SEARCHING FOR HOME: AN EXPLORATION OF SLOVAK ROMA PARENT-CHILD DYADS' PERCEPTIONS OF IMMIGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Children play a key role in facilitating integration of Roma families into new communities and countries, which in turn crucially impacts quality of life of the families (Walsh et al., 2011). Nevertheless, little research has been done to explore the perspectives of the children. Considering this knowledge gap, five parent-child dyadic interviews were conducted for this study and analysed using thematic analysis. Six themes were identified: acceptance and racism, children have a future here, Slovakia; a home but a temporary one, feelings of empowerment, the role of community and the role of language. The results of this study affirm that children play a significant role in integration, but also suggests this process is highly nuanced. Consideration for this nuance needs to be implemented more broadly in policy and practice. Future research should explore the role of mental health and identity, as well as language-learning motivations.

INTRODUCTION

This study aims to explore the complexity Roma people experience, especially Roma immigrant families who have a specific place among other immigrant groups. Roma people are not a homogenous group. Their origin is a contested topic, especially since it differs regionally which creates an ethnicity whose identification is complicated due to a range of shared but also diverse characteristics (Campbell et al., 2020). Throughout many centuries, they have been the victims of persecution; rejected and criminalised due to their nomadic ways (Campbell et al., 2020). More recently, under the recently amended *Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act*; Gypsy, Roma and Travellers are now under the threat of imprisonment for unauthorised stay (Home Office, 2022). This persecution and discrimination, both historic and present, have serious consequences in the form of many negative health outcomes, behaviours, and access to medical care (Williams et al., 2019). Therefore, to even the playing field, their experiences must be heard, and the main challenges identified in order to help them flourish in society.

They may not only struggle with integration due to stigma and lower socio-economic status, but also due to balancing three distinct identities and cultures: Roma, Slovak and now British. The latter is more predominant for the children as they become immersed into the new culture faster and may gradually feel more detached from their birthplace. Moreover, parents may feel conflicted that their child is turning away from their shared culture, language, and norms; this may cause confrontation (Paat, 2013). Children, who have a major impact on family life post-migration, have not been directly asked to participate in previous research. Therefore, this research aimed to involve their input to fill the present gap in the literature and investigate family dynamics, roles, sense of belonging and identities of Slovak Roma immigrants. Consequently, the study's results were organised around six main themes: *acceptance and racism, children have a future here*, *Slovakia; a home but a temporary one*, *feelings of empowerment*, *the role of community* and *the role of language*.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Roma in Slovakia

Currently, a substantial ~9% of the population of Slovakia is Roma. The Roma population is significantly disadvantaged in comparison to Slovakia's general population; the majority of Slovak Roma report feeling discriminated against in the last 5 years (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2016). The rate of unemployment among Roma is 72% for men and 75% for women (UNDP, 2012). This high percentage is perhaps unsurprising, since 65% of Roma do not progress into high school (Slovak government plenipotentiary for Roma communities, 2012). Healthwise, almost 30% of Roma over the age of 6 suffer from a cardiovascular disease and around 20% from a chronic disease (UNDP, 2012). These statistics reflect generational poverty, which is often compounded by early childbirth, generally taking place out of wedlock (Šprocha, 2014). Frequently, young girls are not equipped to raise children and were probably raised by similarly ill-equipped mothers who had to drop out of school early as single mothers (Bird, 2010). When an equivalent age boy admits to being the father, he might drop out of school to make money to support the mother and child. In such a stressful way of life, it unsurprisingly results in a case of health inequality with a high rate of chronic illnesses (Arcaya et al., 2015).

Roma in the UK

Given the above experiences of disadvantage, many have decided to leave and start a new life somewhere else. Although people had been leaving and attempting to leave prior to the more recent exodus of Central and Eastern European (CEE) Roma, this increased after many CEE countries joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 (Martin et al., 2017).

