Representations of Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater Communities in higher education widening participation discourse

A critical review and agenda for future research

Final report

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Contents

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Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Available evidence points to considerable under-representation of Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater (GTRSB) communities[1] in higher education. After being historically overlooked, growing research, policy and practice attention is being devoted to improving access and participation in higher education for GTRSB students in the UK, and pockets of innovation in this area are emerging. However, confusion surrounding appropriate definition and targeting of these groups within widening participation initiatives forms a key barrier to inclusion.

This scoping project aimed to provide conceptual clarity around how GTRSB communities are currently defined and represented in widening participation discourse, and arrive at some common recommendations for future work in this field. This aim was addressed through four project strands: a systematic literature review; a documentary analysis of Access and Participation Plans for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25; an expert interview with an Office for Students (OfS) staff member (n=1); and a Delphi study with GTRSB students, widening participation specialists, and academics (n= 17).

A critical interpretive synthesis of the literature highlighted the dominance of an individual hero type discourse, which represents GTRSB students as 'trailblazers' and positions GTRSB participation in higher education as an atypical event, requiring personal triumph over adversity. This narrative recognises the determination of GTRSB students in overcoming barriers to higher education access and participation. However, it also serves to reinforce a falsity that that GTRSB culture is incompatible with academic success, and downplay the need for structural change; instead placing the onus on GTRSB students to act as 'role models' who 'give back' to the broader community.

Narratives of GTRSB participation in higher education as an unusual event are reflected in, and potentially reproduced through the lack of priority given to these groups in access and participation plans, with only 35% of plans making any reference to GTRSB communities. While a lack of data and small numbers of GTRSB students are identified as key barriers to progressing this work, without systemic action, barriers to self-identification and the low numbers of GTRSB students in higher education are likely only to be reproduced. Including GTRSB communities among the groups that higher education providers must assess their progress for in their Access and Participation Plans was a key recommendation emerging from consultation with experts in the interview and Delphi study.

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[1] Please see Mulcahy et al. (2017) (10) for a comprehensive definition and typology of all sub-groups contained under the GTRSB acronym. We acknowledge the problematic and contested nature of the GTRSB label, which is used as a container category for a hugely diverse set of groups. Indeed, we aim to unpack some of these complexities in this report.

Overall, the report highlights important and potentially troubling absences of GTRSB experiences in widening participation research, policy and practice, and sets out important avenues to address them.

Background

Universities are under increasing scrutiny in both public discourse (1) and the academy (2, 3) for their failure to robustly challenge the racism and inequality which pervades in these settings. At present, higher education institutions tend to adopt a collective approach to considering the experiences of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (4). Yet, the term 'BAME' is widely recognised as problematic for its reductive and homogenising qualities (5), and greater understanding is needed of the diversity of experiences and challenges faced between and within specific ethnic groups (4).

Although figures in this area must be treated with caution, since many GTRSB community members avoid self-identifying for fear of discrimination, evidence points to considerable under-representation of GTRSB communities in higher education. In 2014, only around 3-4% of GTRSB community members aged 18-30 were studying in higher education, compared to 43% of this age group in the overall population (6). A FOI request to UK universities for the year 2016/17 found only 169 self-identified Gypsy, Roma and Traveller higher education students (Traveller Movement 2018, cited in 7), and more recent analysis suggests access may be slowing (8). Research (9, 10) and media coverage (11) also highlights the isolation and exclusion felt by GTRSB higher education staff and students, due, in part, to the invisibility of GTRSB contributions within higher education environments and curricula.

After being historically overlooked (12), research attention to improving access and participation in higher education for GTRSB communities in the UK is now growing (10, 13), and initiatives to increase the representation of GTRSB communities are gaining momentum. A recent House of Lords roundtable event (7, 14) brought together GTRSB community members, higher education representatives, and policy makers to promote action on this issue, and a national 'Good Practice Pledge' (15) has since been launched, through which institutions can demonstrate and enact their commitment to supporting GTRSB communities into and within higher education. However, research and practice innovations in this area are still in their infancy, and work to address GTRSB inequalities in access to higher education is far from widespread across the sector as a whole (8). As such, there remains an "urgent need to provide national direction and impetus for widening access, supporting retention and enabling the achievement of GRT students in UK higher education" (16: 1).

As has been highlighted for under-represented groups more generally (2), confusion surrounding appropriate definition and targeting of GTRSB communities in widening participation schemes forms a key barrier to progress (9). Our previous work highlighted uncertainty around whether the needs and experiences of GTRSB communities should be separated out from those of other 'BAME' groups in widening participation policy for example (9). This is likely tied to the ambiguous position of GTRSB communities as White minority ethnic groups in relation to discourses of racism and racial equality (17), with this potentially undermining their inclusion in educational spheres (18). While higher education policies such as Athena Swan have primarily benefited White middle-class

women (19), GTRSB community members neither benefit from the same privilege enjoyed by the White British majority, nor visibility within initiatives to promote racial equality in higher education (20). Further definitional confusion stems from the diversity of groups encompassed under the GTRSB acronym, each with specific heritage and culture (21). Showmen and Boater communities often prefer to self-define as occupational rather than ethnic groups, and members of GTRSB communities who have been born and raised in the UK may instead, or additionally, identify as White British (20). The potential for variation in experience as ethnicity intersects with other identity positions must also be considered.

Aims and objectives

This scoping project aimed to provide conceptual clarity around how GTRSB communities are currently, and can best be represented in widening participation research, policy and practice. In doing so, it sought to develop common understanding around how the needs, experiences and hopes of these diverse groups can best be supported through further research and practice, and address the current lack of consensus which may undermine opportunity for shared vision and purpose in this emerging area.

These aims were achieved through the following research strands:

1) A critical interpretive synthesis of the literature on access and participation of GTRSB communities in higher education
2) A documentary analysis of current constructions of GTRSB communities in Access and Participation Plans for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25
3) An expert interview with a member of staff from Office for Students
4) Use of the Delphi technique to seek expert views on how GTRSB communities can best be considered in widening participation policies, as well as priorities for future research and practice in the field.

Research Questions

Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- How might constructions of GTRSB communities in widening participation discourse promote or hinder inclusion?
- How are GTRSB communities currently defined and targeted in university widening participation plans?
- How can GTRSB communities best be represented in future widening participation policy, research and practice in order to support their inclusion?

Methodology

The project utilised a combination of methods in order to maximise learning from the emerging evidence base, and which are discussed here in turn. Ethical approval for the study was granted by Northumbria Research Ethics Committee.

Systematic literature review

A systematic review of the literature was carried out on representations of GTRSB communities in relation higher education and widening participation. We focused the review on issues of representation as opposed to more pragmatic concerns of barriers and facilitators to access, since the latter have already been subject to review (10).

Searches of electronic databases (Web of Science, ASSIA, ERIC, British Education Index, Research into Higher Education Abstracts) were undertaken using the search string provided in Appendix 1. Grey literature[2] was retrieved though Google searches, using shortened combinations of the search terms and examining the first 50 results retrieved for each. Material was also located through hand-searches of relevant GTRSB and widening participation websites (Appendix 2), and requests for relevant publications via Twitter. Together these strategies helped ensure breadth and comprehensiveness of the review. While the exclusion of books and book chapters inevitably resulted in the omission of some relevant material, this was necessary in light of limitations in available resources. The otherwise extensive nature of searches, and large degree of overlap in authorship between excluded books/chapters and included articles/reports makes it unlikely that excluded material would substantially alter the synthesising argument presented. Nevertheless, we do not treat the conceptual framework developed here as static, but instead see this as something which can be built upon and extended where needed, through future research. A total of 834 records were retrieved and screened for their relevance using the inclusion and exclusion criteria presented in Appendix 3. A summary of the study selection process is presented in Figure 1. Following screening, 40 articles were included, and data extracted on their aims, sample, geographical setting, theoretical framework, study design, data collection methods, and findings. As our review explored the framings of GTRSB communities in relation to higher education and widening participation, we undertook a Critical Interpretive Synthesis (22) of the literature. This method incorporates attention to issues of representation and enables the problematisation of existing work in an area (23). In keeping with CIS, no formal quality assessment was undertaken based on study design or methodology, and judgements on quality were instead made throughout the synthesis process, based on the relevance and contribution of studies to the research question (22, 23).

