a theoretically sound academic framework in order that it 'fits' into the important wider political debates. It is therefore not only essential to have a good practitioner knowledge and understanding but to conduct rigorous 'academic' desk research. This turns the small local research project into one, which does not 're-invent the wheel', e.g. simply repeating work done on other local research projects. It also allows the research to connect to knowledge networks nationally and even, increasingly importantly, globally. The sustainability of the research results is more likely to be secured if all concerned understand this process of context setting and see their roles and lives connected to national NGO's and campaign groups and European Union and International human rights debates.

The realisation that every day existence is due, or at least can be traced to, legislation, political or historical factors, is liberating. The personal is political and a participative research process can start making the links between personal and group identities and histories, and give people the confidence to critique and challenge images of themselves they encounter in the local health, education or police services.

Foucault argues that society's reality is perceived through the institutions of the state (Foucault, 1980). If we are to make an impact with any research and ensure social, cultural and political change it has to be placed within an all-embracing perspective, which challenges limited thinking determined by state institutions. As Thomas Acton, the only Professor of Romani Studies in the UK and a gadjo himself argues:

If political practice, community activism, and policy planning are to change rather than reinforce the deeply embedded structures of Romani – gadjo misunderstanding they have to be grounded in a profound understanding of how Romani – gadjo relations have developed (Acton, 2005, p.30).

Choosing the methodology

The difficulties of this kind of qualitative research cannot be under estimated. However, other forms of research would not have been successful.

- Questionnaires would have been unacceptable and indeed could have been divisive between people who can read and the many who cannot read. If questionnaires had been circulated the Gypsies and Travellers would, I think, have wanted to complete them because they want to improve their health and site opportunities. However, they would have had to confide in those who read

and write and I was told that they might not have been as open with other Gypsies and Travellers, as with an independent but sympathetic researcher who they felt they could trust. The quality of information would therefore have been open to question and would have been variable.

- Peer group research, after appropriate training, was considered but rejected on the same grounds, but also it was felt that the issues were too politically and personally sensitive. The politicians who were to receive the report may also have cast doubts about the authenticity of the research if not carried out by a 'researcher'.
- The idea of focus groups was also rejected because it was felt that there would be difficulty in getting people to attend and if they did attend getting to the more sensitive information surrounding health and site needs. It would have been difficult in such a small budget to pay expenses to those who travelled to attend focus groups.
- Building trust and endeavouring to design a fully participative action research project with a group of people who had experienced a lifetime of prejudice and were constantly moved on inhibited some aspects of the research. Some people I could only visit once but others I was able to establish a relationship and was invited to meet them several times, giving me a valuable insight into their culture and biological life history research. I was given trust enough to be told about such emotional subjects and intimacies as sex, pregnancies, birth and bereavement. These are all important rites of passage within Gypsy and Traveller culture.
- Qualitative research is more time consuming but more effective in gathering data. The use of face-to-face semi structured interviews in situations, which were part of the everyday lives of interviewees. I was going into their world and not asking them to come into anything unfamiliar. I was therefore ensuring that power was more equal between us.
- The qualitative research assumes gender was important. The methods I use are greatly influenced by feminist research methods, which emphasise the importance of informal conversation, 'chatting' and even what can be described as friendly gossip as important sources for data and information (See Roberts, 1981).

Close contact participative qualitative research fuses a range of methods which allow the 'close contact' with a culture, and people. It borrows from sociology and anthropology, feminism, and development techniques. Close contact means in practice

- A personal, political and emotional engagement with the people involved in the research. A belief that such engagement handled intelligently produces robust, effective research results able to be defended in the academic research community;
- The development of trust in the research process so that one is literally 'invited into' the culture, the homeplace;

- A rigorous research approach to value the ‘really useful knowledge’ of interviewees as rich data; and
- An awareness that close contact involves responsibilities – to make the research available and effective for use in political and community struggles for changing the world.

Theory and practice – the praxis of qualitative community research

The skill of the close contact qualitative researcher is in building trust. Sometimes this has to be done very quickly, rarely with the luxury of time and sometimes in the most awkward of situations. Trust is built through giving respect and building mutual respect. Gaining respect is only done through completely open and honest encounters. My first introduction to the mother of the Gypsy steering group member was not the expected friendly reception but a rather hostile ‘Why should I help you? and ‘what are you going to give me?’ questioning. Questions I could not answer in any other way than to tell the truth – and I simply stated ‘nothing’. I explained I had nothing to offer, I could not guarantee anything helpful, I had no power to change anything and I had no resources or finance to improve her life. I could however, offer my commitment to listen to her, to offer complete confidentiality and that I would write a good report which would make recommendations, that if implemented would change the world a little. She smiled, looked directly into my eyes and said with some surprise “Well! At least you’re honest; come in”.

