

Gypsies, Travellers and the Media: Press regulation and racism in the UK

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‘A crucial dimension for understanding the reaction to deviance both by the public as a whole and by agents of social control is the nature of information that is received about the behaviour in question. Each society possesses a set of ideas about what causes deviation ... and a set of images of who constitutes the typical deviant ... these conceptions shape what is done about the behaviour. In industrial societies the body of information from which such ideas are built is invariably received at second hand. That is, it arrives already processed by the mass media...’¹

‘...I apologise if I have left anyone who hasn’t seen a mobile squatter close-up thinking the majority are poverty-stricken and deserving sympathy. For the majority, that image is as far from true as romantic notions of old ladies roasting hedgehogs over open fires while hand-crafting wooden clothes pegs ... They have all the material possessions of Milton Keynes’ better heeled residents – except legitimate incomes, VAT numbers, Schedule D numbers, demands for council tax and water rates. Cash in hand is their ONLY style.’²

The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) has over 25,000 members in the UK. NUJ members agree to abide by a Code of Conduct, clause 10 of which states: ‘A journalist shall only mention a person’s race, colour, creed, illegitimacy, marital status (or lack of it), gender or sexual orientation if this information is strictly relevant. A journalist shall neither originate nor process material which encourages discrimination, ridicule, prejudice or hatred on any of the above-mentioned grounds’. The Press Complaints Commission – a regulatory body established and operated by representatives of the press itself – also have a Code of Practice, clause 13 of which relates to discrimination and suggests that prejudicial or pejorative remarks about race and other personal traits and social groupings should be avoided.

Yet the print media commonly suggest to their readers, in their representations of Travellers, that this category of people routinely display certain negative characteristics not only typical of but essential to the group: that is, they represent Travellers in a stereotypical and prejudicial fashion. The relationship of the representation to the real is the same as it would be for any societal group: some Travellers are dishonest or law-breaking, some don’t clean up after themselves. The difference is that while some settled people also have those characteristics, all other settled people are not assumed also to possess them, as is the case for Travellers.

In creating largely negative images of Travellers, the press may argue that they are merely reflecting standard

public opinion; and they may be right. But in reflecting it they condone, encourage and confirm racist assumptions whereas, some might argue, it is part of their role to counter such bigoted simplifications. ‘The individual’s store of information, which serves as the reference for individual definitions of normal and abnormal behaviour, is today easily derived from the mass media. The larger units of society do not provide a set of information sufficiently varied for the individual to rely upon his own direct experience except within some limited range of activities’.³ Racist invective by the press infects society in a widespread way; a way in which an unintentionally racist remark by one individual to another cannot. They confirm existing prejudices and create new ones, much as parents do in transferring unexamined aversions to their children. This endless cycle of bigotry benefits no one, and certainly not Travellers. Every anti-Traveller sentiment that is published is a pebble dropped into a very still pool.

‘Some authorities allow us to stay then but sometimes they don’t and then it’s difficult with these family problems as well ... The worst is what the papers say about us. People panic automatically when we first arrive and too much is written in the papers to frighten people against us.’⁴

Groups which are readily and easily stereotyped, such as Travellers, are likely to experience layers of discrimination in their lives which lead to its entrenchment: they are much less likely to become members of the group which is active in the stereotyping or labelling, making it much more difficult to counter such representations with different pictures, other realities.⁵ While it is generally unhelpful to create hierarchies of disadvantage, it is asserted that Gypsies are have less power to influence their image in the press than any other ethnic minority in the UK, especially since illiteracy is a major issue for their community. Many Travellers will not see or cannot read the things that are written about them. Not only are they taunted, denigrated and laughed at, it is done behind their back.