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[2] Material published outside of formal academic channels, including reports, policy documents.

Figure 1: Study selection process
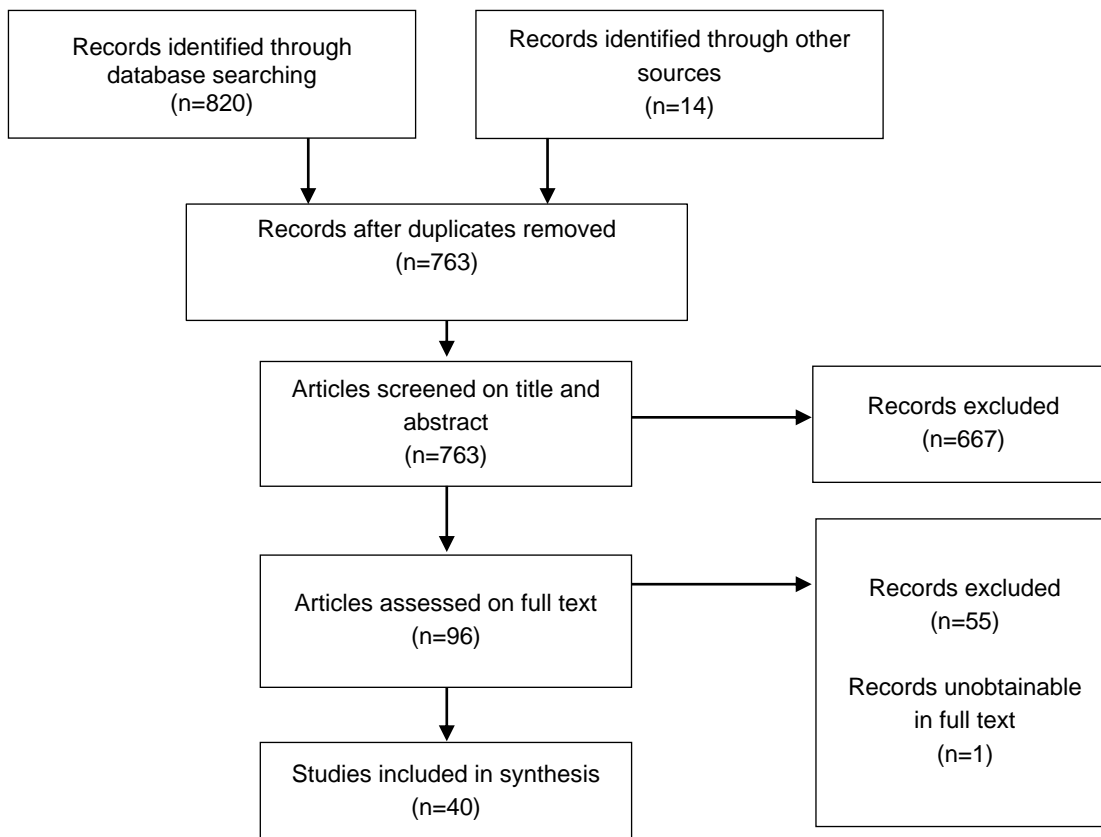
Analysis of Access and Participation Plans

A documentary analysis was undertaken of all UK higher education access and participation plans (publicly available through the OfS website) for the period 2020-21 to 2024-25. Analysis explored the extent to which GTRSB communities featured in plans, the constructions of GTRSB communities employed (including the extent to which GTRSB communities are considered alongside or separately from other BAME groups) and the discourses which are used to rationalise targeted action for GTRSB communities (or a lack thereof). This analysis therefore updates and build upon the review of Access and Participation Plans undertaken by Atherton (8) by scrutinising additional plans published following the release of this report and examining the discursive representations of GTRSB communities within these plans.

Expert interview

The review of Access and Participation Plans was complemented by a qualitative, semi-structured interview with a member OfS staff (n=1). The interview explored current and future strategy to promote equality of access, success and progress for GTRSB students; how universities can be encouraged to adopt good practice in this area; and priorities for future work. The small, purposefully selected sample reflects the early stage of initiatives to support higher education participation for GTRSB communities in the UK, as well as the small-scale nature of the research. This participant was identified and recruited through the research team's contacts, based on their work and interest in this field. The interview was recorded, and a listening analysis undertaken, which involves listening carefully to interview recordings and noting down all arguments and ideas raised, along with verbatim transcriptions of illustrative quotes. Data was analysed thematically (24) and findings triangulated with the results from other data collection strands.

Delphi study

A Delphi study (25, 26), was carried out to explore areas of uncertainty in regards to the appropriate representation of GTRSB communities in widening participation initiatives highlighted through earlier project strands, and to identify priorities for further research and practice in the field. The Delphi technique is a method for reaching 'consensus' on issues among subject experts (27). Typically, Delphi studies utilise various rounds of questionnaires in order to elicit opinions from stakeholders and encourage reflection and reconsideration of personal responses in light of those from the overall group (27). The Delphi method was therefore chosen for its strength in reaching common understanding among stakeholders, in a democratic manner (28).

As widening participation for GTRSB students is an emergent area, and at present, the numbers of GTRSB students who undertake higher education in the UK are low, there is a limited pool of agencies and individuals from which to recruit an expert panel. As such, and in keeping recommendations for sample size in Delphi studies (29-31), we aimed to recruit 15-25 participants to the Delphi study. Purposive sampling was used to recruit a panel of experts comprising GTRSB students/graduates, widening participation specialists, and academics. Invitations to participate were circulated through the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters into Higher Education Jiscmail network. Members of the network are at the forefront of work to promote access to higher education for GTRSB communities in the UK, and therefore formed an ideal pool from which to recruit for the study. Flyers inviting participation were also shared through the research team's Twitter accounts, and targeted invitation emails sent to known experts in the field.

Surveys were divided into two main sections. The first explored views about how GTRSB students should be defined and represented in Access and Participation Plans (and OfS guidance for their production). The second asked participants to identify and rank

priorities for future practice and research in the area. Two rounds of the Delphi study were completed. A third round was not required given the high degree of consensus achieved in the second questionnaire.

In the first round of the questionnaire, participants were asked to provide demographic information (including their ethnicity, gender, and current job role/organisation), as well as a brief summary of their interest/work in the field, in order to monitor the range of respondents. Participants were then asked to indicate their agreement / disagreement with a series of statements about how GTRSB communities should be represented in Access and Participation Plans, using a 5-point Likert scale ('strongly agree', 'agree', 'neither agree nor disagree', disagree', 'strongly disagree'). For each statement, a free-text box was provided, asking participants to explain why they agreed/disagreed or offer any further comments. This generated feedback that could be used to refine statements in later rounds. In this first questionnaire, participants were also asked to select their top 5 priorities from a list of ideas for future practice to widen higher education participation for GTRSB communities, and rank them in order of importance. Practice ideas were informed by the review of literature and Access and Participation Plans, as well as commitments outlined in the recently launched good practice pledge (15). Participants were also given a free text box and asked to volunteer any additional priorities, which were included and consulted on in the next questionnaire round. Future research priorities were generated through the literature review, as well as an open-ended question in the first questionnaire, which asked participants to list up to 5 priorities for future research. Making heavier use of open-ended questions in the first questionnaire enabled participants to retain some control over the direction of ideas explored through the Delphi study, and freely generate insights to be tested out in subsequent survey rounds (32).

