

Anti-Gypsyism in Sweden: Roma's and Travellers' Experiences of Bias-motivated Crime

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Abstract

Hundreds of Roma have been murdered in hate crime attacks in recent years in several European states. Even though anti-gypsyism has many common characteristics, its expression can differ in different countries. Despite the Nordic countries having recently become a "migration hot spot", when it comes to Roma, very few studies of hate crimes against Roma have been conducted in Scandinavia. This article, which is mostly based on in-depth interviews, is therefore an important contribution to the research field of hate crimes against Roma.

The purpose of the article is to examine and exploit Roma experiences of everyday harassment, discrimination and hate crime and to discuss the usefulness of the hate crime concept in the work to combat anti-gypsyism.

The interviewed Roma's narratives clearly show that prejudices against and the discrimination of Roma are part and parcel of the everyday and influence their lives in many respects. Some of the interviews show that as a Traveller/Roma you are exposed to physical violence and death threats. Despite this many of the victims do not report such incidents. This suggests that the number of unrecorded cases could be considerable. The damage that hate crime does is spread beyond the individual to the victim's entire group. These crimes constitute "message crimes" and tell the victim's group that they can also be targeted. The connection between prejudices, structural/institutional discrimination and individual hate crime incidents is strong. Hate crimes/bias motivated crimes against Roma are based on structural and individual factors. The hate crime concept as it is used judicially in these cases has great limitations, because as a rule these forms of "subtle" everyday racism and institutional/structural racism are not regarded as criminal according to Swedish law. On the whole, the hate crime concept does not take account of structures. Instead, it is the individual perpetrator who is at the centre of attention. Despite its limitations, the hate crime concept in the sense of stiffer penalties could still be a way of changing norms and behavior in the longer term.

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Introduction

“They succeeded in destroying the Roma children’s dreams. Now the children wonder why they have to go to school and be educated when they are on a police file. I no longer hear them say that they want to be police officers, barristers or civil servants, as they used to. They ask me if it is wrong to say that they are Roma” (Doris 28/3/2014).

In autumn 2013 the Dagens Nyheter newspaper revealed that the police in Skåne, in southern Sweden, had a database of Roma consisting of some 4,000 people referred to as ‘itinerant travellers’. Children were also on the database, as were deceased individuals. What was common for those filed was that they were Roma or had some kind of relation with a Roma (Dagens Nyheter 23/9/2013, Baar 2014, Kott 2014). The disclosed file takes us back to the notions of Swedish racial biology during the first half of the 20th century as a motive for recording Travellers/Roma (see for example Broberg & Tydén 1991).

Reactions to the database were enormous and were followed by a massive media interest, both in Sweden and internationally. The listed Roma expressed despair and shock, and the file can be seen as a backlash in the relations between Roma and the Swedish authorities. The Roma we interviewed in this article clearly indicated that there was an old inbuilt suspicion of the majority society and their motives, but also that there was a hope that the negative development was on the turn.

In 2000 Roma/Travellers were recognised as a national minority in Sweden, which was regarded by many in the group as a big step forward. The trust that the Swedish state wanted to build up between the Roma and the Swedish majority society was seriously damaged by the file, and many Roma said that the clock had been turned back several decades and that the incident had destroyed all confidence in society’s institutions. Many feel that as a group they have been singled out as criminals by the Swedish police (see for example Aftonbladet 23/9/2013; Helsingborgs Dagblad 24/9/2013; Sydsvenskan 24/10/2013 and interviews). The incident reveals that despite the good intentions on the part of the state authorities regarding the inclusion of Roma in Swedish society, cumbersome and biased structures remain within e.g. the police service and other parts of Swedish society, even though the Swedish self-image throughout most of the 20th century has been to regard Sweden as a tolerant and non-racist country (Pred 2000, Sawyer 2000). It has been difficult for many to realise that even in everyday Swedish life there is a breeding ground for xenophobic and racist manifestations, not least from a structural perspective.