This brave and intelligent woman could see that I was offering a process, which changed our power relationship to be more equal. I offered a process, which could continue after my disappearance as she and her family could use the report as evidence in any future encounters with those who have power. Most importantly I offered her an opportunity to have her voice heard within the research.

As other researchers who have used this approach have pointed out

it is particularly important for groups who tend to have least power in research relationship and in other relationships too and whose contributions are often dismissed.... Participatory research can also enhance people’s awareness of their rights and strengthen their claims on society more generally (Bennett & Roberts, 2004. p.7).

Thus the practice of the research is based on theoretical principles of developing trust and giving a space for ‘voice’. Methodology needs to be grounded in academic theory and the values and principles of the research must be clearly understood by all. The ‘Principles of Participatory Action Research’ (Chambers 1994), developed to relate to the extreme

poverty of the South, gives a good foundation for ethical qualitative research, which values the 'researched' person. Chambers and others have demonstrated how it is the collective knowledge of the group we are researching that hold the key to, not only solutions to problems, but when really listened to, they show us how to proceed throughout the process of the research. The process changes and develops through self-reflection of the researcher, reflection of the process and of the results as we gather information.

Starting out: What's in it for me?

Sensitive, close contact qualitative research has to evolve but the starting point has to be consideration of why people should get involved in the research in the first place. Ask from the outset 'what will they gain?' and devise a programme that does not treat the researched as a passive person but one who deserves to gain through the process. We have seen how this can be through finding a voice through the research but it can be also be through research methods which bring with them information giving, networking, signposting or just fun.

One technique I have used in my qualitative research is to organise with groups 'Action Days' with a carnival atmosphere. These can be useful celebration days for information gathering and giving. These research action days are excellent for gaining a lot of in-depth information, and are set up to be informal, fun and helpful. In the past I have organised days with a whole range of professions from architects to health professionals, who have welcomed the opportunity to talk informally whilst talking about their specialist subjects. I have had health professionals offering information, checking blood pressure or giving information about childhood diseases or pregnancy, and health promotion issues. Information about domestic violence, rape or sexual abuse can be discreetly obtained in amongst information about healthy eating or more 'ordinary' life events.

In the Leeds research budget restraints and the difficulties of encouraging people who are unused to mixing in public gatherings made any 'action days' undesirable. However, I coordinated my visits with the visits of the 'Health Bus', which is a very small mobile health room staffed by nurses and health professionals, sometimes a doctor and occasionally a dentist. The bus is usually accompanied by Travellers Education Services who provide mobile crèche facilities so the women can attend alone or in groups for a consultation. The bus and staff are welcomed onto site and this provides a focus for an almost celebratory communal gathering in a helpful, non-invasive way.

Really useful knowledge

The commitment of the engaged researcher to change the world with and for, in this case Gypsies and Travellers, means we challenge surface notions of conventional wisdom or common sense. We are trying to release in the qualitative research process what is generally

referred to as tacit knowledge. However, the real goal must be to a step further, to build trust and relationships, which encourages the researched person to impart their 'really useful knowledge' which can be the key to them themselves finding connections and methods to change their worlds. Researchers can learn from adult educators who have used the idea of 'really useful knowledge', since the 19th century as a central theme in radical theories of adult education. Their focus is on notions of developing and applying this 'really useful knowledge' a term which still holds the resonance of the classic social movements of early industrial England. One radical workingman described it then (in 1834) as the knowledge, which will give him the methods on "how to get out of our present troubles" (Clarke, 1979, p.84).

Concentrating on the value of 'really useful knowledge' also means an open rejection of theoretical perspectives, which see poor people as a problem and in terms of what they lack, depending on a presentation of negative images. We have to start from a positive perspective and this means a rejection of deficit theory. Our starting point must be that people are interesting, skilled and are able to, not only solve, but also to define what their real problems are. If society wants to change to give opportunities to poor people then we must learn what their problems really are, not what we perceive them to be.

Starting from a rejection of deficit theory I have developed a simple research technique which can succeed in building trust and interest. When asked to self define, I found that many Gypsies and Travellers would not admit to official bodies or outsiders their ethnic origins. When I asked them they would hesitate and then tell me they were a Gypsy or a Traveller. My reply to this is always a simple but positive 'good!' I go on to encourage expressions of their cultural pride, which they have become accustomed to hiding. I use positive images and role models in my reports. Finding examples are usually easy after meeting such interesting and colourful characters.