Estimates of the number of Roma immigrants to the UK are widely accepted as not being completely accurate, but there are c. 200,000 (Women and Equalities Committee, 2019). Last year marked the first time that Roma ethnicity was an option in the UK census (ONS, 2021). However, many may still choose to mask their ethnicity to avoid the 'benefit tourists' label (Martin et al., 2017; Nagy, 2018). Unfortunately, this has been the narrative perpetuated by the media and salient in the recent political discourse, especially when Brexit was at the forefront of debates (Nagy, 2018). The perception of 'benefit tourists' is that the Roma immigrate to enjoy the welfare benefits the UK offers without participating in the workforce. Roma people leave Slovakia to escape racial discrimination only to arrive in an environment with a pertaining negative outlook. Therefore, many choose to deny their Roma origin to avoid prejudice (Nagy, 2018).

Reasons for immigration

There is qualitative evidence that challenges the 'benefit tourists' stereotype, considering the extensive and complicated administrative process of trying to access meagre welfare benefits and prevalent language barriers (Martin et al., 2017; Nagy, 2018). Research proposes that their reasoning is predominantly focused around gaining employment: they flee from employment discrimination to find work (Martin et al., 2017). Furthermore, Martin et al.'s (2017) study pointed out that their Roma participants showed little knowledge of the state benefits available to them prior to their arrival, which highlights the need to raise awareness of these. Therefore, it seems unlikely welfare benefits would be their primary pull factor. Conversely, they were aware of specific job vacancies that prompted their migration, strengthening the argument that they come to work.

The drivers for Roma emigration are therefore twofold: they leave to escape precarity, but also to showcase their own empowerment and agency by emigrating to gain access to more opportunities (Tileaga et al., 2019). Smith (2018) found that the main motive behind immigration of Slovak Roma was to live a better life, followed by gaining work and joining their family. Tileaga et al. (2019) conducted a qualitative study showing that the Roma immigrants in the UK perceive less discrimination, better health care, education, and employment conditions than they did in their home country.

Barriers in the UK

Nagy (2018) observed that those who are openly Roma find it more difficult to find employment, but the individuals who mask their ethnicity or engage in ethnic mimicry behind Slovak nationality live much like non-Roma Slovak immigrants. They tend to immigrate on their own before the age of 40, already have extensive work experience, good English and are of better economic background compared to those who do not engage in ethnic mimicry. They tend to isolate themselves from, and are denied by, the Roma community, which stems from prejudice on both sides. Nevertheless, even this group of Roma continue to struggle with social exclusion by the host society. Although they describe the UK positively as a place where migrants can find work, their lower social status as foreign migrants, and especially the lower status jobs they are ascribed, give them inferior status which excludes them from the 'powerful' in society. The lack of inclusion can explain why Roma often work with, and are employed by, other immigrant groups under unfair conditions (Smith, 2018). Nagy (2018) explains that Roma become virtually invisible by either becoming self-employed and risking getting frowned upon, or taking short-term jobs and risking exploitation. Thus, it is not as much Romaphobia as it is exclusion due to wider discrimination and prejudice towards migrants in the host society. Prolonged discrimination is intricately linked to negative health outcomes (Adzajilic, 2022). The resulting exacerbated mental health issues make it more difficult to handle finances and assert themselves in the job market in a way that reflects their competence (Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland, 2021). In turn, poverty and adversity due to the associated financial problems further aggravate the issue (Holkar and Mackenzie, 2016).

One study conducted with Romanian Roma concluded that years of generational poverty and racism make it more difficult to react to the more subtle ways in which they experience differential treatment in the UK (Tileaga et al., 2019). Therefore, although they report perceiving less discrimination, it does not mean they are not being marginalised. Clark (2020) used the expression 'racialised everyday bordering', which describes the day-to-day barriers that have been put in place for people who ascribe to a certain race. It can be observed in the number of obstacles the government has instated in the process of claiming benefits (Nagy, 2018) and, even when they manage to apply, their request may be erroneously denied. One study found that half of the benefit refusals are made incorrectly (Paterson et al., 2011). More recently, this manifested itself during Brexit uncertainty and aftermath. The anxiety caused by immigration status procedures is always a major stressor, more so when made cumbersome (Walsh et al., 2011). Unfortunately, applying for a pre-settled status in the UK is made very difficult for Roma people and they are put at a disadvantage due to digital exclusion and lack of documentation due to the nature of their jobs (Clark, 2020).