There has been debate for many years as to whether there is such as thing as ‘media effects’. It has been argued that powers of mass persuasion on the part of the media are not provable, and to posit them is an insult to the minds of media consumers. ‘Undoubtedly, few social scientists today think that the mass media have the power to sway huge audiences to the extent once believed likely’.⁶ But there is little question that not only do the news media ‘largely determine our awareness of the world at large, supplying the major elements for our pictures of the world, they also influence the prominence of those elements in the picture’.⁷

Those who write and speak of Gypsies and Travellers often do not know them, and therefore do not often present a complete or balanced picture. 'Researchers have labelled the persons who are involved in the news selection process 'gatekeepers' of information because they are in the position of either letting information pass through the system or stopping its progress. Performance of the gatekeeping function results in what some scholars have called 'agenda-setting' for the society'.⁸

Travellers experience both direct and indirect exclusion from this process, by not being involved in the creation of stories about them either as interviewees or as journalists. It is unlikely that Travellers will enter media careers for many reasons, no doubt including their fear that a profession which so often represents Travellers in a negative light would make neither a good source of employment nor an appropriate forum or ally for their interests and concerns. This may also in part explain why those local papers which have previously presented Travellers in a poor light or worse then complain that the Travellers refuse to be interviewed on the rare occasion when a paper attempts to examine their point of view.

Why pick on the press?

While it is unfortunate that Travellers are not specifically mentioned within them, the BBC Producers Guidelines 1996 provide a very clear framework within which televisioners can present race and ethnicity issues. If they should, nonetheless, get it wrong, the BBC keeps all transmissions for 42 days during which time anyone can complain about a programme they find to be offensive or inaccurate – not just persons directly affected. This allows third party complaints to be taken so that if for example, a BBC television programme makes a pejorative comment about Gypsies generally, any Gypsy or non-Gypsy who takes offence can complain. The BBC Serious Complaints Unit is answerable to the Governors of the Corporation who exist to protect the public interest; the Reports of the Governors are made public.

The Broadcasting Standards Commission (BSC) is the statutory body for both standards and fairness in broadcasting. It is the only organisation within the regulatory framework of UK broadcasting to cover all television and radio. This includes BBC and commercial broadcasters as well as text, cable, satellite and digital services. As an independent organisation representing the interests of the consumer, the BSC considers the portrayal of violence, sexual conduct and matters of taste and decency, and any viewer can make a complaint about a broadcast programme or advertisement. As an alternative to a court of law, the Commission provides redress for people who believe they have been unfairly treated or subjected to unwarranted infringement of privacy in a broadcast programme.

Perhaps because of these systems of statutory regulation, it appears that portrayal of Gypsies and Travellers by those media are rarely problematic. The only area in which problems commonly arise is with local radio stations. Some 'talk radio' programmes may, it seems, give people an opportunity to express prejudicial and potentially offensive comments without giving others, such as Travellers, an opportunity to reply to these comments. This includes remarks made on a live radio programme by the Home

Secretary Jack Straw in July 1999.⁹

It could be argued, with respect to television, that lack of negative portrayal is not in itself good enough, and that positive portrayals of Travellers and other ethnic minorities are desirable to foster a more tolerant society generally. But it is clear that where a regulatory framework is coherent and imposed legislatively, those responsible for reportage and representation of ethnicity issues appear, with a few glaring exceptions,¹⁰ appear to approach the task with some thoughtfulness and care.

The press, however, routinely represent Travellers in such a way as to actively increase dislike of them and their way of life. The local press, in particular, more often than not cover Traveller-related issues in a manner which seems deliberately designed to inflame local tensions and damage relations between the settled and Traveller communities. I say this after monitoring all of the national press, and as much of the local press as possible, throughout the years 1998 to 2000. Other research has found 'that the announcement of a large number of small sites had been used by some local newspapers to produce the image of a major gypsy 'invasion', even though the gypsies¹¹ concerned were already regularly resident in the area'.¹²

'KEEP THIS SCUM OUT (And it IS time to hound 'em, Chief Constable). They call themselves tinkers. itinerants. new age travellers. We call them parasites. The scum of the earth who live off the backs of others. They contribute nothing but trouble... They set up filthy, disease-ridden camps on roadsides and in parks and offend every decent citizen.'¹³