According to the Swedish Government Official Report (SOU) 2010:55 *Roma’s Rights*, some discriminating structures in society are based on an antiziganism/anti-gypsyism that is both historically grounded and socially accepted. Anti-gypsyism can be seen as a special kind of racism, where xenophobic, negative prejudices and attitudes and discriminatory and offensive actions are specifically directed towards the Roma collective. Anti-gypsyism occurs both individually and structurally (Bartel 2008, SOU 2010:55 and Selling 2013:13).

Even though anti-gypsyism has many common characteristics, its expression can differ in different countries (see e.g. Cederberg 2010, FRA 2012). Margaret Brearley maintains that hundreds of Roma have been murdered in hate crime attacks in recent years in several European states. The role of the police in this is often controversial – the Roma themselves say that instead of supporting vulnerable Roma, the police often commit hate crimes against them (Brearley 2001, FRA 2008, Donnelly 2008, FRA 2013, James 2013, James 2014, Baar 2014). Thomas Hammarberg, the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights up to 2012, thinks that the situation has worsened in recent years: “Some xenophobic politicians and media have resuscitated century-old prejudices about Roma, which has sometimes legitimated violent attacks on individual Roma. The Roma have again become scapegoats. Today’s antiziganistic rhetoric is very similar to that used by Fascists and Nazis before the mass murders began in the thirties and forties” (Hammarberg 2008).

Despite the Nordic countries having recently become a “migration hot spot”, when it comes to Roma, very few studies of hate crimes against Roma have been conducted in Scandinavia, and thereby also in Sweden (Nordberg 2004). This article is therefore an important contribution to the research field of hate crimes against Roma.

In Swedish legislation hate crime is actually a non-juridical umbrella concept consisting of harassment of ethnic groups, unlawful discrimination and stiffer penalties based on the perpetrators’ motives in criminal acts. A stiffer penalty rule was introduced in Sweden in 1994 for crimes relating to violations of individuals, ethnic groups or any other group of people on the grounds of race, skin colour, national or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation or any other similar circumstance of the victim (The Swedish Penal Code Ch. 29 2 § 7 p and Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt 2014).

In 2012, 215 hate crimes were reported in Sweden, which according to the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention contained an anti-Roma motive (about 4% of all racist/xenophobic notifications). The number has increased since 2010 and 2011 (about 35 more reports since 2011 and approx. 65 more reports since 2010). The commonest types of crime in 2012 were unlawful threats/molestations followed by violent crimes. If we compare this with other reports of hate crime, the percentage of unlawful discrimination is high. The commonest category of crime venue is what is referred to in the statistics as other places, e.g. supermarkets and petrol stations. The perpetrators were often service staff (27%) or a neighbour (26%). According to the hate crime statistics provided by the Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention, the category with the lowest detection rate is anti-Roma hate crime.

Some researchers are critical of the hate crime concept and for different reasons question its meaningfulness and/or usefulness. For example, Jacobs & Potter (1998:8) maintain that stiffer penalties do not necessarily mean fewer group-based violations, that it is very difficult to prove hate crime motives in the legal system, and that the hate crime concept can result in individual rights becoming group rights, which can lead to greater antagonism between

different groups. According to Gerstenfeld (2007), the danger is that politicians may think that they have done all they can by establishing laws where a hate crime motive can mean stiffer penalties. Perry maintains that the concept of hate crime is unsatisfactory and unserviceable in some aspects, and points out that acts are carried out that are harmful and based on prejudice, but are still regarded as legal. Perry claims that there is actually a continuity that stretches from verbal harassment to extreme actions like murder. Even though some of the actions might not be counted as crimes in a judicial sense, they constitute serious social problems (Perry 2009: 402). Like Perry, Hall (2005) and Bowling (1999) claim that hate crime can best be seen as an ongoing process. Bowling (1999) maintains that hate crimes do not take place as isolated incidents, but must be seen as ongoing, dynamic and embedded in time, space and place; a process that can best be studied by means of qualitative interviews (Hall 2005 p 65). It is also important for hate crime to be understood in a context. Another important criticism is that the hate crime concept is directed towards individual offenders and thereby not considered as part of the structures that can be a breeding ground for hate crime and even be discriminatory in themselves (Card 2001).