Roma in Glasgow

Having looked at the wider issues experienced by this group, this research looked at a particular example in practice: Govanhill. Govanhill, an area of Glasgow that houses the majority of Roma community in Scotland, has previously even been named 'Glasgow's Ellis Island' due to its reputation as a frequent immigrant destination (Clark, 2014). It was said to welcome 3,500 CEE Roma by 2013, a number that has only grown since (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013). The Roma generally travel to the UK multi-generationally, from the same locality, following their relatives and their perhaps exaggerated promises of a better and easier life. These networks explain how Roma clusters in cities are formed. Creation of these discrete close-knit communities provides the necessary support at first, however, it exacerbates segregation in the long term and prompts the use of the word 'ghetto' describing an isolated homogenous housing estate (Clark, 2014; Smith, 2018).

The Roma settlement in Govanhill has caused a lot of unrest among the residents. Complaints about criminality, intimidation, loitering, overcrowding and even child maltreatment by the Roma are routinely voiced (Clark, 2014). This narrative is rather dangerously perpetuated by the media, especially papers like the Times (Horne, 2017a; Horne, 2017b). Despite there being no evidence to corroborate that these are 'Roma problems', they get blamed for issues that concern Govanhill and its residents more generally (Clark, 2014; Mullen, 2018). In reality, Roma are more often the victims of exploitation rather than the perpetrators. They are treated unjustly by landlords, given flats in poor condition, and then held accountable (Mullen, 2018). Even government bodies blame Roma for housing issues and repeatedly intimidate immigrants by threats of forced evictions and racial profiling (Clark, 2014; Mullen, 2018; Clark, 2020). Fortunately, there are many organisations in Govanhill that do not let these injustices and false accusations go without rectification and actively work at facilitating inclusion and raising awareness of these serious issues (Mullen, 2018; Clark, 2020).

This study aims to explore the perspectives of the child-parent dyads (or pairs). Children often play a significant role in the acculturation, or culture adaptation process, of their entire community because they are more immersed in the host culture and relationship building than the adults due to compulsory school attendance. This immersion leads to faster acculturation and language acquisition (Walsh et al., 2011). Consequently, children guide their parents through the customs and conventions of this new culture as well as assisting them whenever they need translation (Snyder et al., 2005). Roma children perceive less racism and perform better than in Slovakia (Fremlova & Ureche, 2011). These subsequent positive experiences of acceptance are what separate the perceptions of older and younger generations (Smith, 2018). As a result, it is likely that the children are building a life very different to their parents'. Parents already have a lot to cope with going through such a transition and consequently may end up relying on them much more than being engaged in helping them go through their own struggles (Suárez-Orozco, 2001).

Despite the role reversal, it is the adults who make legal and final decisions for their households. Therefore, it might not only be within the academic literature that children lack their voice. Although efforts to study the needs of Roma children have been made, children do not tend to participate in the interviews due to ethical concerns and parental concern.