'Though Travellers are not a large group in Britain their treatment in the media is appalling. A measure of the real ability of our media to reflect the fact that we are a multiracial society is its treatment of Travellers. The use of racist language, prejudicial images and stereotyped coverage of Travellers endorses the principle of prejudice and so gives to those members of the public who it may influence the suggestion that racist attitudes to others are an acceptable and rational approach ... the print media continues to exist within a regulatory framework which does not allow general complaints of racial offence. The Press Complaints Commission supervises a code of practice which makes reference to racial offence but only considers complaints to be within its scope when the offensive words are used in relation to an identified individual who then themselves complain. Effectively this means that the PCC never upholds any complaints on grounds of racial offence. What has become usual practice for broadcasting and advertising is still considered beyond the pale of the print media. You do not have to read the papers for very long to see the consequences: writing which has no other purpose than to play upon – and so reinforce – prejudices.'¹⁴

Stereotyping

'Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretence. They are

a fantasy, a projection onto the Other that makes them less threatening. Stereotypes abound when there is a distance. They are an invention, a pretence that one knows when the steps that would make real knowing possible cannot be taken or are not allowed.¹⁵

Stereotyping is a potentially negative product of a standard mental process carried out by all humans and many animals: categorisation. We need to categorise from a very early age: which foods do I like / not like? In which environments do I feel safe / in danger? By dividing people or things into groups based on certain perceived characteristics and then creating a hierarchy of preferences to which we adapt our behaviour, we learn to find our way around a complex and occasionally dangerous world. But while useful as a means of simplifying complex things and people, stereotyping is problematic when used by adults to simplify and therefore more easily deal with things of which they are afraid and lack knowledge. If everything they read about the object of their fears and ignorance (from childhood books to adulthood newspapers) simply confirms their reductive assumptions, they are encouraged to continue in this simplistic and sometimes prejudicial thinking. Therein lies a major root of social exclusion.

Stereotypes stem from not just categorisation but evaluation of those being stereotyped. Even if there is a grain of truth in a stereotype, it may only apply to one person or a few members in a group but may disproportionately and dramatically disadvantage the whole. Yet stereotypes are difficult to get rid of as they are deeply rooted in socialisation and thought processes, and their very nature means, their strength relies on the fact that the features of the stereotyped are assumed to be fixed by nature.

Being stereotyped as, for example, 'the typical academic' (male, white, middle-aged) can be negative for those people who might have more difficulties being taken seriously and advancing in an academic career as a result of not fitting it. But while such difficulties can affect the path of their life, it is unlikely that they could affect their very way of life. The stereotypes moulded on Travellers lead to constant eviction, harassment, school exclusions and prejudice of an intensity bordering on hatred. 'Negative attitudes frequently manifest themselves in the refusal to admit Travelling children or in delay or the imposition of difficult or discriminatory conditions. In some cases, threats and acts of physical violence by members of the settled community have been sufficient to deter Gypsy parents from placing their children in school'.¹⁶

The 'typical' Traveller?

So what are the stereotypes which play such a powerful role in propagating prejudice against Gypsies and other Travellers? Most racism consists of reducing a particular racial group to particular, stereotyped, representations. Often 'people who are in any way significantly different from the majority – 'them' rather than 'us' – are frequently exposed to this *binary* form of representation. They seem to be represented through sharply opposed, polarized, binary extremes – good/bad, civilized/primitive, ugly/excessively attractive, repelling-because-different/compelling-because-strange-and-exotic. And they are often required to be *both things at the same time!*'.¹⁷

Travellers are in an interesting position in this respect. Unusually and often the main complaint to be found regarding Gypsies is that they do *not* fit the stereotype that has been carved out for them: the 'true' Gypsy. That they do not fit this stereotype is used to justify hatred of them and to deny them rights and access to goods and services. This 'true, good Gypsy' stereotype is the 'positive' branch, whereby they are seen as mysterious, darkly beautiful and sultry, spiritual in a naturalist fashion, fortune tellers in touch somehow with other times and dimensions, bestowing luck or curses as the mood takes them, all flashing jewellery and brightly coloured clothes and scarves (both men and women), leading a free and carefree and varied and above all romantic life which is tantalising for but unattainable by settled folk.