The purpose of the article is to examine and exploit Roma experiences of everyday harassment, discrimination and hate crime and to discuss the usefulness of the hate crime concept in the work to combat anti-gypsyism.

In the article we will show, with the support of the analytical framework and our empirics, that structures and individual harassment/hate crime incidents are closely linked, that historical stereotypes of Roma/Travellers live on and influence the situation today, and that stiffer penalties for crimes where the motive is to violate someone can, despite the limitations, be a way of changing norms and behaviour in the long term. However, politicians cannot just sit back and think that stiffer penalties alone will solve the underlying problems of racism/anti-gypsyism, but need to realise that other measures also need to be put in place.

Analytical framework

Perry maintains that the long-standing structural, institutional discrimination of minorities concerning the categories race, ethnicity, religion and sexuality has laid the foundations for individual hate crimes as a continuation of the structural attacks. Hate crime is simply one of many mechanisms through which power relations are upheld. Here, structure refers to how power and resources are allocated and how relations between people take shape. Thus, perpetrators of hate crime do not break society's norms of violence, but create them (Perry 2001). Perry's point of departure is that identity politics, which means that we group ourselves, or are grouped, according to "affinity", has often led to negative hierarchies and hegemonies. Difference is constructed socially in a process of constant change through time and place. The divisions, the categorisation, is regarded as natural and taken for granted (Perry 2001:46 ff). In this process, various kinds of racism can appear at different social levels and in different contexts (see e.g. Brah 1993, Goldberg 1990).

Many researchers claim that hate crime is worse than other crimes because it signals to the group to which the victim belongs that it should “know its place”, and that some hate crime victims, compared with other victims, suffer long-term psychological damage such as fear, depression, anxiety, panic attacks, a loss of self-confidence and sleeping disorders (Iganski 2008; Iganski & Lagou 2009, Herek, Cogan & Gillis 2002, Hall 2005, Walters 2014). McDevitt, Balboni, Garcia & Gu (2001) say that the consequences of hate crime differ from those of other crimes in that the victims are replaceable – anyone in the affected group could be a victim. Hate crime also has a “ripple effect”, which means that the crime is propagated in the form of fear within and perhaps even outside the group (Lawrence 2003).

In order to be able to analyse and understand what the situation is like today for Roma/Travellers in countries such as Sweden it is necessary to study the historical context, not least in order to understand outsiderhood against the background of the stereotypes and prejudices that live on through the centuries as part of the structures in society that lead to a separation and ranking of different categories of people, sometimes referred to as structural racism. Society’s material and discursive resources are organised at the structural level (see e.g. Pincus 1999). Structural racism is closely connected to the concept of institutional racism, which is based on organisational rules and standards that can lead to prejudicial discrimination and/or offensive acts (see e.g. Wieviorka 1995, Winant 2000).

Racism against Roma – anti-gypsyism – can be expressed in what Essed (1990 and 1991) calls everyday racism. Essed says that everyday racism activates underlying power relations in a subtle way on an everyday basis. Even if an individual expresses or practises racism, it is nevertheless related to group power and social structures. The concept of everyday racism unites structural, institutional racism with the routine situations of everyday life, i.e. structures are linked together by everyday attitudes, such as prejudices and behaviour (Essed 1991:2). As everyday racism permeates everyday practices, it includes the behaviour and attitudes that the majority population are socialised into and seldom reflect on. There is often an underlying message in everyday racism that is based on notions of difference; that some, the Others, do not belong in the community and the geographical space. Everyday discourses are linked to discriminatory actions, and in some cases can escalate into open violence (Selling 2013:182).