This paper argues that children play a key role in facilitating integration which, as has been outlined, crucially impacts upon the whole family's quality of life and well-being. Both child and parent perspectives are interlinked as parents influence the child and vice versa: as parents grow dependent on their children after immigration, the roles can switch to some extent. However, the hierarchy does not flip completely as parents remain the ones to make key decisions about education, healthcare and ultimately, the family's immediate residence. This dissonance may lead to conflict since the more integrated immigrant children are, the less attached they can feel to their parents (Kalmijn, 2018). Therefore, this study will explore the experience of both children and their parents, trying to gain insight into how their perspectives converge and diverge. This way, we can give voice to the children who have been left out of the conversation as well as investigate the points of contention that can arise from contrasting perspectives on the decisions made for the family as a whole.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The aim of this study is to give a voice to Slovak Roma immigrant parent-child dyads to understand their perspectives on life in the UK. To keep the participants at the centre and to give them sufficient freedom and space to express themselves, this study employs an exploratory, experiential qualitative research method of semi-structured dyadic interviews. This research further assumes a critical realist stance; it assumes that reality is knowable and therefore it validates people's experiences as partial reflections of this knowable reality (Clark and Braun, 2013). To properly study family dynamics, it is important to look at them in interaction rather than in isolation. This is why dyadic interviews were the chosen method for this study; they allow for exploration of the interaction between the child and parent while maintaining the richness and level of intimacy (Morgan et al., 2013). The data is analysed with the bottom-up method of thematic analysis building larger meaningful structures from individual pieces of information (Braun and Clarke, 2013).[1]

Participants

The number of dyadic interviews for this study was expected to be around six due to the challenges of recruiting from the desired group, who are often hard to access and the exploratory nature of the study (Hamama-Raz et al., 2010). The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- Roma ethnicity

- Slovak nationality

- Proficiency in Slovak or English language

- Permanent Scottish address

- The children were required to be between 12 and 18 years of age

In the end, due to recruitment difficulties, 5 children (male N = 1, female N = 4) and 5 parents (male N = 3, female N = 2) were interviewed. The participants met all inclusion criteria except one of the children who was over 18 years of age. Four pairs live in Glasgow and one in Ayr. Mean age of the children was 17.2 years (range 15-20 years old, median age of 17 years). Mean age of the parents was 43.4 years (range 36-50 years old, median age of 45 years).

Measures and Procedures

This study was advertised by Community Trust Renewal and The Space, both of which are non-profit community support organisations, whose employees approached potential participants. Interviews took place in person and were recorded, four in the Community Renewal office and one in the Govanhill Free Church. All except one interview were in Slovak to accommodate for the parents' novice command of English.

Before each interview, every participant read the study's information sheet to familiarise themselves with the main purpose of the study and data handling. Parents and children over 16 signed their own consent forms, and for young people under 16 years, the parents signed the consent forms. The ethics of this study were in accordance with the BPS Ethics Code of Conduct and approved by the University of Glasgow's School of Psychology Ethics Committee.

Participants were also rewarded for their time with a 10-pound 'One4all' voucher per interview. All participants were anonymised in the process of transcription.

RESULTS

Interviews generated a rich dataset giving insight into the varied experiences of five Slovak Roma parents and their children living in Scotland. Participants' names were changed to ensure confidentiality. The results section is divided into six themes.

1. Acceptance and racism

Acceptance and racism explores differences in experiences of racism in Slovakia compared to the UK and was the most prominent theme mentioned by every dyad. Racism in Slovakia, especially in connection to job seeking, was presented as a major reason for searching for a better life in the UK. Racism was so pervasive that Jan, one of the parents, said '*when I get there in person and they see I am Roma, they would say 'I am sorry, we're full', but on the phone they had told me they have a vacancy*'. People's lack of satisfactory income forced them to seek employment elsewhere. Racism was also said to be present in public spaces such as restaurants, shops and even in education. Issues of racism in Slovakia contrasted with the overwhelming acceptance they were met with in the UK. In Iveta's words: '*at the start I did not know anything, anything and I got a job after my first week in a factory. There it did not matter if you were white, if you are black or whatever you were, you just showed you can work so you worked*'. In Slovakia, participants expressed they needed much more than just a desire to work and provide for their family, they needed to be a completely different person. Compared to that, it was overwhelmingly easy to find a job in the UK. When they talked about the acceptance they encountered in the UK, it felt like this gave them a sense of capability and this impacted how they saw themselves.