'The settled population is generally intolerant of contacts and relations with nomads ... The further away the nomad is the better. When the gypsies are so far away that they verge on myth, they suddenly become alluring: handsome, artistic, living untrammelled lives, symbols of freedom'.¹⁸

This picture of Gypsies, of the 'Romany Rye', can be found in art and literature and music, from Austen to Van Gogh, from Bizet to Modigliani. It is for this reason that I am able to present what should be a familiar picture purely from imagination, from 'memory'. For I too was fed on these images from a young age. What I have come to realise from my experience with reality is that these representations bear no more (and no less) of a relationship with actual Travellers than with settled people. Some are spiritual, some are sultry, some are beautiful, few could be described as carefree.¹⁹ Whatever the images may be they are not the products of memory but of imagination. Settled people draw on 'memory' to decide who does and does not constitute a 'real' and therefore marginally more acceptable Gypsy.

'Josephine Doherty, a member of one of Britains's [sic] last true Romany families, had dreamed of a fairy tale wedding. So her relatives organised an event fit for a princess'.²⁰

It is a very real difficulty in the representation of Travellers that, as previously mentioned, few members of the press actually take the trouble to meet or talk to Travellers in constructing news stories about them. (It is a given that the person constructing the representation is more likely to faithfully portray a person or experience with which or with whom they have had direct experience).²¹ So they have only their 'memories' to draw on. Many of these 'memories' consist of the other, more 'negative' stereotype. It is more commonly found in the press because Travellers seem to be assumed to more closely fit this type and are then penalised for not conforming to the positive construct, the 'good' Gypsy.

The 'bad' Gypsy is dirty, thieving, surviving on wits rather than skill and so necessarily living outside the mores and laws of settled society, providing a low standard of goods and services to settled people and then using nomadism to 'slip the net' of the law, scrounging and parasitic, living off the scraps and through the loopholes of settled society and taking it for what he or she can get, leaving

disgusting piles of human and industrial waste on every piece of land on which he or she has settled, potentially violent, creating expense, fear and conflict by their very nature. This aspect of the so-called Gypsy character is so firmly held by settled people that 'to gyp' has come to mean 'to be cheated', as in 'I've been gyped'.

Whichever stereotype is employed, or whether one is set against the other, they constitute what Barthes²² would call a 'cultural myth', albeit a pervading one. To bluntly divide Gypsies into two 'types' and then punish them for being one and not the other may have developed as a device to combat feelings of fear and ignorance, but it can only lead to an increase in those fears among settled people and between the settled and Traveller communities. Travellers have become a sub-class because they have been placed there by another culture which fears them.

By creating categories into which we expect the world to fit neatly, we create a false and tidy world out of which some things and some people might step and transgress our contrived boundaries. Those things and people must then be stigmatised and discontinued if we are to feel safe and orderly, because they do not fit neatly into society as we like to see it. Foreigners do not fit unless they are money-spending tourists; otherwise they are asylum-seekers. Travellers do not fit because they are assumed to be nomadic, although they often move because they are forced to so by police and local authorities; and may be no more nomadic than the modern businessperson. Sometimes these 'others', these 'unfitted' people, are both foreigners *and* Travellers. Suffice it to say that these 'others' become both despised and desired, humans being drawn to that which is threatening or taboo.

It is not difficult, then, to see why and how the media plays a role in promulgating these ancient images and thus reinforcing the position of Travellers as perhaps the most maligned of minorities in Britain and in Europe. The 'difference' element makes good copy, makes stories that stand out from the ordinary, that always sell and stir up emotions. The plethora of stereotypes around Travellers provides writers with rich imagery and 'hooks' upon which they can hang a story, and readership sympathies upon which they can draw.