Several of the studies conducted by Iganski (2008) on the different categories of people singled out for hate crime show that the crimes often take place in everyday, routine situations. The structures are there in society – in the local community – and the perpetrator is one of us. Every hate crime becomes a kind of building block in the hate structure, which in turn supports an individual’s actions.

Anti-gypsyism is above all a concept that embraces the majority society’s prejudices and constructions of the Roma category. However, it is not only the majority population in Sweden that is prejudiced against Roma. Other groups, some of which are themselves exposed to violations due to group affinity, can also be prejudiced against Roma. It is not uncommon for subordinate and vulnerable groups to come into conflict with each other (Green et al 2001, Iganski 2008). Roma are among the groups that are considered to be the

most hierarchically subordinate. Their status is very low among many other ethnic groups. Roma have always been assigned the role of deviating from the normal and have been stigmatised. In order to analyse the consequences of hate crime from a micro-perspective, where the victims' experiences are in the foreground, Goffman's theories are fruitful. In *Stigma* (1963/2007), Goffman describes the deviant person's role and identity and how people categorise those regarded as aliens. This stigma can be transferred between generations. Regardless of who commits the offences, in this article we focus on how Roma people experience and are subjected to actions based on prejudice.

Listening to victims' stories is vital in order to access these more subtle expressions of racial/ethnic prejudice and stereotypes. This has led us in this study to focus on the victims' experiences as the foreground for the following discussion. Iganski (2008) is one of several scholars who pleads for a victim-centred perspective in hate crime research, because this acknowledges the significance of the special injury inflicted on the victim through the committed hate crime compared to other crimes. Ahn Lin (2009) draws attention to the fact that researchers seldom ask how racial minorities define, experience and deal with the exposure that follows in the wake of hate crime. She therefore calls for empirical studies of the distinct experiences that the different groups of hate crime victims have.

Earlier research

The Roma have existed in Europe for about 700 years (Csepli & Simon 2004, Brearley 2001, Cederberg 2010). With a few exceptions in certain places and in different periods of time, the Roma have been persecuted and marginalised ever since they came to Europe (see e.g. Shahar 2007, Cederberg 2010, Widmann 2007, Katz 2007). Petrova (2003) and Puxon (1987) maintain that, general speaking, the Roma in Europe have been discriminated against and oppressed since the Middle Ages. In many countries today, Roma are socially, economically and politically excluded (Dodgson & Struthers 2005, Brearley, 2001; Guy, 2001; Nordberg, 2004; Prieto-Flores et al., 2012). Although anti-Roma sentiment has always existed in Europe, there was a rapid upsurge in hate crimes against Roma communities after the fall of Communism (Balogh, 2011; Brearley, 2001; Mirga, 2009; Postma, 1996). Today, anti-Roma hate speech and violence are increasing in intensity and becoming more deliberate and organised in character. Such tendencies are particularly visible in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, where the transition towards democracy and a market economy was accompanied by a rise in ethnic consciousness and nationalist groups that often used Roma as scapegoats for social and economic problems (Balogh, 2011; Brearley, 2001; Burjanek and Retter, 2001; Mirga, 2009; O'Nions, 2012; Vidra and Fox, 2012, Postma, 1996). Increases in anti-Roma hate incidents are also observed in 'old' EU member states, such as Italy and France (see e.g. Costi, 2010; Korando, 2012; Marinaro, 2003; McGarry, 2011; O'Nions, 2012, 2011; Sigona, 2011, 2005; Solimene, 2011).

An extensive literature examines the multidimensional problems that Roma people face in their everyday lives (Balogh 2011, Balogh 2009, Bjørge 2003, Brearley 2001, Dimitrova et al. 2014, Phillips 2010, Pogány 2006, Pogány 2006, Reemtsma 1993, Burjanek and Retter 2001,

O’Nions, 2012). In comparison with non-Roma, Roma have generally been associated in Europe with low education, high unemployment, poverty and poor health (Walsh, Este & Krieg 2008 and Hajioff & McKee 2000). Everyday discrimination and hate crime incidents are frequent occurrences (Phillips 2010), although very few crimes against Roma result in legal proceedings because both the general public and the judicial system are negatively inclined towards them (Brearly 2001, Petrova 2003). Goldston (2002:147) summarises that Roma are “among the most hated, misunderstood and mistreated of all people”.