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[1] I am a white Slovak middle-class woman who came to the UK to access higher education and acknowledge that my experience may be different to that of participants in this study, and there may be room for potential unconscious bias. Therefore, the interviews were approached with curiosity and open-mindedness. Reliability of the themes is evidenced by the ample use of quotes from the data transcripts (Stiles, 1993).

Even though no parents reported any racism aimed towards them, a large majority of the children reported that they were met with racist language in school. Children reported the use of racial slurs in their schools and even differential treatment by fellow classmates. The use of 'gypsy' and connotations of uncleanliness were specifically mentioned. Ela said that such forms of racism caused her to '*never say to anyone I am Roma'*. If ridiculing the gypsy identity keeps being normalised, there will be a sense of shame connected to admitting membership to this ethnicity.

More positively, another difference they experienced in the UK is the governmental and general support provided. Jan appreciated that they '*had a social worker who worked for us but she was, she was not a friend, she was like a family member, that's how she took care of us*'. They were met with empathy, humane treatment, and love; once again highlighting the contrast between the treatment Roma people are given in Slovakia and the UK. Other interviewees mentioned more concrete steps the government has taken to support them in the transition, or as Jan said helped to put them on their own two feet. They mentioned free medication, bus fare reimbursement, free emergency care, free lunches, free schooling and equipment, various bursaries available to students, interpreters and even increased opportunities given to people from ethnic minorities. All these social care benefits, except free schooling are, in contrast, non-existent or unavailable to them in Slovakia.

2. Children have a future here

The interviews showed that for the parents the future of the children was a big factor in deciding to leave Slovakia. Parents clearly believed that differential treatment in schools minimised the number of opportunities children had in Slovakia. Children's prospects abroad seemed much more promising to all parents. Hence, children frequently reported being actively encouraged to study and take advantage of all the opportunities they have in the UK, because '*here if they graduate, they have a future. […] Nothing awaits them in Slovakia''* (Ernest).

The UK has become a home for many of the immigrant children. Since they all have very limited experience of Slovakia, they are much like any other Scottish adolescent. The fact that the children have settled in the UK is also a big factor influencing why many Roma parents plan to stay and '*even if the parent goes home, they only go under the condition that they come back to their child'* (Tereza). Parents came to provide their children with a better life and even though they struggle to integrate on the same level because of their lack of Scottish friends or limited English language skills, they do not want to go home without them. The children in the study had little choice in the decision to leave Slovakia. They left Slovakia because their parents made that decision; they were too young to have any say. However, most of the parents voiced that once their children or grandchildren are adults, they are ready to accommodate their desires and once again act in their best interest. The language used by parents expressed generous support for their children as they allow them to make autonomous decisions about who they want to be and where they want to live. As illustrated by Ernest: '*I'm always going to be Slovak. But he, if he wants to be Scottish or if he wants to have a British passport, or if he wants to give up his Slovak one, that's just his decision.'* Parents want their children to do what makes them happy, even if it means they end up adopting different nationalities. None of the participants expressed a fear of potential estrangement from the incongruity that could come from the different national identities (Paat, 2013).

3. Slovakia—our home but a temporary one

Slovakia was referred to in various contexts. The most prominent association interviewees related to were the financial struggles they experienced while living there and the living '*month to month taking maternity allowance and parental benefits'* (Tereza). Despite this, some parents expressed that they are still thinking about going back. One of them, Jozef, mentioned how this led to 'living in these two worlds,' and long periods of indecisiveness, which he perceived as detrimental to his mental health. Once their children finish education, there is nothing keeping them in Scotland. Slovakia is now seen by some as an idyllic place where they can build a house and finally rest. However, they would not give up the possibility of going back since although '*home is home (…) if I feel like I want to go, then I'll go and I'll try for a few years, but if things aren't working out, then I'm definitely going to come back'* (Petra). Therefore, although all, even the children who simultaneously identify as British and Roma, reported that they have retained their Slovak identity and tradition and so '*are still Slovaks from Slovakia'* (Jan), they also see it as more of a place to 'try out' rather than to settle long-term.