'Residents quiz council – who's moving into empty homes? "We don't want gypsies next door"'²³

The way that Travellers are treated by society puts them into positions which tally with common views of them, lending a patina of 'truth' and 'objectivity' to the press representations. For example, it is easy to sell the 'dirty Gypsy' image when societal dislike of Gypsies forces them to live on the margins of society, under motorways, next to sewage plants and railway lines, where no-one else wishes to live. The problems of access to health, education and stability, of over-policing, and of lack of access to land that many Travellers experience is rarely portrayed.

From National to Local

'Over-reporting' is commonly employed with Gypsy arrivals in local towns, and with the arrivals of asylum seekers from other countries. When the asylum seekers are Gypsies (or Roma, as they are properly known in the Czech

Republic) the effect appears to be doubled. This type of reporting is so common now that 'the media and their audiences have lost even a tenuous hold on the meaning of the words they use. How is a town 'beaten up' or 'besieged'? How many shop windows have to be broken for an 'orgy of destruction' to have taken place?'.²⁴

In October 1997 Roma from the Czech Republic and Slovakia arrived at the port of Dover in Kent, seeking asylum. They had been drawn there – and also to Canada – by documentaries shown on television in their countries of origin, which held the UK and Canada up as being tolerant, welcoming, and having generous and relatively accessible welfare benefits systems. Within a day of the arrival of these Roma people, the UK press became extremely active in 'describing' the situation at Dover. Rarely did they talk to the Roma themselves; when they did they appeared to seek out Roma who 'fit' the picture they were expecting.

'I'm not saying that all these gypsies are the same ... there may be genuine cases. But it is the ones who are just hoping to get a free ride on the gravy train that we are talking about'.²⁵

'We were told your country really is the land of milk and honey: the Sun joins spongers on refugee express'. 'Cheeky Bulgar: Immigrant blows £67 dole on lotto'.²⁶

'Gypsies invade Dover, hoping for a handout'.²⁷

Some of the writing that took place over these few weeks clearly had no purpose other to play upon and reinforce existing prejudices and fears. Any other issues that might be important, even central to, the arrivals of these people, were downplayed, derided or ignored entirely. Seven months later a responsible journalist wrote, in an article entitled 'Plight of the gypsies Britain branded as scroungers', that a number of the Roma had indeed been granted asylum after it was established that they would face racist persecution if returned to countries which had statutorily removed their citizenship (and effectively rendered them stateless) in 1993.²⁸

Negative imagery and language characteristic of most reporting around the Roma arrivals by the national press in October 1997 reappeared in March 2000. It was sufficiently inciteful that the PCC were sent many complaints against the *Sun* newspaper concerning a front page in which Romanian Gypsy asylum seeking was conflated with tax and benefit fraud. The June 2000 PCC adjudication is unsatisfactory in that it simply accepts the *Sun* editor's defence of simply stating that they are 'not a racist newspaper' but were exposing cheating and tax-wasting as a matter of public interest. The PCC side-stepped the issue that the placement of words and images on the cover implied that Gypsies are solely responsible for all of the tax evasion, black marketeering and benefit fraud that takes place in Britain.

However, the PCC did take the opportunity, in announcing that they would not uphold these complaints, to remind newspapers of their duty under the PCC code to avoid discriminatory reporting and the incitement of racial hatred. The adjudication states that 'Discrimination has no place in a modern society and the Commission would censure most heavily any newspaper found guilty of racist reporting'. Are the PCC walking a safe line or issuing a warning for the future?