The research on Roma in Europe is relatively extensive, whereas that in Sweden is limited (Rodell Olgac 2006:16 and Palosuo 2008). Many of the researchers who have written about Roma have done so on the basis of old conceptions and prejudices, of which Arnstberg (1998) is a relatively recent example. However, some research is different. How the Roma have been treated in Sweden in an historical perspective is accounted for in Svanberg & Tydén (1992) and in the Swedish Government initiated and newly published *Den mörka och okända historien, Vitbok om övergrepp och kränkningar av romer under 1900-talet* [The dark and unknown history, White Paper on the abuse and violations of Roma during the 20th century] (Ds 2014:8 Arbetsmarknadsdepartementet), which describes the discrimination and abuse of Roma/Travellers in Sweden during the 20th century.

Popoola (2000) studies the interplay between different ethnic groups in an area of Malmö, with a focus on Roma family settlements. Montesino (2002) maintains that attitudes towards and the treatment of Roma are linked to the Swedish state’s need for control. The history of Swedish Roma is dealt with in Cederberg (2010), Hazell (2011), Åkerfeldt (2013), Lindholm (1995) and (Svensson 1993) have described Travellers’ past and present situations. Their books are largely based on interviews with Travellers. Svensson (1993) also looks at Travellers from the perspective of their resistance to “power”.² A Scandinavian (historical) perspective of Travellers is taken up by Minken (2009). Broberg & Tydén (1991) have studied Swedish sterilisation policy and its consequences for Travellers. Selling (2013) accounts for and discusses anti-gypsyism in Sweden from an historical perspective within a context of social, religious and racist prejudices and their consequences for the categories Roma and Travellers. In the Equality Ombudsman’s report, *Diskriminering av romer i Sverige* [Discrimination of Roma in Sweden] (2004), the conclusion is drawn that discrimination against Roma is widespread, both at a structural and individual level, and that prejudices based on antiziganism are common in society as a whole. Even though direct legislative discrimination no longer exists, anti-gypsyism has remained – to a lesser degree as an ideology, but to a much larger extent as everyday practice. Rodell Olgac (2006) studies the relation between the Roma minority and the majority society as it is expressed in Swedish schools. One of her conclusions is that institutional discrimination has led to the academic failure and marginalisation of many Roma children and young people. A follow-up of Roma children in Swedish schools was conducted by Rodell Olgac & Dimiter-Taikon (2013). In the

² Svensson has been strongly criticised for publishing the names and pictures of Travellers subjected to police interventions (Hazell 2011).

report *Unga romers situation – en intervjustudie* [The Situation of Young Roma – An Interview Study], de los Reyes (2009) concludes that an important prerequisite for improving the situation of young Roma is to introduce measures that counteract structural discrimination.

Method and Material

This article is mostly based on in-depth interviews conducted within the project entitled Hate Crime –A Challenge to Democracy. This is a multidisciplinary study on hate crime in Skåne that focuses on the causes, consequences and support initiatives, and is financed by the Swedish Research Council and The Swedish Crime Victim Compensation Support Authority. The project studies groups that are often exposed to crime, such as Jews, Muslims, Afroswedens, Roma/Travellers and the LBTG community, and this article is based on one of the project's sub-studies.

