

Gypsies, Travellers and Gendered Employment



Institute for Diversity Research, Inclusivity,
Communities and Society

Margaret Greenfields
Research Director IDRICS
m.greenfields@bucks.ac.uk

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health**

Employment Key Facts

- GTAA evidence, findings from the EHRC review (Cemlyn et. al. 2009) and follow-up/specialist studies such as Smith and Greenfields (2012); Greenfields (2008); Ryder & Greenfields (2010) support changing perceptions of ‘gendered’ traditional employment as identified by Okely (1983).
- During the late 20th Century increasing shift away from ‘whole family’ employment to working (frequently self-employed) father and home-making mother.
- Amongst males, a strong positive correlation existed between “*physical jobs*” and gender roles, with several young men referring to ‘good’ jobs as involving working “*like my Dad and my Uncles*” (Greenfields, 2008)

A summary of evidence from the above studies indicates that :

- (Male respondents) Strong preference for self-employment, working for themselves or in family-based businesses, 36-48 % of participants across study areas
- In total, over one-third of working-age men were registered as unemployed or economically inactive (up to 60% in some localities)
- Males tended to be clustered within relatively low-skilled manual work or in skilled trades - often following the same occupations as their fathers and other male relatives, despite opportunities for 'traditional' Traveller economic activities being in sharp decline.

- Regional differences in working patterns were shaped by local structures of opportunity:
- Scrap metal dealing and market trading were more significant in urban and suburban areas,
- Rural locations, construction, block paving, gardening and tree felling were more common income sources,
- Household income thus predicated overwhelmingly on sources of male employment although some evidence was also found of women claiming benefits as lone parents and males 'absent' from homes/working abroad.

- Over 2/3 of women studied were economically inactive although almost all were engaged in family caring..
- Employed women had a tendency to be concentrated in care work and personal services, e.g. hairdressing, beauty therapy or in retail and cleaning.
- Some evidence of women encouraging daughters to consider employment/training options: *“just in case you get a bad one – I don’t want her to be stuck like me with no work and nothing”*
- Women in all study areas more willing than men to take paid employment rather than opt for self-employment. However attitudes towards married women working did make it difficult for some to find work outside family-based economic practices:

“other travelling girls are saying ‘she’s married, she’s still working, what good is that? She’s married and not being forced to work, she should quit her job’”

“it would shame your husband”

“I tell you – you’re married – he’s working - so why would you want to go out to work?”

“You’d have to marry a gorge boy if you want to go out to work”.

- *“it’s very unusual for a married woman to get to work”*
- *“marry a Travelling boy – is he going to allow you to go out to work all day?”*
Chorus of “no” from other female participants

(all quotes from Greenfields, 2008) *“A Good Job for a Traveller”*

Accommodation Situation as employment impact factor

- One woman, who entered housing after losing a planning appeal on her family's privately owned site, explained how the move into housing resulted in the loss of her livelihood and subsequent unemployment:
- 'I used to keep chickens and sell eggs. When we moved here they says, "you're not allowed to keep chickens here", so we've got none 'cos we can't keep them, so I can't make my own money any more'
- (Romany Female (45-55), South-East England).

The TEIP (ITMB/Ryder & Greenfields, 2010)

Context of G&T Voluntary Sector and Social Enterprise Activities

- Sharp decline in traditional economic activities – single generation 50% reduction [from 80% parents working in self-employed ‘Traveller Economy’ to 40% of sample].
- Around 25% interviewees no formal education; remainder predominantly ended at primary school age; small minority held practical qualifications – none with academic qualifications.
- Decline into unemployment amongst men. In contrast more women moving into low skilled jobs
- Only 10 per cent of the self-employed G/IT sample (the majority of whom worked in the ‘Traveller Economy’) had received business advice. Contrast: 50% BME business people received professional information/advice.
- Majority of interviewees unaware of employment and business advice sources.

- 40% of 'waged' sample were female. Increasingly working in the community sector.
- Volunteering was found to be an important first step to employment - one third of the overall TEIP sample reported that they had found volunteering and activism invaluable preparation for their work.
- “If it hadn't been for my aunty being involved as a volunteer and knowing them all I'd not even have thought of it – she said '*they're alright - it's all Travelling people and them as knows us – come along – you might learn something*' – so I thought why not give it a try”

ITMB Evaluation – Community Development Course

- The programme ran between Autumn 2009 and Spring 2010 and was one of a suite of activities funded from a Capacity Builders grant from the (former) Government in 2009.
- The cost of putting on the project was relatively financially cheap (involving an input from all agencies (funders, ITMB etc.) of £18,929 (this figure does not however include payment of income support and other benefits, receipt of which enabled ladies who were not in work to participate on the programme).
- The core figure (and headline return on investment of £1 spent to £6.59 of gross social value) showed that the 'total value' created by ITMB CD course over a 5 year period is **£124,797.75 (gross)** over a five year forecast period, was however, perhaps one of the lesser outcomes of this programme.