Also in June 2000, the Audit Commission released their report *Another Country: Implementing dispersal under the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999*. (The Act introduced a system whereby asylum seekers are sent to all parts of the UK, to ease pressure on authorities in London and Kent who have traditionally taken responsibility for providing housing and other services to asylum seekers). The report notes that:

- The success of the scheme could be hampered by inadequate local services and poor community relations.
- In some areas, community tensions have been raised by emotive and sensational media reporting.
- More positive messages from central government would help to abate the overwhelmingly negative media coverage of asylum seekers.
- Without effective support, asylum seekers could be caught in a cycle of social exclusion dependency in their new communities, or drift back to London.²⁹

Reporting around asylum issues often includes emphasis on lack of citizenship and deservingness for welfare assistance. This approach is also to be found in the local press in their handling of arrivals of *British* travellers. Twenty years ago UNESCO³⁰ produced a report analysing media reporting of race in the UK, Canada and Ireland.³¹ Their UK analysis was with regard to the West Midlands, where they focused on black and Asian issues but had their attention drawn to the high rate of press coverage of Travellers in the years 1968-70. They note, 'it seemed that certain constraints operating on the coverage of race did not apply in the case of travelling people'.³² UNESCO used the overtly hostile and racist reportage to allow them to pick up on issues that might usually be subtler, as the papers were more sensitive to criticism where other minorities were concerned.

The main analysis was of the *Walsall Observer* which, UNESCO determined, 'portrayed travellers as dirty, criminal, alien, etc., giving rise to communal tension'.³³ Common themes in the reportage created 'a composite negative image of travellers as causing conflict, creating health hazards, committing criminal acts and as having special legislative rights and immunity from immigration control. News with any positive reference to any travellers activity is minimal throughout the period ... The status of Travellers as a foreign-born, culturally different, minority is used to raise questions of nationality, cultural conformity and majority interests'.³⁴

In other words, '...the need to provide scapegoats who symbolize the potential undermining of traditional values may have particular salience for the self-conception of a local community and the newspaper which serves it. An alien group such as immigrants or tinkers may be used to overcome ambiguities and contradictions present within the community itself ... used as a negative symbol for all that was good and decent in local life'.³⁵ It is for this reason, perhaps, that Travellers not only never seem to belong to the place where they are, and that hateful and inciting representations of them are so much less common in the national than in the local press, which UNESCO accuses of operating a form of 'institutionalized intolerance'.³⁶

'Fury as travellers set up illegal camp... Families 'in fear of raids on homes''³⁷

Conclusion

With power comes responsibility. The media have encouraged the image of Travellers that has existed since legislation in the 1500s made simply being a Gypsy a capital offence. They cannot be expected to single-handedly undo centuries of prejudice, fear and ignorance, but nor should they continue to breed it. The broadcast media has shown a marked improvement in its representations of ethnicity in recent years; the press has too but only with regard to some minorities. Asylum seekers and Travellers still come in for rough and racist treatment with very little outcry.

Those who watch the press, whether regulators or commentators, are little better. 'When ... racism is transmitted in routine practices that seem 'normal', at least for the dominant group, this can only mean that racism is often not recognized, not acknowledged – let alone problematized – by the dominant group'.³⁸ This is clearly evidenced in that: 'Not one of the 600 or so complaints made to the Press Complaints Commission (PCC) since 1991 about alleged racism in the Press has been upheld. In fact, the vast majority of them are not even allowable complaints under PCC rules. Article 13 of the Code of Practice only recognises racist reporting made against a specifically named Person, and even then there is no violation unless the named victim complains'.³⁹

It seems odd but is true that a Gypsy who finds remarks about Gypsies in their local press offensive, inaccurate, racist and personally harmful nonetheless cannot object to the remarks because they are not directed at that particular Gypsy personally. The PCC was, admittedly, created for the purpose of allowing redress for individuals adversely affected by press coverage, not to determine and police a set of standards for the press. But as no other organisation is charged with the setting of standards, there is a vacuum only filled by the press itself. It could be said that the regulators are toothless, but the regulators are themselves the regulated. If they are toothless it is because they choose to be.