In the second round of the questionnaire, only statements for which no consensus could be reached were consulted on again. Where this was the case, participants were provided with explanatory notes on percentages and common reasons for / against the statement across the group, and asked to indicate their agreement/disagreement with a new version which had been revised in light of free-text comments from Round 1. Participants were also asked to reflect again on their top 5 priorities for future practice, considering the overall ratings of items as well as new options suggested by the group. Participants were reminded of their previous selections, and it was made clear that they were free to either change their answers or to keep these the same. Suggestions for future research generated through open responses to the first questionnaire were collated and presented to participants (in no particular order) in the second questionnaire, with respondents asked to select their top 5 priorities and rank them in order of importance.

Qualitative, free text responses were analysed thematically, while participants' demographic characteristics and their responses to closed, Likert scale questions were analysed using descriptive statistics. Following Sumsion (33), consensus was judged as reached when over 70% of participants indicated that they agree/strongly agree or

disagree/strongly disagree with a statement. Practice and research priority items were given a weighted rank score (whereby first priority was given 5; second priority was given 4; third priority was given 3; fourth priority was given 2; and fifth priority was given 1) then ordered according to their total score.

Findings

Critical interpretive synthesis of the literature

The characteristics of included studies are summarised in Appendix 4. As shown, few studies addressed the higher education experiences of GTRSB students in the UK, with the majority focusing on other European contexts, and on Roma students in particular. There is a particular dearth of literature exploring higher education access and participation among Showmen and Boater communities. The research literature available is predominantly qualitative, and for the most part, reports on the perceptions of current GTRSB students or graduates of higher education, with the views of higher education staff and policy makers largely absent.

The critical interpretive synthesis of the literature revealed an overarching synthesising argument that GTRSB participation in higher education tends to be represented as an atypical and extraordinary event, requiring personal triumph over adversity. This narrative is important in recognising the multitude of barriers to higher education access faced by GTRSB communities. However, it can also reproduce polarised understandings and identity positions which do not reflect lived realities, and place unrealistic demands and additional pressure on GTRSB students. Such extreme representations may also reinforce the 'otherness' of GTRSB students who do participate in higher education, denying the mundane, everyday but also complex, heterogeneous and shifting experiences of GTRSB students.

This overarching argument was built from three core synthetic constructs generated through the synthesis, each supported with sub-themes or second-order constructs identified in the literature, and focusing on a key dilemma or tension in regards to the representation of GTRSB higher education students (Table 1). These three core constructs are discussed now in turn.

A 'trade-off' in identity

The construct of a 'trade-off' in identity refers to tensions which arise for GTRSB students due to a tendency for GTRSB culture to be perceived as incompatible with academic success (7-10, 14, 34-42). The supposed opposition between GTRSB culture and education was related to presentations of gender norms within the literature, with GTRSB women suggested as needing to balance a desire to pursue higher education with expectations in regards to marriage, family responsibilities and domestic work for example (8, 10, 35-37, 42-45). Gendered expectations were also argued as influential over the occupations that GTRSB young men and women select (44, 46), and the routes they are directed to by professionals (9, 10). In the 'trade-off' narrative, educational progression is often associated with some loss of GTRSB cultural identity (7, 38, 39, 45, 47-50), and success explained by individuals 'not really being Roma', 'not being like other Roma' (38: 202) or 'exceptional for a Roma' (7: 5). Where aspirations to progress to

higher education are evident, this is often couched in terms of a modernisation process (44), potentially reinforcing culturally imperialist perspectives (51). The construct also highlights the liminal position created for GTRSB students, graduates and academics, who are neither treated as 'authentic' members of their communities, nor more than temporarily accepted outsiders within higher education environments (10, 40, 49-51). This position can lead to pressure on GTRSB students and academics to disclose their identity in order to counteract historical and contemporary examples of racism, stereotyping and 'Othering' (6, 7, 9, 36, 40, 49, 52-57) or alternatively, decisions to hide one's ethnicity (7, 9, 14, 41, 45, 49, 50, 52, 54, 55).

GTRSB students as 'trailblazers'

The construct which we have termed 'GTRSB students as trailblazers' refers to the individual hero type narrative applied to GTRSB communities who have succeeded in higher education. This encompasses tensions between individual and collective responsibility for education identified in the literature (51). Emphasis is often placed on personal determination and raising the educational 'aspirations' of GTRSB young people and their families (10, 36, 42, 44, 46, 51, 58, 59). GTRSB students who do go on to undertake higher education often find themselves balancing personal advancement with the additional labour that stems from pressure to 'give back' to the wider community (6, 7, 9, 10, 34, 37-40, 46, 47, 49, 51, 53, 60-62). While celebrating the achievements of GTRSB students, the trailblazer narrative downplays the role of systemic and structural support mechanisms, instead placing the onus on key 'role models' or 'champions' to instigate change. The concept of a 'Roma elite'[3], and associated affirmative action and international mobility programmes have been similarly critiqued on the grounds of inclusivity, with these opportunities more often involving younger women (6), focusing predominantly on the arts, humanities and social sciences as opposed STEM fields of study (6, 63), and less accessible to Roma living in poverty or disadvantage (37, 41, 48, 56, 62). The explicit focus in much of the literature on exploring success stories, and the absence of research into the experiences of GTRSB community members who chose not to undertake further education, or for whom barriers have continued to prevent their participation, serves to further minimise other representations, and limit understanding of the support that GTRSB individuals would find beneficial.

Identity as complex and negotiated

This construct provides a more nuanced perspective, which describes a process of active negotiation by GTRSB students, between externally imparted and individually chosen identities. It challenges polarised representations detailed above, suggesting that narratives of personal aspiration are not necessarily opposed to arguments for structural change, but can be mobilised to challenge systemic inequality (51). It also shows that GTRSB students combine aspects of their culture and position as higher education

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[3] A movement which aims to grow a critical mass of Roma professionals who can act as advocates, role models and a support network for the wider community

students when constructing their identities (34, 38, 40, 54, 55, 64) and points to the importance of both bonding and bridging ties (57, 65). This construct therefore conceives of identity as complex, intersectional, and fluid rather than fixed or one-dimensional (6, 7, 37, 42, 43, 45, 55, 58, 64) and accommodates the more mundane and everyday experiences of GTRSB students(9).

Table 1: Summary of the overarching synthesising argument, mapped onto core constructs and themes identified in the literature

Overarching synthesising argument	Core constructs addressing key tensions/dilemmas in representation of GTRSB community members	Themes / second-order constructs coded in papers
Participation of GTRSB students in higher education is treated as an unusual event, requiring a personal and dramatic triumph over circumstances or adversity	**A 'trade-off' in identity** Addresses the tendency for GTRSB culture to be perceived as incompatible with academic success. Represents GTRSB higher education students as needing to 'break free' from community constraints, as no longer a 'true' or 'authentic' GTRSB community member, and as temporarily accepted outsiders in higher education settings	GTRSB culture opposed to higher education
		Gender and family roles
		Countering racist stereotypes
	GTRSB students as 'trailblazers' Addresses the tension between personal achievement and collective responsibility Represents GTRSB students as pioneers, 'elite', indebted	Individual motivation and 'aspiration'
		Giving back to the community
		The trouble with a Roma elite
	Identity as complex and negotiated Describes how GTRSB students work between binary representations Accommodates more ordinary and mundane aspects of GTRSB experiences and avoids homogenisation	Identity as negotiated

Analysis of Access and Participation Plans

Published Access and Participation Plans for the period 2020-21 2024-25 were available for 245 of the providers listed on the OfS website. In their guidance for the production of Access and Participation Plans, OfS includes GTRSB communities in their definition of under-represented groups (66). However, GTRSB communities are separated out from those groups considered "specifically, for access and participation plans" (p.17) and are instead referred to (together with carers, people estranged from their families, refugees and children of military families) as "a wider set of student groups…that *can be* [emphasis added] addressed in access and participation plans" (p.18). As such, there is an apparent framing within this guidance, of GTRSB inclusion in Access and Participation Plans as optional. This also apparent where GTRSB communities are not included among the groups that, as a minimum, providers must assess their performance for, but are instead listed as groups that institutions '*may* [emphasis added] include in their assessment' (p.22).