In this article the focus is on those who are perceived as Roma or have a Roma identity. The Roma sub-study began in the autumn of 2012, when the research group took part in a number of activities that different Roma organisations in southern Sweden had arranged in connection with the celebration of the Roma's 500th anniversary in Sweden. During the gatherings representatives of the various Roma organisations talked about Roma experiences of exposure and discrimination in different everyday situations. That same autumn, the researchers also met six representatives of the Roma Information and Knowledge Centre in Malmö to present the study and discuss their experiences of discrimination, abuse and hate crime. We have also taken part in public events, such as the UN Observance Day on 21st March 2014 where Roma talked about harassment and anti-gypsyism, and the presentation of the White Paper, an event that was organised by the Swedish Government and the City of Malmö on 10th April 2014. At these events the Roma's own experiences of anti-gypsyism were presented and discussed.

We have come into contact with our informants via Roma organisations, the Roma Information and Knowledge Centre in Malmö, the Roma Cultural Centre in Malmö, Malmö Roma Discussion Centre, anti-discrimination offices in Helsingborg and Malmö and personal contacts that have led to other contacts through the snowball method. Most of those who appear in our interviews are conscious activists with large contact networks and are often organised in various Roma associations where they enthusiastically pursue issues related to the rights of Roma.

With the aid of semi-structured interviews, the informants communicate their experiences of discrimination, everyday harassment and hate crime. A total of 17 people – 11 men and 6 women aged between 25 and 75 years – were interviewed in depth for this article. The interviews contribute to highlighting the experiences, approaches and resources that can be mobilised in order to deal with different situations, and also make it possible to capture the feelings, reflections and circumstances that affect people's everyday situations. However, what is said in one interview should not be interpreted as a direct reflection of an actual course of events. The informants mainly live in southern Sweden and have been given fictitious names in the text. They also have different nationalities, class and religious

backgrounds. After conducting the in-depth interviews, a group of twelve Roma serving as a kind of focus group contributed written comments on the tentative results, which we regard as vital in terms of not just seeing Roma/Travellers as research objects. There is an enormous mistrust of the Swedish majority society. This also includes the research community, where research on Roma has sometimes had a damaging affect on them (Ds 2014:8). Creating trust between the research group and different Roma has been important in order to gain access to Roma experiences. As our purpose is to describe Roma/Traveller's experiences of hate crime and similar incidents, we have also chosen to include their views of our preliminary research results. The study is not a generalisation of all Roma individuals and groups, but rather contributes to a deeper understanding of those affected from the Roma's and Travellers' own perspectives.

The interviews were conducted in Swedish, lasted between one and two hours, and were tape-recorded and transcribed. The focus group interview also lasted for between one and two hours. The authors have made minor revisions to the language used in the interview quotations when translating from Swedish to English, although in that process we have tried to keep as close to the original as possible. Data was collected and analyses were conducted throughout the research process. The interview guide was revised regularly to suit the varying circumstances; questions were added and some were omitted. The analysis began by listening to the taped interviews and reading the transcriptions and documentation. The interviews were coded according to the central themes that had been identified during the above process, and comparisons of the authors' various interpretations were made. The coding was revised in the light of the researchers' interpretations. Theoretical concepts were then applied in order to analyse the interpretations. This led to the emergence of new questions, which were addressed by returning to the empirical material – an abductive process that was enhanced by alternating between theory and the empirical material (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 1994). We analysed the data using various grounded theory techniques (Charmaz, 2006) and narrative analysis (Miller, 2000). Miller (2000) maintains that narrative interviews in studies based on life stories or biographical research are much more oriented towards eliciting the interviewee's perspective than objective facts. To a great extent the interviewer is part of the process, in that he or she is included in the construction of the interviewee's story. In this article we have chosen to allow many of the informants to speak for themselves by making use of short yet representative quotations from the interviews we conducted.

The Dagens Nyheter newspaper's revelation of the police database of Roma led to enormous coverage in the Swedish and international media and the database was followed up in a number of reports in the autumn of 2013. Roma from throughout Sweden were interviewed, and their stories give a good insight into their interpretations of the file and how they experienced everyday discrimination and prejudices in Swedish society. For this article a total of 53 newspaper articles were collected from the two national newspapers Dagens Nyheter and Aftonbladet and from local newspapers in Skåne, such as Sydsvenska Dagbladet, Kvällsposten and Helsingborgs Dagblad during 2013. They are mostly used as background.