It is not necessarily desperately positive images of Travellers which are needed to balance the current style of reportage of them. This would create a danger that those doing the representation might be the ones to decide what those positive characteristics should be, resulting in images of Travellers no more realistic or representational than the common negative images. 'Supposing a group with good grounds for surliness, and for lack of co-operation with a social system or situation (slaves in plantation conditions, as imaged in *Gone With the Wind*) are represented as always smiling and whistling contentedly at their lot? They may well wonder if this image is 'positive' only for those who want to be reassured that all is well with an unjust set-up. Sometimes groups heavily stereotyped ... have responded by taking on the denigrated identity that the stereotype or abusive nickname gives them'.⁴⁰ In other words, 'If you treat a man like a dog for long enough, eventually he'll start to bark and bite'.⁴¹ This may be one of the origins of the 'grain of truth' within each stereotype.

What is needed is a range of representations; a confir-

mation that Gypsies and other Travellers, while they have their own distinctive cultures – and, in some cases, languages – are also people as complex and varied and human as all those other people portrayed by the media. In a multitude of ways their way of life can be shown to have been made more difficult by Governments who profess that their policies exist to ease the lives of citizens. Stereotyping and selective reporting by the press belie this essential and obvious fact. ‘The media overwhelmingly fail to incorporate sufficient information about the social context or historical development of issues involving race and class’.⁴²

‘Mythomania: The peddling of myths represented as facts that promotes hysteria on any given topic, for example, the asylum debate in Britain’.⁴³

It is wrong to allow a system which may not allow one Gypsy to be called ‘gyppo’ but which regularly allows Gypsies in general to be referred to as scum, gyppos, parasites and so on with impunity. It cannot be fair or logical to allow the argument that freedom of speech should give columnists the right to present racist remarks as fair opinion when they are in a more powerful position than most to disseminate such opinions. It is neither emotive nor inaccurate to suggest that, under the current system of self-regulation by the press, were Adolf Hitler to be alive today and an opinion columnist he would experience no legal impediment to publishing whatever statements he chose regarding Jews and homosexuals. He would not do so only for fear of public outcry and an ensuing drop in circulation. He could probably speak his mind on the Gypsies as he used to, however, and still keep his job.

The press alone cannot combat prejudice against a societal group, especially since many readers selectively read material that will confirm rather than challenge their existing beliefs. But the ‘media have their greatest influence when they reinforce rather than attempt to change the opinions of those in their audience’.⁴⁴ Journalists owe it to themselves and to their profession to try and set standards and seek a somewhat objective truth. Lack of press regulation allows lazy journalists to unquestioningly embrace and perpetuate the prejudices and ignorance of settled society.

‘We don’t realise the amount of prejudice against us when we’re on the road. If we get trouble, we just hook the trailer on and move. So we don’t see what the local papers say about us. We don’t buy them. What’s the use, if you can’t read them? So we’ve never complained of what’s said of us. And so those paper people think it’s okay, what they do. But it’s time we spoke up’.⁴⁵

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NOTES

1. Stanley Cohen (1973) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, Paladin, p. 16.
2. Trevor Johnson, *Milton Keynes on Sunday*, 6 July 1997.