Solidarity, building on trust

During the process of this research I observed an interesting shift of perception of me, no longer just the researcher but as an 'outsider' who had solidarity with the Gypsies and Travellers. This privileged position gained me a place to continue and gather really sensitive information.

An extended family of about twenty caravans had encamped on a piece of local authority land and had gained through the judicial process permission to stay for approximately three months. They were given portable toilets and refuse collection, albeit inadequate refuse collection as they were blamed for local tipping of rubble and rubbish. I had visited this encampment several times and one day one of the men who had avoided being interviewed asked who I was and what I was doing. The police had raided the site in the dawn hours and had, he explained, frightened the children and acted in what he felt was an aggressive and provocative way, making people get out of bed and stand in the field whilst

they searched the caravans. They found nothing and made no arrests. He asked what I could do and I felt powerless to offer any real help. I did however visit the site from dawn on a number of mornings. I sat in my car and didn't speak to anyone. I did not witness any raids but the fact that I had turned out to observe was noted. I thought about it carefully and decided on a subsequent visit to take breakfast for the families. Not in a patronising or philanthropic way, but in the same way as I would take a bottle of wine to a party, I took bacon, eggs, bread, cereal and milk and we all had breakfast in what became a celebration of eating outside and sharing stories of past encampments. This was one of the many special moments which Judith Okley describes as "heaven sent moments" of research (Okley, 1983, p.v) and an opportunity to be welcomed into the homeplace, which is often "a site of resistance" (Kendall, 1997, p.75) to gadjo society, and not often afforded the stranger researcher.

I wanted to build on this experience and I invited one woman Gypsy, who was about the same age as me and I had developed a good relationship with, to accompany me to a very pleasant destination where we could talk confidentially and I would ensure she was well looked after. My desire was to somehow thank her for participation by 'treating her', perhaps like I would have 'treated' a sister or my Mother. The invitation was understandably rejected because in an attempt to understand her world I was taking her out of her comfort zone and into my world. This was an honest mistake but one well learned in my research which demonstrated some of the limits of the approach.

During this research I learnt to be opportunistic, to conduct interviews in the most awkward situations. I have learnt to take both written and mental notes whilst standing outside a caravan or in the rain, anywhere, when the opportunity presented itself. I once asked for an interview but was told there was not enough time as my interviewee was going shopping; I proceeded to be kept in conversation for more than an hour, whilst she crouched down and I leaned across the empty passenger seat out of my car window. I think the real reason was that entering the caravan, which I had visited many times before when it was full of people, was not acceptable when there was no one else around and the space to be confidential was too threatening.

Reports and their uses

The 60-page report of the research was written using case studies, which illustrated the lives of the Gypsies and Travellers I met. Positive images and recommendations were developed for a range of organisations and state institutions to take forward (Horton, 2004). It was made available on the internet through the Travellers Education Service⁷. The report was also adapted by the steering group who produced a small booklet with a colourful range of positive image photographs, quotes from the Gypsies and Travellers and

⁷ See: www.travellersinleeds.co.uk/academic

the recommendations. This was a step towards providing an accessible form of the report for people who cannot read.

The tiny research budget and the nature of the travelling patterns of the researched group of Gypsies and Travellers restricted a formal presentation of the research findings to a research seminar. However, informally I visited as many of the research participants and told them about the report and how it could be accessed. The report was widely used within Leeds and presented to politicians. The report contributed to Gypsy and Traveller campaigns on health and became a main part of a conference, which was organised by Gypsies and Travellers in the region. It has been quoted in other research (see Thomason, 2006) and was one of the influencing factors used by Senior Civil Servants at the Department of Health to invest more funding in the health needs nationally of Gypsies and Travellers.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a case study demonstrating an approach to community participative research using a process of innovative qualitative methodology. It also demonstrates that research with a marginalized and oppressed ethnic minority like Gypsies and Travellers demands culturally sensitive approaches, and a commitment to values and solidarity. I feel that it is possible for an engaged researcher working closely with and for Gypsies and Travellers to produce a robust and academically recognised piece of local research. The research may start out to be local but one of the aims of research is to change the world, albeit step by step... and hopefully as Thomas Acton has pointed out "... will also be a re-humanising of inter-cultural relations in general" (see Acton, 2006).

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