Result and analysis

“You are all criminals”

The centuries-old oppression of Roma in Sweden is imprinted in people’s minds, particularly amongst the older Roma, who harbour many bitter memories. After the disclosure of the Roma database, the cautious optimism of the early 21st century due to the granting of minority status rapidly reverted to pessimism and suspicion, and old memories were again reactivated. This is clearly reflected in our interview material, as well as in many of the newspaper reports in autumn 2013 after the disclosure of the file.

John, who came to Sweden from the former Yugoslavia in the 1970s, is one of the people on the database. When he was only three-years-old, everyone in the family except John was executed by the Nazis. Compared to the conditions under which Roma live in many parts of Europe, John thinks that Sweden is good. However, in the light of the database, he considers that the Roma’s minority status is in actual fact nothing more than a paper exercise. John and his entire family ended up in the police file – which upset him enormously.

It isn’t only John and his wife Annika who are on the database, but also their little grandchild – a little baby – and Annika’s parents, who have been dead for over 40 years. In the media many have shown great sympathy with the Roma, and several of those affected have been interviewed and expressed their criticism of the database. Those interviewed have also pointed to the number of innocent people, including small children and the dead, in the file. Many Roma have said that they intend to claim compensation. Annika talks about the fear and threats towards Roma following the revelation of the police file: “Those who threaten us say: ‘why should you have compensation? You are all criminals and shouldn’t be in Sweden’” (Annika 17/1/2014).

Although the granting of minority status has led to improvements for the Roma, Annika also experiences that some things have got worse:

“Many are envious of us because we have become a bit too big in society. And many don’t like that. This file has meant that people can now say what they really think about us. Some people have never liked the Roma” (ibid).

The family has been exposed to hate crime and similar incidents due to being listed, but refuse to report them to the police for fear of reprisals: “We daren’t report anyone; it’s as simple as that. We just have to put up with it and accept all the abuse” (ibid). Annika also says that other Roma in Malmö do not report such incidents to the police either. Following the revelation of the database a reduction in the reporting of hate crimes to the police has been noted.

“We daren’t call the police if anything happens, we don’t know whether they will come and help us. We have talked about what we should do if something does happen. Should we deal with it ourselves, help each other, or call the police? Many Roma have said that it is better to take matters into our own hands and help each other” (ibid).

John's and Annika's son Steven is on the database as well. Steven says that he wishes that the file had never been made public, especially as many of the old prejudices have now resurfaced: "Most of my anger is directed at society. At the police. They haven't explained why. Why children? Why me?" (Steven 17/1/2014)

Although as an adult Annika does not have any personal, negative experiences of the police, memories from her childhood have been reawakened. When Annika was little the family lived in tents and the police often came to drive them away from their living quarters:

"We were simply people who shouldn't be seen. We should be hidden in the woods, we had no electricity, we had nothing, we had no water. But now they daren't drive us out" (Annika 17/1/2014).

Few of those interviewed are surprised about the database. For example, Susanna says: "I am not surprised, but had a feeling that we as Roma were listed. But it hurts" (28/3/2014). Doris, who is quoted at the beginning, is a native language teacher and meets Roma pupils every day. She says that the young people thought that it was strange that Roma were on a police database and that they reacted angrily towards the police:

"There was a lot of hate towards the police and it took all my strength to explain that they couldn't hate all the police. The children were upset. When I heard about the database on the news I thought: Sweden was the first country to have ideas about racial biology, so this is nothing new" (Doris 28/3/2014).