4. Feelings of empowerment

The participants' desire to stay or leave was further influenced by the specific environment that made them feel capable to provide for themselves and their loved ones. The shifts between empowerment of parents and children were mostly based on language and feeling at home in a certain place, as illustrated by the examples below.

'I can speak for myself at home and for my children or wife if it came to that, not here. Here I need to bother them, burden them.' (Ernest, parent)

*'We bother **them** when we are in Slovakia. (laughter) We bother you at home.' (Oto, child, Interview 3, min.28)*

Through this statement Ernest argues that while he must rely on his children or other people while living in Glasgow, in his native Slovakia he can take care of everything himself. His son added that in Slovakia the situation flips, and the children need him not the other way round. This shows that parents want to provide for and desire to be needed by their children instead of feeling like they are a burden to them. Jozef, a parent seriously considering moving back, had another reason which is to '*do some third sector organisation and start helping Roma people'.* Jozef has been working for a non-profit in Govanhill and now feels like he could use the expertise gained and knowledge he learned.

On the other hand, other parents did not perceive that they could potentially gain anything by moving back. Rather, they are content in the UK where they finally attained this sense of empowerment by being able to take care of their family. Even with very basic or no English, they all '*managed to find accommodation, work and school for our children, doctors, dentists, everything'* (Jan), which they lacked the power to do in their homeland. Moreover, children reported gaining a further sense of empowerment by staying in the UK thanks to their English proficiency making them more self-reliant.

5. The role of community in the UK

Community made an impact on determining where the Roma moved within the UK, but also majorly impacted whether they liked living in that area. There were, of course, two sides to this coin and whether community was a positive or negative force. On the positive side, family and community is an important value in Roma culture that seems to have a significant impact on their decision-making, which explains why '*you're going to find lots of families are from the just 10, 15, 20 miles radius in Slovakia coming from the same location because they all each other's support'* (Jozef). Another positive aspect mentioned was the number of Slavic people, who have a similar tradition and conveniently '*Slovaks can understand the Polish'* (Iveta).

However, the negatives that can come from the community were also mentioned. Several parent-child pairs expressed struggling with stereotypes connected to being a 'gypsy' such as '*Roma are people who steal or cause problems*' (Jan). It was clear from the interviews that the participants had this idea of better and worse Roma, with whom they did not want to be mistaken, even in Slovakia. The dislike of certain communities furthermore manifested itself in conflicts. Romanians, Pakistanis and the Asian community were mentioned as groups with which Slovak Roma do not have good relations with. They did not elaborate on the cause of these conflicts, but it seemed like in general it was due to cultural clashes, religious differences ('*Pakistani kids could not have ham, so it caused conflicts in school*' (Jan), unfamiliarity and distrust. Therefore, groups can become exclusive, and they may struggle to feel part of the community.

6. The role of language in everyday life

Language mastery was a crucial difference between the interviewed parents and their children. While all children reported that their English is on par with native speakers, parents predominantly still grapple with the language. Ivana, one of the children interviewed, reported helping their parents read official letters or accompanying them to various appointments as represented by this quote.

 '*Well, yeah once I learned English, I had to deal with everything. (laughs) Like when it came to things like reading something. (…) But I think that they relied on me a lot for help in terms of the language.*' (Ivana)

Children did not report that their parents needed their help from a young age in any other way. As has been mentioned, only one of the five parents speaks English. More than half mentioned going to classes, but with little effect. Jan attributed his lack of progress with English language skills to unfamiliarity, his age, and the fact that he can manage without it. Other parents also mentioned time-consuming parental responsibilities and inadequate zoom sessions over the periods of COVID-19-related restrictions.