Given this positioning of GTRSB students, it is perhaps unsurprising that only 86 of the 245 plans reviewed (35%) make any reference GTRSB communities. In keeping with OfS framings, assessment of progress for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities is considered, in the vast majority of plans, under an amalgamated section on 'other groups who experience barriers in higher education'. There also appears to be some ambiguity in regard to the treatment of GTRSB communities as ethnic or 'other' groups in plans. Only 7% of plans refer to GTRSB communities as ethnic groups, and 20% do not employ appropriate capitalisation given the recognised status of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller ethnicity. The vast majority of plans treat Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as a homogeneous group, while some refer only to certain GTRSB groups, without providing any rationale. Two plans seem to conflate the needs of GTRSB communities with other groups, stating an intention to apply learning and approaches taken for care experienced students to other 'disrupted education' groups (including GTRSB students), but again, without providing insight into the reasons these groups were judged to have similar needs.

Of the 86 plans that do make reference to GTRSB communities, only 14 (16%) name GTRSB communities explicitly as target groups, though a slightly greater proportion (20%) outline some activities to support GTRSB students. The extent of targeted action for GTRSB communities varied across plans. Commitments were limited to fairly generic intentions to explore opportunities and good practice for working with GTRSB communities in 12 Access and Participation Plans. Where outlined, specific actions related most commonly to outreach or other initiatives to facilitate access (14 plans), and to the inclusion of GTRSB communities in financial support schemes (7 plans). Two plans described activities to support successful transition to higher education, through reviewing induction processes for example. Access and Participation Plans for 11 institutions noted their intentions to provide individual support to students who disclose GTRSB ethnicity. Broader work to raise the visibility of GTRSB students within higher

education environments, for instance, through educating Higher Education staff (3 plans) and reviewing curriculum materials (2 plans) was reported far less frequently.

Three discourses were identified as underpinning a lack of systemic action to promote GTRSB participation in higher education and are discussed here in turn.

Discourse 1: 'We don't have enough data'

As found by Atherton (8), references to GTRSB communities in Access and Participation Plans focus predominantly on limitations in the data pertaining to these groups, with this including gaps in monitoring as well as the difficulty undertaking meaningful analysis given low numbers of GTRSB students. These limitations are suggested as inhibiting robust assessments of institutional performance for GTRSB students and the development of numerical targets for these student groups. The presentation of data as an important prerequisite for action is potentially problematic however, since this may limit efforts to promote access for GTRSB students and in turn hinder the generation of evidence on access, success, and progress for these groups. This narrative also adheres to a restricted definition of 'data', tending to privilege quantitative analysis of numerical data and overlooking alternatives such as qualitative or more creative approaches to data collection and analysis. It is important to acknowledge however, that there was some variation in how this discourse was enacted within plans, and in the extent to which data was treated as necessary for the implementation of targets and initiatives for GTRSB communities. Indeed, in the absence of local data, a few plans make use of broader evidence on the educational inequalities experienced by GTRSB communities in order to inform judgements about the support which should be put in place.

Discourse 2: 'GTRSB communities are not 'major' under-represented groups'

In keeping with the above discussion on the placement of GTRSB communities in guidance for Access and Participation Plans, a discourse that GTRSB communities are not among the 'major' or 'main' under-represented groups which should be prioritised, was evident across plans. This discourse was underpinned by arguments about the limited numbers of GTRSB community members in institutions or their surrounding area, and/or the small size of organisations and their available resources. However, as with discourses on the lack of data, this narrative may serve to reproduce low access rates for GTRSB students, since without targeted action, the numbers of GTRSB higher education students will remain low. This discourse also fails to recognise that GTRSB students may move across geographical regions to study. Finally, a narrow and predominantly numerical view of representation was also evident here, neglecting attention to broader opportunities to promote inclusion (regardless of current GTRSB students), such as incorporating attention to GTRSB cultures and histories within the curriculum and anti-racism training for staff, students and future professionals.

Discourse 3: 'We will provide individualised support where students self-identify'

A third discourse evident within plans sought to balance consideration of resources with the need to address inequalities in higher education by providing individual support to students who disclose GTRSB ethnicity. While this strategy has benefits in ensuring targeted and tailored support, approaches that make access to support conditional on disclosure of GTRSB ethnicity may increase pressure on students to ascribe to this identity position, and exclude those who do not feel comfortable self-identifying. Very few plans made reference to the reasons that GTRSB students may prefer not to disclose their ethnicity, including to avoid experiencing racism and discrimination. This approach also concentrates attention on existing students, and the success and progression stages of the student lifecycle, and is less useful in promoting access for GTRSB students. The absence of more systemic approaches to promoting a welcoming and inclusive environment for GTRSB students at all stages of the student lifecycle will likely contribute to the invisibility of GTRSB community members in higher education, with this in turn feeding above narratives that a lack of support is required due to low numbers of GTRSB identified students.

Expert interview

The expert interview with a key stakeholder from OfS identified a number of challenges in relation to work to promote access and participation for GTRSB groups, as well as a potential levers for change, which are discussed below. Key themes are highlighted in bold.

Challenges

The breadth of work required to address educational inequalities was identified as a key challenge, with **multiple and competing priorities** necessitating difficult decisions about how best to distribute available resources between groups. The allocation of resources was not only based on potential impact, but is also heavily influenced by **Government agendas.** In accordance with the 'levelling up' agenda, Government policy (and associated guidance provided to OfS) was suggested as prioritising geographical inequalities. This emphasis, coupled with shifts in the Government's stance towards equality and protected characteristics was viewed as potentially limiting the **visibility of GTRSB communities relative to other groups** (with 'White working-class' communities mentioned in particular) in widening participation work. More generally, working in uncertain and shifting landscapes was also identified as a challenge, with plans contingent on changes to funding arrangements, and the organisation of access and participation regimes at the level of Government.

As was highlighted in the analysis of Access and Participation Plans, **small numbers and the emergent nature of knowledge** around how best to support GTRSB students were identified as further barriers to the progression of work in this area. Degrees of progress were anticipated to vary geographically, with those institutions who are bigger or who have a greater number of GTRSB students expected to advance this agenda more quickly.

Levers for change

The **regulation of higher education institutions through Access and Participation Plans** was suggested as one mechanism through which greater action on GTRSB inequalities could be encouraged. At present however, expectations on institutions are limited to improving understanding of GTRSB groups, rather than requiring organisations to set and work toward specific targets for GTRSB students. The rationale for including GTRSB students as groups that higher education institutions *can*, but do not necessarily *have* to assess their performance for in APPs was again, suggested to stem from the currently limited data and numbers of GTRSB students. However, this was felt to have potential to change, as understanding and evidence improves over time. The position of GTRSB students was contrasted with that of care experienced students for instance. The core requirement that institutions assess their performance for care experienced students in plans (together with greater Government support) was felt to be influential in greater strides to improve outcomes for this group, and it was suggested that 'there could be a

case over time for GTRSB students to move into that top category' of groups that institutions must consider.