- In total seven Traveller women aged between their early 20s and 48 years of age took part
- 6/7 Traveller participants had caring responsibilities – ranging from one young child to seven children at home (widowed mother).
- None had any formal qualifications prior to taking the course
- All but one of the participants who is a parent, were raising their children alone.
- In terms of relatively intangible qualitative findings participants spoke about:
- Increased confidence,
- Satisfaction with their engagement in community development practice
- Pride in being able to act as role models for their children
- Delight in supporting their peers and community members in accessing services

Programme Format

- 6 modules (delivered at NVQ Level 2) providing Certificate in Community Development Practice
- Practice Principle Community Development Work
- Social Justice
- Community Development Work Skills
- Identifying Needs in Communities
- Involving People in Community Groups
- Reflective Practice
- Assessed by Portfolio and Practical Skills monitoring

OUTCOMES - EMPLOYABILITY

- **Respondents moved by the end of the course to:**
- 1 employed in a full time job
- 2 working on a part-time basis
- 4 x enhanced volunteering opportunities potentially leading to employment
- Seven women went on to undertake continued training – health NVQ Level 3 (via ITMB)

- *I feel more confident now, I feel I can speak better, get my point across better.*
- *Definitely more confidence. A better understanding of how other communities work. I can now carry out an interview. Extension of my vocabulary. I now know the right way to go about bringing people together. Also I have a better understanding of people when they interview me.*
- *I learn that information can be given in different ways – like pictures, so this helps communication among people who don't read and write well. I can tell other people who don't read or write [this participant is functionally illiterate but has still gained the CD NVQ Level 2 through supported learning and use of innovative validated processes for submission of work] that they can also join courses like this, not reading is not a barrier.*

- *I have supported family members in applying for GPs and school places. Helped to do teacher training days. I have helped the local police with our cultural beliefs. I have given advice to local councillors on our beliefs. [impacts on wider community/service providers eg – Local Authority] .*
- *I have used confidence to encourage other people to do the same. I feel I can talk better to people. I can use the confidence I got from doing the course to pass on the information and skills I learned on the course to the Travelling community. I have met new people and have stayed in contact with them after the course was finished. People come to my sister (who was also on the course) and me to ask us questions about how to get access to health services, planning information and we are now able to give them contact numbers, information and to help them, however we can. [impact on wider Gypsy/Traveller community and service providers]*

Sustainable Economies and Social Enterprise

- Initial concepts underlying the 'Big Society'/Localism match VCSE drivers
 - Citizen involvement
 - Recognition of pool of skills within society
 - Local knowledge
 - Self-determination

On the face of it precisely what women interviewed within TEIP/Community Development programme claim to want.....

In contrast the marginalised and 'voiceless' are least likely to be able to participate in social enterprise as a result of shrinking public sector support

- In this context - how to ensure that BME VCSEs are able to benefit?
- The Big Society – people with time to give, and skills – predominantly those who are retired/educated and with ‘cushion’ of assets?? **"generally are more likely to be white, older, better educated, richer, middle-class males"**
- while volunteers are typically **"women, of higher social grades, in managerial positions, degree educated, and middle aged"** (Brodie et. al., 2009: 22-23).

Impacts of Supported Community Development/VCSE posts

- **Where does that leave ‘unpopular’ groups??**

“None [Q: whether offered suitable training or employment before]. ITMB was the first and only organization which has ever offered me any help or any sort of course. No-one has ever offered anything to Traveller women like this, as far as I am aware, and certainly not to me.”

“Without funding there wouldn’t be a course so that helped get us all where we are” [Traveller woman now on paid internship].

Proxy for modelling impact: TSRC Study “Surviving, Thriving or Dying” (Davidson & Packham 2012)

- 80% of VCSE groups said they had experienced/expected demand for their services
- 78% said they had been affected by Local Authority cuts in funding, and as a result 51% said it was likely
- that their group would close within the next three years.
- The likelihood of closure is evident across a wide range of groups including co-ops and social enterprises.
- Most likely to survive: self help, rely on volunteers and have their own income. Mainly groups with <£10,000 of income and identify themselves as community groups (cf comment above re Big Society volunteers)
- The groups who are **least** resilient are those who provide services for ‘vulnerable groups’, have small number of paid staff and rely significantly on external funding e.g. from Local Authorities.

“It is alright for women to work for your own community because it is a matter of trust – but what your husband would think if it was out in a shop or a pub for another community..... well that wouldn’t be allowed” [Romany Gypsy woman community worker]

Nb: the impacts of cut-backs in funding for NGOs/Vol. Sector agencies therefore potentially risk not only significantly reducing accessible services to wider GRT populations but also diminishing the opportunities for women to engage in external work opportunities and develop transferable skills.

Conclusion

- For GRT Woman in highly gendered/traditional cultures volunteering offers an opportunity to step outside of culturally constraining roles
- Opportunities/training developed through highly bonded networks and perceived of as 'safe' environments
- Gradual shifting of personal confidence and family acceptance of employment in external roles
- Access to alternative roles overwhelmingly dependent upon funding/sustainability of community groups
- Cut-backs in VCSE sector having a disproportionate impact on BME/GRT women who are not otherwise 'work-ready'.
- GRT VCSE at high risk of 'fragility'.

Selected Key Texts

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