DISCUSSION

Similarly to what the Slovakia's National Roma Strategy (2012) states regarding the poverty that Roma experience, the interviews conducted for this study showed that financial struggles are deep-rooted and taxing. As the participants said, these issues did not only force emigration but are also present obstacles when they think about returning to their home country. This should be considered by the Slovak government, as Slovakia is losing a large proportion of available workforce by creating unfavourable conditions for the Roma who simply ask for fair opportunities with decent livelihoods.

The results also supported the notion that the Roma as a group are vastly heterogenous, and especially so in Glasgow's Govanhill (Campbell et al., 2020). Interviewees reported that they perceive differences between Roma groups based on nationality, language spoken and economic status. This idea of heterogeneity was raised in connection to the effort to separate themselves from the poor Roma in Slovakia and/or the Traveller and Romanian Roma in the UK, who are seen as problematic. Roma are currently often seen across the literature as a homogenous group that can be generalised, which needs to be challenged. Authors should provide more information than stating their participants were 'Roma' (e.g. Crondahl and Karlsson, 2015) as this additional information impacts upon the scope of permissible generalisation.

The position that the Roma do not immigrate as 'benefit tourists', but that their main objective is to seek a better life in the UK both for themselves and their children was supported very strongly by the results of this study (Martin et al., 2017). Seeing that the parents reported that Scotland as a country is essentially free of racism, this corroborated previous findings that Roma who immigrate as adults are less likely to identify the subtler forms of racism in the UK since they lived under staggeringly obvious racist treatment in Slovakia for much longer than their children (Tileaga et al., 2019). Complete non-existence of racism is highly unlikely, which was highlighted by the children's experience of racism in school. One recent Freedom of Information request exposed that there were at least 2,200 reports of racism in Scottish schools over the last 3 years (Bol, 2021). Therefore, educating the Roma on exposing unfair treatment should be encouraged and particularly so considering a survey which estimated that 31% of Scottish population hold discriminatory feelings towards the Roma/Traveller ethnicity (Abrams et al., 2018).

The perceptions of integration between the interviewed Roma parents and their children were perhaps the most diverging. Children reported a stronger sense of belonging than their parents. Manning and Roy (2010) showed that subsequent generations are more likely to identify as British than first-generation immigrants. English proficiency and better education of the children compared to their parents opens many doors for them in the future. Algan et al. (2010) looked at education and employment of first- and second-generation immigrants in 3 European countries. The main finding across France, the UK and Germany was that economically immigrant communities do not fare as well as the natives. However, they also found a much smaller immigrant-native variance in school achievement when second-generation immigrants were considered compared to first-generation. This additional finding corroborates the high educational attainment of the Roma children. Out of the three countries, the outcomes of second-generation migrants in the UK exceeded their parents' outcomes the most. Although the children of Roma immigrants may not currently feel more British than Slovak, they are closer to feeling British than their parents. Therefore, it is important that the native population of the UK sees them and especially their future children (third-generation immigrants) as such.

Kalmijin's (2018) study posits that the differing rates of assimilation between parents and children could lead to conflict. Although the results of this study supported that the rates of assimilation are different, there was no evidence provided for any conflict resulting from the variance. Parents reported that it is wholly up to their children whether they remain or leave the UK as well as which identity and nationality they ascribe to. When asked about identity, children communicated holding multiple separate identities: Roma, Slovak and British. They did not feel pressure to pick just one and did not report any strain stemming from this. It has been suggested that the process of acculturation and maintaining several identities is possibly what facilitates integration, establishment of their place in the host society and loss of the stigmatised 'immigrant' status (Hack-Polay et al., 2021). In consequence, similarly to how Roma ethnicity has been added to the census options, social policy should account for this and allow for multiple identities to manifest (Wiley et al., 2019).