Regional and national collaboration was identified as important given the small numbers of GTRSB higher education students currently. UniConnect partnerships in areas with larger populations of GTRSB communities were suggested as crucial in driving forward work in this area and in producing learning on good practice that can then be shared with the sector overall. The development and publication of practice guidelines, as well as case studies of successful work by OfS (including but not limited to that undertaken by UniConnect partnerships) was one way of sharing learning and best practice. Organisations such as the TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education) What Works Centre and HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) were also identified as key parties in generating and improving national data and evidence in this area.

A need to **raise awareness about inequalities in GTRSB higher education access** was also highlighted, with action suggested as required across multiple spheres of influence, including OfS, the Government (which is in turn influenced by parliament and the media), the higher education sector and students. Momentum and interest were felt to be growing however, with the House of Commons event and the GTRSB into higher education Good Practice Pledge cited as examples of initiatives that are helping to achieve buy-in across the sector and which further work should continue to build upon. Involving the new director of OfS in this work was identified as important, and **student voices and ambassadors** were also felt to play a powerful role in developing the case for action, by sharing live stories and case studies about their experiences.

Delphi study

Respondent demographics

A total of 17 experts were recruited to the Delphi study, with diversity reflected across the panel according to gender, ethnicity, and job role (Table 2). Most respondents were women (76.5%) and defined their ethnicity as White British or English (52.9%). However, 29.4% participants were of GTRSB ethnicity or described dual GTRSB and other heritage, and 11.8% described themselves as mixed (non-GTRSB) heritage. The majority of participants worked in higher education, in a variety of occupations, including academic (52.9%), widening participation (29.4%) and student service (5.9%) roles. One participant worked in an NGO and one in a further education college. As such, participants contributed a range of expertise, combining academic, equality and diversity, widening participation and experiential perspectives. Of the 17 participants recruited, 15 completed both rounds of the Delphi study (88.2% response rate), with similar distributions across rounds according to gender, ethnicity, and job role (Table 2).

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of Delphi respondents

	Round 1 (n=17)	Round 2 (n=15)
Gender		
Men	4 (23.5%)	3 (20.0%)
Women	13 (76.5%)	12 (80.0%)
Ethnicity		
White British or English	8 (47.1%)	7 (46.7%)
GTRSB or dual GTSRB and other heritage	7 (41.2%)	6 (40.0%)
Mixed heritage (non-GTRSB)	2 (11.8%)	2 (13.3%)
Job role		
HR - Academic	9 (52.9%)	8 (53.3%)
Higher education - Widening participation	5 (29.4%)	5 (33.3%)
Higher education - Student services	1 (5.9%)	1 (6.7%)
Further education	1 (5.9%)	1 (6.7%)
NGO	1 (5.9%)	0 (0%)

Representing GTRSB communities in Access and Participation Plans

Only one of the statements about how GTRSB students should be represented in APPs did not reach consensus (Appendix 5) in the first round of the Delphi study and was therefore consulted on again in the second questionnaire.

There was complete consensus in the first round of the Delphi study that GTRSB students should be included among groups that higher education Access and Participation plans must assess their performance for (Statement 1). Statements two, three and seven addressed issues regarding the treatment of GTRSB as ethnic or 'other' groups within plans. The panel indicated broad agreement (76.5%) that GTRSB communities should be treated as ethnic groups within plans (Statement 2), albeit with some qualification about the extent to which this applies to all groups encompassed under the GTRSB acronym. While Romany Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller Communities are recognised minority ethnic groups, participants suggested a need for further consultation with Showmen, Boater and New Traveller communities around how they wish to be identified. There was also fairly strong agreement (70.6%) that referring to GTRSB students as 'other groups' in Access and Participation Plans could be problematic (Statement 3). While participants identified potential commonalities in the challenges experienced by GTRSB communities and other under-represented groups, there was also broad agreement that GTRSB communities should be treated as distinct from other student groups (such as care experienced students) in Access and Participation Plans (Statement 7).

The Delphi panel were asked for their views on how the diversity of GTRSB communities can best be represented in APPs (Statements 4, 5 and 6). Consensus was reached in favour of expanding the overarching OfS label 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities' to explicitly include Showmen and Boater communities (Statement 4). The only statement not to reach consensus in the first round of the questionnaire was Statement 5; that GTRSB communities should be discussed together under one heading in Access and Participation Plans. Participants raised concerns that this would prevent work from being tailored to the specific circumstances of different groups. They identified a need to avoid erasing the distinct identities of groups (and individuals within them), while also bearing in mind the degree of complexity that can realistically be accommodated in plans and the potential to capitalise on 'critical mass' and foster solidarity across groups. As a result, Statement 5 was revised and subsequently approved (100% agreed or strongly agreed) as follows: "If GTRSB communities are to be considered together under one heading in Access and Participation Plans, this must be with explicit attention to the potential for differences and similarities within and across groups". Connected with this issue, consensus was reached in the first round of the survey that higher education institutions should be specific about the particular GTRSB groups that they are working (or not working) with in their Access and Participation Plans (Statement 6). Reasons for agreement focused on avoiding blanket approaches, producing greater granularity of knowledge around what works for distinct communities, and ensuring transparency in how far institutions are addressing the needs and experiences of all GTRSB groups.

Suggested categories for data monitoring purposes

Participants were asked to list the categories that should, ideally, be used for purposes of data collection and monitoring, in order that GTRSB students can appropriately disclose their identity. Again, participants commented on the challenges in attending to the complexity and diversity in groups encompassed under the GTRSB acronym and the variations in terminology used, with one person describing this as a 'minefield'. Participants highlighted the importance of offering categories which reflect the terminology used by specific sub-groups themselves (e.g. Romanichal, Kale, Mincier, Nawkin) wherever possible. Some suggested the use of a free text box (as in the US census) which allows people to self-define their ethnicity, and which can be regularly reviewed and used to expand or modify options as needed. The use of very specific categories during the collection of data was suggested as enabling identification of bespoke needs, with the option of aggregating this data later, where required. While the range of options and terms suggested by participants in the Delphi study are listed in Box 1, these are not necessarily exhaustive, and further research and consultation with GTRSB communities was felt necessary in order to understand and delineate the most appropriate self-defining terms.

Box 1 Suggested categories and terminology for disclosing GTRSB identity and specific

Roma (e.g. Kalderesh, Domari)

Romany/English Gypsy (e.g. Romanichal)

Travellers of Irish heritage (e.g. Irish, Minceir, Pavee)

Scottish Gypsies or Travellers (e.g. Nawkin)

Welsh Gypsies or Travellers (e.g. Kale)

Showmen (e.g. Showman, Showwoman, Showpeople, Circus Showmen, Fairground Showmen, Fairground Travellers)

Boaters/bargees/live aboard boaters

New Travellers

Priorities for practice

There was a high degree of consistency across survey rounds in the priorities for practice rated most highly by participants (Appendix 6). The provision of financial support and scholarships for GTRSB students was rated top in both surveys. A new item suggested by participants in the first survey ('addressing barriers earlier on, in the years before entry/during school') was rated second priority in the second and final survey round, and the item on celebrating and promoting role models increased in priority to be ranked fifth. Strong support was evident for outreach activities, tailored support for GTRSB identified students, and embedding understanding of GTRSB culture and contributions into the curriculum, with these items among the top-five rated items in both surveys.

