

Gypsy Culture

Introduction

This document has been prepared to provide useful information about culture, Gypsy traveller culture and the relationship between Gypsy traveller culture and education and how they reflect each other. Also, to understand the impacts of their culture on their education.

The writer has defined culture as something that represents the way of life of groups of people and how they live such as, traditions and the way they do things (Moodle, session 1, Griffiths, page 8, 2020). E.B Taylor (2006) noted that culture is explained as a blended pattern of knowledge, belief, values, behaviours and feelings that are made by society and social groups.

However, according to the National Institute Urban School (2005), there are many people that think that culture is thought of as foods, clothing, music and holidays. Although, culture is seen to be bigger than that as it is a way of how people live. The writer will be discussing about the Gypsy traveller culture in this document. There are a variety of Gypsies cultures within society which include Irish Travellers, Romani Gypsies, New Travellers and Showmen.

Their communities, beliefs and values

O'Hanlon and Holmes (2004) noted that in their own communities, the travellers assert their specific identities as: Gypsy as (Welsh, English) Traveller (Irish, Scottish) and Showmen (Fairground, Circus). The Gypsy and Irish Travellers are mostly an ethnic community and Showmen are classed as a cultural community. P.Niner (2003) noted that Irish Travellers have been born into a tradition where they have options whether to settle in one place or live and travel in a caravan, whereas Showmen have been forced to live on the road (2003). According to Friends, Families and Travellers (2009), there are 300,000 Gypsies and Travellers that live in the UK, with 200,000 live in houses and 100,000 that live in caravans where they would travel to different places. Although, there are not many Gypsies and Travellers that travel around anymore, as they have been settled in houses, council caravan sites and public caravan sites (2003).

They also try and find land that will be suitable for a caravan and to settle down. Gypsies and Travellers share some of the same communities, where they both mostly follow the same culture. According to O'Hanlon and Holmes (2004), both communities have a strong tradition that puts family loyalty above all else. The children will be cared for by following the same traditions. By bringing up the children within their culture the child will grow up wanting to be considered part of the family. This way, the parents have transferred their culture, values and beliefs from generation to another. Travellers and Gypsies (no date) stated that most girls from a Gypsy community will marry before their 16th birthday. Their culture live by rules and tradition, where Gypsies and Travellers are expected to marry into the tribe to carry on the tradition. However, marrying a non-gypsy culture is normally frowned upon, but

the expectation of a non-gypsy bride is to abide by the gypsy culture and live according to their rules and traditions as a gypsy. They believe that the groom should offer money to the bride's family as a compensation for the loss of their daughter and a guarantor of decent behaviour, and vice versa. It is important for them to offer something for their daughters commitments. In addition, both communities are committed to the importance and values of wealth of others, by collecting silver and gold jewellery, good china and glassware and vehicles and cars where they would sell these items to replace with money to help with family costs. Meanwhile, both Travellers and Gypsies work with scrap, garden clearance, landscaping, carpet dealing, tarmacing and antique dealings (O'Hanlon and Holmes, 2004). This is where they make a living and families would have to travel to different countries to work. According to O'Hanlon and Holmes (2004), Showmen are also expected to work from a early age, by starting to learn from their parents and to receive the skills that are essential for the business. They will be adapting new skills by helping with the business the best that they can. In addition, they are also expected to marry into the community at a young age to strengthen the skills that are needed to continue with the business of showmen and the circus.

As Travel Movement (2020) noted that the Irish Travellers language, is called 'cant' or 'gammon' and Gypsies speak Romani as they are originated from India and is the only indigenous language in the UK. Travellers and Gypsies do occasionally speak english, they also speak in their own language.

Impacts of Education

It has been made clear that Gypsies and Travellers cannot get easy access to school. In 1950s - 1960s there was a open door policy which was available if Gypsies and Travellers wanted education, but failed as they were rejected from the panel (O'Hanlon and Holmes, 2004). However, in 1980s - 1990s, the Government introduced funding to support the LEA's to provide education and wealthfare to support children and their families. This would be done by providing them with their own unit to be educated which will support their needs as individuals. By providing their own unit, the staff members can focus on the children's weaknesses as many Gypsies and Travellers have difficulty with their speech and language. Also, the funding will be able to provide the correct support for the children's learning needs. In addition, many Gypsies and Travellers experience a variety of disadvantages in education such as bullying, and excluding travellers from the rest of the school. According O'Hanlon and Holmes (2004), Gypsies and Travellers would be taught in a separate classroom with different times to start and finish the day and different break times on different playgrounds. This indicates that they did not receive an inclusive education as they were segregated from the rest of the school. The lack of belongingness and acceptance can have negative impacts on their mental health, confidence and their self-esteem and therefore they cannot achieve self-fulfillment as stated in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (2020). In addition, this could lead to lack of interest in education as they do not see the need of education. As Carmarthenshire County Council (2019), stated that Gypsies and Travellers may have a different attitude towards school, which could lead to low attendance and attainment.

Children from Gypsy and Traveller families tend to leave school at the age of 16 and the Scottish Government (2018), noted that not many Gypsies and Travellers transfer from primary to secondary due to their culture. After receiving primary education the boys were expected to go straight to work by dealing with scraps, gardening, landscaping and other jobs. The women would then stay at home to look after the young ones whilst cleaning.

Education

There is a document which has been published on November 2006 which is designed to reflect on particular needs of Gypsies and Travellers to support their learning and inclusion. The Welsh Assembly Government (2008), stated that it is important to provide good working practises to include Gypsies and Travellers and to support and raise their achievements in the curriculum. The curriculum promotes equal opportunities, values and diversity and aims to support culture identity to all children. This would improve the way Gypsies and Travellers think of education, and may become interested to learn and gain knowledge and new skills. In addition, the Welsh Assembly Government (2008), stated the importance of celebrating their differences to gain knowledge and a positive awareness of their own and other cultures. There is a school in Pembroke called The Priory Learning Center which is based in Monkton. The Learning and Work institute (2021) stated that Priory Learning center offers a range of adaptable courses to help and encourage families from Gypsy or Travellers to continue to secondary school. The learning center provides additional support that focuses on each individuals needs and to encourage them to reach their full potential in their education. According to The learning and work institute (2021) the learning center is more flexible with attendance than mainstream schools, as Gypsies and Travellers travel from area to area. However, The National Strategies (2008) stated that there are schools available for children from Gypsy or Traveller families to register to more than one school when travelling. They would have a base school in place where they have been attending for 18 months and over (2008). This will help to educate the children with the correct support while being on the move.