The language disparity between the immigrant parents and the children was once again shown to be significant (Mitchell et al., 2019). Although it has been suggested that children understand the necessity of language skills more acutely, their parents are nevertheless aware of the disadvantages language incompetence brings (Bhugra and Becker, 2005). They admit to a reliance upon their children when it comes to communication. This starts very early after migration. Consequently, it was clearly a hindrance to a sense of empowerment to the non-English speaking parents, both in terms of parental authority and perceived ability to take care of their family (Jackson,

2017). The main difference seems to derive from the effectiveness of teaching, rather than motivation. The older the immigrants are at arrival, the less likely they are to learn. This might be due to diminished cognitive ability and more limited contact with the new language and locals (Hartshorne et al., 2018). Contact with locals and exposure to the language is critical. Children are socialised at schools where they are forced to interact with natives: the desire to form friendships acts as an incentive to improve their English language skills. Parents lack a similar social environment as workplaces are Slavic dominated. A possible solution could be the incorporation of coffee mornings, where people can mingle and practice speaking.

The idea of empowerment was an important one that binds the main themes together. It seems to be pivotal when participants consider returning to Slovakia: even though only one participant said his mental health is affected by the dilemma this poses, it is an understandable point that might be a wider issue. As a result, mental health impact specifically needs further investigation. Kirmayer et al. (2010) included 113 studies in their analysis of mental health risks that immigrants are subject to. However, 'living in the two worlds', as described by one of the participants, is missing from the list. Perhaps they need more support that considers the potential of mental health issues rooted in indecisiveness and not knowing what the right choice is for the whole family. More research is needed to explore just how taxing this inner conflict is for the parents.

In terms of the limitations, the method of dyadic interviews is both a strength and a limitation. Having the dyads present allowed for interaction, resulting in wider scope of obtained information (Kvalsvik and Øgaard, 2021). However, it is hard to estimate whether their responses would not have been different had the interviews been done separately. It is possible that the parent-child dyads engaged in respondent bias (Kvalsvik and Øgaard, 2021). To avoid upsetting one another with their answers, they may have opted for more positive language. Moreover, individual interviews produce more in-depth personal data than dyadic interviews (Kvalsvik and Øgaard, 2021). Future research might benefit from combining both methods.

Another limitation was identified in the recruitment process. Since four out of five dyads were contacted through Community Renewal, it means that most participants have already been linked to social support networks. This research may not have reached other groups that are not as well supported and relatively new to the system and the area. Inclusion of younger children and more recent immigrants, although complicated, could be a valuable addition in future studies.

Future directions have been suggested throughout this section. However, in short, large-scale structural changes need to be made to create a more equal society, where people do not feel pressured to leave their homes, but also where home can be anywhere and for anyone.

CONCLUSION

The present study explored the perspectives of Slovak Roma children and parents currently living in Scotland and outlined six main themes. *Acceptance and racism* explored differences in experiences of racism in Slovakia compared to the UK. *Children have a future here* focused on the sense of belonging and opportunity that the children perceive they have in the UK. *Slovakia; a home but a temporary one* represented the view of both parents and children, who see Slovakia as a place to either try out or to simply visit. *Feelings of empowerment* illustrated that empowerment could come from both living in Slovakia and in the UK and how those feelings affect whether they want to stay or try to move back. *The role of community* showed that community was seen as both a positive and a negative factor and *the role of language* portrayed that there were differences between the parents' and children's level of English, and children were identified as significant helpers in that area.

The results of this study affirm many of the findings in the literature (Snyder et al., 2005; Fremlova and Ureche, 2011; Walsh et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2017; Nagy, 2018; Smith, 2018; Tileaga et al., 2019). However, the overall experiences of the participants painted a more positive picture than expected based on previous research (Paat, 2013; Clark, 2014; Kalmijin, 2018; Mullen, 2018; Clark, 2020). They were generally very content with their decision to emigrate and their life here. Moreover, the results also showed how unique each circumstance is through the nuances apparent in each theme. Community was seen as a positive supportive force, but also as a negative since some groups are frowned upon. Some parents feel more empowered in the UK, while others in Slovakia. It highlights the need for a more personalised treatment that takes each individual situation into account as one size does not fit all.

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