Participants commented on their difficulty in selecting only five practice areas from a long list of actions which were all felt necessary for addressing the educational inequalities experienced by GTRSB communities. Some explicitly suggested that they had prioritised actions targeted at the access stage of the student lifecycle which they felt would have the most immediate impact. However, participants also highlighted the inter-related nature of many of the priorities listed, and pointed to a need for sustainable, long-term support which is not reliant on individuals. A cross-regional/institutional approach was also identified as important. While financial support and scholarships were widely agreed upon as a priority, participants also suggested that the provision of financial support would need to be very clearly delineated in practice, to ensure GTRSB communities benefit from these initiatives, and cautioned that this support must be balanced against its propensity to Other.

Priorities for research

Priorities for future research are presented in Appendix 7 (in descending order of priority according to their weighted ranking score in the second survey round). Emphasis on the early stages of the student lifecycle were again evident here, with 'research into the barriers and facilitators to retention of GTRSB young people during secondary school and the transition to further and higher education' named as the top priority by participants. This was followed by research to gain deeper understanding of GTRSB student experiences; data on GTRSB student numbers; evaluation of current best practice in widening participation for GTRSB students; and longitudinal research into educational experiences and outcomes for GTRSB students following participation in higher education. As for practice priorities, participants commented in their free text responses on the difficulty in selecting from such a long list of research topics which were all felt to be beneficial, particularly given the limited amount of research in the field. Priorities identified by participants didn't always mirror gaps in research highlighted through the literature review, with research into the views and attitudes of higher education staff prioritised less often by participants for example. Participants reflected on the need to learn from parallel research into the school experiences of GTRSB students and avoid continually re-stating already well-established problems, while also recognising the need for further research to achieve more granular understandings of GTRSB experiences. This should include studies to identify who transitions/does not transition to higher education and why, and to explore which parts of higher education are accessed by GTRSB students and staff, and which remain out of reach.

Conclusions and recommendations

Study strengths and limitations

This was a relatively small-scale study and as such, some limitations must be borne in mind. There is a slight possibility that some articles were missed through searches, and due to restrictions in available resources, books and book chapters were omitted from the review. The sample size for the Delphi study is small (albeit in keeping with recommendations), and there was only scope to carry out one interview with a member of OfS staff. Nevertheless, the study has involved meticulous analysis of a comprehensive and substantial body of texts in the area of widening higher education for GTRSB communities, as well as consultation with stakeholders bringing a range of expertise.

The extent to which consensus is achievable, considering the complexity and diversity of groups contained under the GTRSB heading was a key consideration in conducting the Delphi study. While the research has helped to identify some general recommendations that hold across the diversity of groups (e.g. mandating the inclusion of GTRSB students in Access and Participation Plans), other issues (e.g. the categorisation of GTRSB communities as ethnic groups) were (predictably), more nuanced and came with qualifications. As such, findings around how GTRSB groups can best be included in plans should be read as providing insights which help providers grapple with these complexities, as work in this area evolves, as opposed to offering definitive, 'one-size fits all' solutions. In addition, the incorporation of GTRSB students in plans is by no means claimed to be sufficient as a measure of inclusion. We consider the position of GTRSB communities in plans as important however, since processes of Othering can be understood as encoded within, and reproduced through our systems of language, representation, and classification (67). Together with the critical interpretive synthesis, this analysis therefore contributes understanding to the oft-overlooked issue of how group subjectivities are constructed in the widening participation field (41) but which should be read alongside concrete recommendations for action to promote access, success and progress for GTRSB communities described both here and elsewhere.

Summary of main findings

- Dominant narratives unearthed through the critical interpretive synthesis, of GTRSB higher education participation as an atypical event, are reflected in, and potentially reproduced through the relative absence of these groups in higher education Access and Participation Plans.

- Approaches to the definition and targeting of GTRSB groups in Access and Participation Plans are hugely varied, confused and piecemeal across the sector overall. Access and Participation Plans adhere to narrow and predominantly numerical notions of representation, with the presentation of data and student

numbers as pre-requisites to action likely entrenching inactivity and reinforcing the exclusion of GTRSB communities.

- Ambiguity anticipated in regards to the position of GTRSB communities as ethnic or other groups in widening participation work were indeed apparent in project findings. There was very little recognition within Access and Participation Plans that some GTRSB communities are protected minority ethnic groups, and GTRSB communities were acknowledged in the stakeholder interview as lacking visibility relative to 'White working-class' communities in current policy.

- Strong support was evident in the Delphi study for the inclusion of GTRSB groups among the groups that higher education providers must assess their performance for in APPs.

- The highest rated practice and research priorities focused on addressing barriers early on, during school years and the transition to further and higher education, as well as on the access stage of the student lifecycle. However, participants commented that all research and practice priorities consulted upon were important, highlighting the need for wholescale action, addressing structural, institutional and personal obstacles, as well as spanning all phases of the student journey.

Recommendations for policy

- OfS guidance for the production of Access and Participation Plans should include GTRSB groups among the groups that providers *must* assess their performance for.

- The label 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities' should be expanded in OfS guidance to include Showmen and Boater communities, thereby mirroring those groups encompassed in the National Good Practice Pledge in the area.

- GTRSB communities should receive explicit consideration within the renewed emphasis on pre-16 attainment following the change in Directorship for Fair Access and Participation at OfS (68).

Recommendations for practice

- Higher education providers should give greater consideration to GTRSB groups in their widening participation policies and practices, including within Access and Participation Plans.

- The National Good Practice Pledge on supporting GTRSB students into and within higher education should continue to be supported as a mechanism for achieving buy in on this issue across the sector as a whole.

- Training and resources are needed to increase understanding of the complexity and diversity of groups included under the GTRSB acronym among higher education widening participation teams.

- Higher education institutions should be specific about the particular GTRSB groups that they are working (or not working) with in their Access and Participation Plans, and the reasons for these decisions.

- Blanket assumptions must be avoided, and consideration given to the varied experiences within and between GTRSB groups. Recognition of distinct circumstances must be balanced against the potential to Other groups, and the risk, in the words of one participant, that we 'replace a university experience with a GTRSB university experience'.

- Institutions should ensure that appropriate options are provided for GTRSB students to disclose their ethnicity, in order to increase data on student access and outcomes. Data categories should be broken down as far as possible to reflect the distinct sub-groups encompassed under the GTRSB acronym (see page 23 for suggestions), and then aggregated later where needed. Wherever possible, categories should also employ the terminology used by GTRSB groups themselves and data monitoring processes should be regularly reviewed and updated in consultation with GTRSB groups, and as understanding in this area develops.

- Wider definitions of 'data' could also be utilised by institutions, with qualitative and creative approaches helping to inform actions, particularly when quantitative data is limited.

- Small numbers and limitations in data on GTRSB students are recognised to create challenges. However, this should not be viewed as a pre-requisite to action. Providers should make use of broader opportunities to promote inclusion which are possible regardless of current GTRSB students, including incorporating attention to GTRSB cultures and histories within the curriculum and providing anti-racism training for staff, students and future professionals.

- The provision of individualised support to GTRSB identified students was one potential strategy in contexts where numbers are small, and resources limited. However, care is needed with this approach to avoid patronising or singling out students by definition of their ethnicity. Ideally, any such action should also be accompanied by actions to promote access.

- Regional collaboration should be supported (through UniConnect partnerships for example) in order to drive forward good practice innovations in this area.

- Action is needed early on, to address barriers to attainment in school years and outreach work to support access and transition to higher education.

- Financial support and scholarships are important in facilitating access. These schemes should be offered without any conditionality (e.g. pressure to pay forward the support received to the broader community) and cover a broad range of subjects.

- Role models can play an important role in encouraging uptake of higher education, but no pressure should be placed on GTRSB students to disclose their ethnicity and act in this capacity. Care should be taken to ensure that any such activities do not interfere with individuals' own study and career plans, and appropriate reimbursement should be provided for this work. The use of role models should sit within wider systemic and structural work to alleviate barriers for GTRSB students.