3. Leslie Wilkins (1976) *Information and the definition of deviance*, from *The Manufacture of News: Social problems, deviance and the mass media*, Stanley Cohen & Jock Young, editors, Constable, London, pp. 26-7.
4. A Long-Distance Traveller, January 1982, from Smith, Gmelch & Gmelch (1982) *The Accommodation Needs of Long-Distance & Regional Travellers: A Consultation Paper*, Department of the Environment, Appendix 3, p. 9.
5. Gill Branston & Roy Stafford (1996) *The Media Student’s Book*, Routledge, London, p. 83.
6. Richard E. Petty and Joseph R. Priester (1994) *Mass Media Attitude Change: Implications of the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion*, from *MediaEffects: Advances in Theory and Research*, Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (eds.), Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Hove, England, p. 91.
7. Maxwell McCombs (1994) *News influence on our pictures of the world*, from *MediaEffects: Advances in Theory and Research*, Jennings Bryant and Dolf Zillmann (eds.), Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, Hove, England, p. 4.
8. Clint Wilson II & Félix Gutiérrez (1995) *Race, Multiculturalism, and the Media: from Mass to Class Communication*, second edition, SAGE Publications, London, p. 151.
9. See the newsletter of the Traveller Law Research Unit, Cardiff Law School: *Travellers’ Times*, Issue 8.
10. For example, the producers and writers of the BBC television soap opera *Eastenders* raised some hackles in 1997 for the way in which they represented Irish characters.
11. The word Gypsy, they being a racial group and it being a proper noun, should be capitalised. I have not changed quotations which did not capitalise the word.
12. David Todd & George Clark (1991) *Gypsy Site Provision & Policy: Research Report*, Department of the Environment, HMSO, London, p. 21.
13. The Birmingham Evening Mail, Tuesday June 29 1993, front cover. Similar articles have been printed each summer, with every large arrival of Travellers.
14. From a speech by Hugh Harris, Deputy Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, at a meeting of June 1998.
15. bell hooks (1992) *Black Looks: Race and Representation*, South End, Boston, p. 170.
16. Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) [1996] *The Education of Travelling Children: A Report from the Office of Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Schools*, reference HMR/ 12/96/NS, p. 10.
17. Stuart Hall, editor (1997) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, The Open University, Milton Keynes, p. 229.
18. J-P Liegeois (1986) *Gypsies: An Illustrated History*, Al-Saqi, London.
19. Their very way of life is now subject to criminalisation under the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994.
20. *Now* magazine, 25 July 1998.
21. Oscar Gandy (1998) *Communication & Race: A Structural Perspective*, Arnold, London, p. 97.
22. Roland Barthes (1972) *Mythologies*, Cape, London, pp. 114-5.
23. The Biggleswade Chronicle, Friday 16 May 1997.
24. Stanley Cohen (1976) *Mods and Rokers: the inventory as manufactured news*, from *The Manufacture of News: Social problems, deviance and the mass media*, Stanley Cohen & Jock Young, editors, Constable, London, p. 229.
25. The Daily Telegraph, 25/10/97, p. 11. Quote from one of 3,000 signatories to a petition demanding that Roma asylum seekers be denied any access to social assistance. As previously mentioned, the theme of ‘it’s not those real ones, it’s the others’ is highly pervasive. This is used to justify denying tolerance of any of them.
26. The Sun newspaper, 23/10/97.
27. The Independent newspaper, 20 October 1997, front page headline.
28. Ian Burrell, Home Affairs correspondent, the Independent newspaper, 21/5/97.
29. These conclusions are taken from the Briefing Paper on *Another Country*; both it and the full report are available from the web site at www.audit-commission.gov.uk or from Audit Commission Publications, Bookpoint Ltd, Abingdon, Oxford ☎ 0800 502030.
30. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
31. UNESCO (1977) *Ethnicity and the Media*, Paris.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 164.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 166.
37. *Weston-super-Mare Daily Post*, 11 June 1998, front page.
38. Philomena Essed (1991) *Understanding Everyday Racism*, Sage, California, p. 10.

39. Publisher and former journalist Bob Borzello, from *Telling It Like It Is...*, the Report of the Ethnic Minorities and the Media Forum, PressWise Ltd, 25 Easton Business Centre, Felix Road, Bristol BS5 0HE.
40. Gill Branston & Roy Stafford (1996) *The Media Student's Book*, Routledge, London, pp. 84-5.
41. Comment of a Health Visitor for Travellers, June 1997.
42. C. E. Simmons (1993) *The Los Angeles Rebellion: Class, Race and Misinformation*, p. 143, in H. R. Madhubuti (Editor) *Why LA Happened*, Third World Press, Chicago, pp. 141-155.
43. From *The Editor, the Guardian*, 21st April 2000, p. 6.
44. Wilson & Gutiérrez, 1995, p. 44.
45. A English Gypsy woman, aged 76, speaking in September 1998.