Recommendations for further research

Future research avenues include:

- Research into GTRSB widening participation in a UK context, and with a broader range of groups (addressing the paucity of research with Showmen and Boater Communities in particular).

- The barriers and facilitators to retention of GTRSB young people during secondary school and the transition to further and higher education. This should include more granular understanding of who does/does not transition, which parts of higher education are accessed by GTRSB students, and which remain out of reach.

- In depth exploration of GTRSB student experiences into and through higher education (graduate and postgraduate).

- Evaluation of current best practice in widening participation for GTRSB students; what has and hasn't been successful.

- Long-term educational experiences and outcomes for GTRSB students (e.g. what GTRSB students go on to do after higher education and the difference this has made)

- Research which looks not only at higher education 'success stories' but explores the range of educational pathways undertaken by GTRSB students (including careers advanced outside of higher education, the experiences of those who chose not to undertake higher education, and the experiences of those for whom barriers ultimately prevented access or progression).

- The TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education) What Works Centre and HEAT (Higher Education Access Tracker) could make key contributions to generating and improving national data and evidence in this area.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Search string used in electronic databases

Gypsy OR Gipsy OR Gypsies OR Gipsies OR Traveller OR Travellers OR Romani OR Romany OR Roma OR Showpeople OR Showperson OR Showmen OR Bargee OR Boat dweller OR boat-dweller OR "New Traveller" OR "New Travellers" OR "New Age Traveller" OR "New Age Travellers" OR "Occupational Traveller" OR "Occupational Travellers" OR "Traveller Community" OR "GRT Community"

AND

"Widening participation" OR "widening access" OR "higher education" OR "further education" OR college OR university OR undergraduate OR postgraduate OR apprenticeship OR apprentice* OR intern* OR off-rolling OR distance learning

Appendix 2: List of websites searched

1. ACERT (Advisory Council for the Education of Romany and other Travellers
2. Travelling Ahead
3. Travellers Times
4. Friends Families and Travellers
5. The Traveller Movement
6. Leeds GATE
7. GATE Herts
8. Open Society Foundations
9. Council of Europe
10. European Roma Rights Centre
11. Society for Research into Higher Education
12. Office for Students
13. NEON
14. NCOP
15. Higher Education Academy

Appendix 3: Inclusion and exclusion criteria for the review

Include	Exclude
Studies focusing on any GTRSB group (including Roma, Irish Travellers, Scottish Gypsy-Travellers, Welsh Gypsy-Travellers, Romany Gypsies, Showmen, Boat Dwellers, and New Travellers)	Studies which do not address the needs or experiences of GTRSB communities
Studies focused on access to, and support needs and experiences during higher or further education study	Studies focused solely on primary or secondary education
Primary research studies (using any design), as well as theoretical and opinion pieces, and anecdotal reports of practice which contribute understanding of how GTRSB widening participation is framed	Material which does not contribute understanding of how GTRSB widening participation is framed
Studies published in any country	N/A
Studies published in any year	N/A
Articles published in English	Articles not written in English

Appendix 4: Characteristics of included studies

Author/Date	Title	Geographical context	GTRSB communities included	Study design	Themes
Atherton (8)	More than luck: enabling access and success in Higher Education for Gypsy, Romany and Traveller (GRT) Communities	UK	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities	Mixed methods	A 'trade-off' in identity
Alexiadou (47)	Framing education policies and transitions of Roma students in Europe	Europe	Roma	Qualitative	GTRSB students as Trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Alexiadou and Norberg (48)	Roma, Education, and Higher Education policies: The International Context & and the Case of Sweden	Mixed geographical contexts	Roma	Review of policy approaches	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Boneta et al. (44)	ROMA PARENTS AND CHILDREN ON EDUCATION – A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS: "They have to finish school because the rules are strongly changing with us, too"	Croatia	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers

Breen (52)	An "Other" Perspective: Emancipation in Alterity?	Ireland	Irish Travellers	Theoretical / commentary piece	A 'trade-off' in identity
Brooks et al. (53)	Engaging with Decolonisation, Tackling Antigypsyism: Lessons from Teaching Romani Studies at the Central European University in Hungary	Hungary	Roma	Theoretical / commentary piece	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Brüggemann (34)	Romani culture and academic success: arguments against the belief in a contradiction	Spain	Gitanos	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Centre for Higher Education and Equity Research (CHEER) (43)	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller: the UK's Forgotten Higher Education Minority: A response to the Commons Select Committee on Tackling Inequalities faced by Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.	UK	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities	Policy paper	A 'trade-off' in identity Identity as complex and negotiated
Danvers (6)	Supporting Roma Students in Higher Education: Briefing Report on Higher Education, Internationalisation and Roma in the UK	UK and Europe	Roma	Documentary analysis and literature review	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated

Doyle and Hearne (35)	An Exploration of Female Travellers' Experiences of Guidance Counselling in Adult Education	Ireland	Irish Travellers	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity
Forster and Gallagher (9)	Exploring how Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students can best be supported to participate and thrive in higher education	UK	Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen communities	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Garaz (62)	Helping the Marginalised or Supporting the Elite? Affirmative Action as a Tool for Increasing Access to Higher Education for Ethnic Roma	Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, and Turkey	Roma	Quantitative	GTRSB students as trailblazers
Garaz and Torotcoi (63)	Increasing Access to Higher Education and the Reproduction of Social Inequalities: The Case of Roma University	Eastern and Southeastern Europe	Roma	Quantitative	GTRSB students as trailblazers
Gkofa (40)	Being Roma – being Greek: academically successful Greek Romas' identity constructions	Greece	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers

					Identity as complex and negotiated
Gkofa (58)	Promoting Social Justice and Enhancing Educational Success: Suggestions from Twenty Educationally Successful Roma in Greece	Greece	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Goenechea et al. (54)	Who I am and who I share it with. Roma university students between invisibility and empowerment	Spain	Roma	Mixed methods	A 'trade-off' in identity Identity as complex and negotiated
Gornall (60)	The Kerry Travellers' Development Project	Ireland	Irish Travellers	Description of educational initiative	GTRSB students as trailblazers
Greenfields (46)	A Good Job for a Traveller? Exploring Gypsy and Travellers' Perceptions of Health and Social Care Careers: Barriers and Solutions to Recruitment, Training and Retention of Social Care Students	UK	Romany Gypsies, Irish Travellers, New Travellers and Showmen	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Greenfields (7)	Report of a Roundtable Meeting on Access to Higher Education for members of Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) communities. 10 September 2019, House of Lords	N/A	Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater communities	Policy paper	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers

					Identity as complex and negotiated
Greenfields (14)	Roundtable on Gypsy, Traveller and Roma (GTR) Communities in Higher Education, 10 September 2019. BRIEFING NOTE	N/A	Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boater communities	Policy paper	A 'trade-off' in identity
Hinton-Smith et al. (51)	Roma women's higher education participation: whose responsibility?	Mixed geographical contexts	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Hinton-Smith and Padilla-Carmona (49)	Roma university students in Spain and Central and Eastern Europe: Exploring participation and identity in contrasting international contexts	Central and Eastern Europe and Spain	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Katz (57)	Emerging from the Cocoon of Romani Pride: The First Graduates of the Gandhi Secondary School in Hungary	Hungary	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity Identity as complex and negotiated
LiNCHigher	Widening Access to Higher Education for GRT communities – LiNCHigher and Lincolnshire Traveller Initiative	UK	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities	Description of educational initiatives	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers

Lukács and Dávid (65)	Roma Undergraduates' Personal Network in the Process of College Transition. A Social Capital Approach	Hungary	Roma	Quantitative	Identity as complex and negotiated
Maoláin et al. (69)	Handbook for National Unions of Students on Students with a Migrant or Ethnic Minority Background	Mixed geographical contexts	Roma	Description of educational initiatives	NA – Insufficient data to inform analysis of GTRSB representation in relation to higher education
Marcu (55)	Mobility as a learning tool: educational experiences among Eastern European Roma undergraduates in the European Union	Europe	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity Identity as complex and negotiated
Morley et al. (56)	Internationalisation and migrant academics: the hidden narratives of mobility	Mixed geographical contexts	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Mulcahy et al. (10)	The underrepresentation of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils in higher education A report on barriers from early years to secondary and beyond	UK	Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Notar (45)	Roma's Access to Higher Education in Spain: Enablers and Barriers	Spain	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity Identity as complex and negotiated

Padilla- Carmona et al. (38)	Roma in higher education: A case study of successful trajectories in the University of Seville	Spain	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Padilla-Carmona and Soria-Vílchez (39)	Supporting Roma Students to Access Higher Education: Good practice for widening the participation of Roma in Spanish Higher Education	Spain	Roma	Review of policy approaches	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers
Pantea (61)	Affirmative action in Romania's higher education: Roma students' perceived meanings and dilemmas.	Romania	Roma	Qualitative	GTRSB students as trailblazers
Pantea (37)	Persuading Others: Young Roma women negotiating access to university	Romania	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity GTRSB students as trailblazers Identity as complex and negotiated
Petre (64)	Roma Education in the UK: Strategies for Inclusion and General Education Indicators	UK	Roma	Qualitative	Identity as complex and negotiated
Roberts (41)	Class dismissed: international mobility, doctoral researchers, and (Roma) ethnicity as a proxy for social class?	Mixed geographical contexts	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity

					GTRSB students as trailblazers
Rutigliano (70)	Inclusion of Roma Students in Europe: A literature review and examples of policy initiatives	Europe	Roma	Review of policy approaches	N/A – Insufficient data to inform analysis of GTRSB representation in relation to higher education
Scanlon et al. (50)	'My biggest fear was whether or not I would make friends': working-class students' reflections on their transition to university in Ireland	Ireland	Irish Travellers	Qualitative	
Sime et al. (42)	'It's good enough that our children are accepted': Roma mothers' views of children's education post migration	Scotland	Roma	Qualitative	A 'trade-off' in identity

GTRSB students as trailblazers

Identity as complex and negotiated |
| Wilkin et al. (59) | Improving the Outcomes for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Pupils | Mixed geographical contexts | Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities | Literature review | GTRSB students as trailblazers |

Appendix 5: Responses to statements consulted on in Round 1 of the Delphi Study

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Total
1. **GTRSB students should be included among the groups that university Access and Participation plans must assess their performance for**	**15 (93.8%)**	**1 (6.3%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**	**16 (100%)**
2. **GTRSB communities should be treated as ethnic groups within Access and Participation Plans**	**8 (47.0%)**	**5 (29.4%)**	**1 (5.9%)**	**0 (0%)**	**3 17.6%**	**17 100%**
3. **It is problematic to refer to GTRSB students as 'other groups' in access and participation plans**	**6 (35.3%)**	**6 (35.3%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**	**5 (29.4%)**	**17 (100%)**
4. **The overarching label 'Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities' used in the Office for Students definition of underrepresented groups should be expanded to include Showmen and Boater communities**	**7 (41.1%)**	**6 (35.3%)**	**2 (11.8%)**	**0 (0%)**	**2 (11.8%)**	**17 (100%)**
5. Access and participation plans should discuss GTRSB students together under one heading	3 (17.6%)	4 (23.5%)	3 (17.6%)	0 (0%)	7 (41.2%)	17 (100%)
6. **Higher education institutions should be specific about the particular GTRSB groups that they are working (or not working) with in their access and participation plans**	**6 (35.3%)**	**8 (47.1%)**	**0 (0%)**	**1 (5.9%)**	**2 (11.8%)**	**17 (100%)**
7. **The experiences of GTRSB students should be treated as distinct from other groups such as care leavers**	**9 (52.9%)**	**5 (29.4%)**	**0 (0%)**	**0 (0%)**	**3 (17.6%)**	**17 (100%)**

*Bold indicates that 70% consensus was reached

Appendix 6: Practice priorities according to their weighted ranking score

	Total score survey 1	Overall rank survey 1	Total score survey 2	Overall rank survey 2
Financial support / scholarships for GTRSB students	**39**	**1**	**33**	**1**
Focus on addressing barriers earlier on, in the years before entry/during school (new item)	n/a	n/a	25	2
Outreach activities	**37**	**2**	**22**	**3**
Tailored and individualised support for students who disclose their GTRSB identity	**20**	**3**	**22**	**3**
Embed understanding of GTRSB culture, contributions and rights into the curriculum	**18**	**5**	**21**	**4**
Celebrating and promoting GTRSB role models	16	7	14	5
Education and training for higher education staff	17	6	13	6
Support where needed with university applications	9	8	13	6
Mentoring, peer support schemes and societies for GTRSB students and staff	19	4	11	7
Activities to support transition to university (e.g. reviewing induction processes)	20	3	10	8
More literature written by GTRSB community members being used/shared within lectures (new option)	n/a	n/a	10	8
Ensure transparent policies are in place to effectively tackle racism against GTRSB staff and students	16	7	9	9
Ensuring admissions processes do not discriminate against GTRSB applicants	16	7	8	10
Improve data collection and monitoring on GTRSB students	16	7	3	11
Training for union officials (new option)	n/a	n/a	3	11
Different course delivery methods (e.g. online learning, distance learning)(new option)	n/a	n/a	3	11
Celebrate GTRSB culture through awareness raising events	5	9	2	12
Encourage equality and diversity among non-academic staff and provide	n/a	n/a	2	12

access to anti-discrimination support and training for them (new option)				
Equitable careers guidance, free from stereotyping	1	10	1	13
Open days, short courses or taster days	5	9	0	14

*Statements in bold were rated among the top 5 priorities in both surveys

Appendix 7: Priorities for research according to their weighted ranking score

Priorities for research	Overall rank	Total score
Research into the barriers and facilitators to retention of GTRSB young people during secondary school and the transition to further and higher education	1	34
Deeper understanding of GTRSB student experiences into and through higher education (graduate and postgraduate)	2	29
Data on GTRSB student numbers	3	23
Evaluation of current best practice / what has and hasn't been successful in widening participation initiatives for GTRSB students	3	23
Research into long-term educational experiences and outcomes for GTRSB students (e.g. what GTRSB students go on to do after higher education and the difference this made)	4	20
Perceptions of and attitudes towards higher education amongst GTRSB communities	5	17
How to ensure GTRSB students experience higher education as an inclusive space via teaching/relationships/cultures of institutions	6	13
How higher education of GTRSB communities impacts on perceptions of GTRSB communities in wider society	7	12
Research into the benefits of flexible/blended secondary education, as a means to maintaining interest in further learning at higher education level	8	10
Mapping what higher education providers are actually doing to widen access and what they plan to do in the future	9	8
Research into how GTRSB role models are visible, celebrated and engaging with prospective students	10	7
Positive success stories of GTRSB students	10	7
Research into the representation of GTRSB students in higher education curricula	11	6
Research into institutional barriers to access	12	4
A 360-degree evaluation of tailored activities (incorporating evidence from staff and students and a cost-benefit analysis)	13	3
How GTRSB students are represented in higher education policymaking e.g. the Race Equality Charter	14	2

Research into the views and attitudes of higher education staff	14	2
Learning from Central Europe or other countries where initiatives and GTRSB pioneers have been more common	14	2
How to support navigation through the admissions process	15	1
Research into the impact of networks and family understandings/experiences/attitudes	15	1