Earlier, Doris had been careful to instil in her pupils that they should be proud of their international Roma origins, but when the database was made public her pupils said that "it is better for me to keep quiet about being Roma". Despite the negative consequences of the file, Doris points out that it has also had positive effects. Many of her colleagues have shown a "positive empathy" and great sympathy and think that the file is wrong, which she interprets as many in the majority society "don't think in the same way as them". However, Doris has also seen that on the Internet some people have expressed great joy over the database, and said that "the Roma should be sent to the gas chambers", a form of online hate crime (Doris 28/3/2014).

Roma and the authorities

During the first half of the 20th century, up to the end of the 1960s, it was primarily Travellers who were the focus of the Swedish authorities' interest in control and discipline. For most of the 20th century Travellers did not have any possibility of becoming part of the community. The elderly in particular had bad experiences (Lindholm 1995, Hazell 2011, Selling 2013).

However, in the 1960s when Travelling people, or vagrants as they were then called, began to be seen as a social group and not an ethnic group, the conditions improved for many in this category. Instead, the authorities' interest was increasingly directed towards "... the Swedish

Roma, before this it was mainly the Travelling people who experienced discrimination on the part of the authorities. After that they directed their attention to other Roma” (Jakob 5/3/2013).

In our interviews with younger and older Travellers it is mainly fear of the Swedish authorities that is described, and especially the fear that the children would be taken into custody. Erik, who is a Traveller, says that when he was young and rode in the car with his parents they were always afraid that the authorities would take him and his siblings away from them: “When we were out driving and saw a police car it was just a matter of diving down onto the floor and hiding” (Erik 22/3/2013).

There was also a great fear of being sterilised. Jakob describes sterilisation as something frightening, a kind of control mechanism that society could make use of. “An awful lot of Travellers are sterilised. In fact, if you meet someone who is a bit older, 60 and above and they don’t have children, it’s probably because they have been sterilised” (Jakob 5/3/2013). Jakob’s grandmother was sterilised and the informant Emilia also has relatives who were sterilised because they were Travellers (Emilia 22/3/2013). Jakob says that in the 1960s state policy was changed for the better for Travellers, although a lot of prejudices remained, e.g. among the police.

Even though the conditions improved for Travellers, many problems still remain for other Roma groups, also now in the 21st century. Suspicion of the state and government agencies is still very strong. Maria, a young Roma born in Sweden in the 1980s said in an interview: “We Roma are suspected of everything and we are afraid of everything” (Maria 15/3/2013). Although Maria is not afraid of the police herself, she knows many Roma who are.

Ned, another informant, thinks that the police have preconceived ideas about Roma because during the course of their work they meet Roma who commit crimes. Like other informants, Ned says that the lack of trust in the police and the “difficult procedures” of reporting mean that Roma do not report abusive incidents and hate crimes, despite these being “everyday fodder for Roma”. He also says that there is considerable fear and suspicion of the majority society on the part of the Roma, which means that “you try to adapt” and “are on your guard and are afraid of doing wrong” (Ned 11/5/2012). Doris says that she doesn’t report incidents to the police because: “For me it’s normal, we accept the discrimination that exists against us” (Doris 28/3/2014).

Suspicion and fear of different institutions has a lot to do with the fact that representatives of the categories Roma/Travellers as a collective have been associated with prejudices and stereotypes (see also Selling 2013). The different Roma groups live with a collective ethnic stigmatisation and have experiences of not being regarded as individuals.

The power of the authorities brings its own special fear, but structures and the tendency to see all Roma as a collective permeate many everyday encounters. However, the Roma’s new

minority status means that the Swedish authorities are obliged to find new ways of reaching out to the Roma group and bring about change.

Exposure at school

The majority of the informants have been exposed in various ways at school, both in terms of bullying and hearing nasty comments such as: “I have heard that all gypsies steal” to “bloody gypsies” and the like, which reflects the results of other studies of Roma schoolchildren (Rodell Olgac & Dimiter-Taikon 2013).

Ned was born in Czechoslovakia and his entire family fled and came to Sweden at the end of the 1970s when Ned was seven-years-old. In spite of the fact that conditions for Roma were better in Sweden than they had been in Czechoslovakia, their exposure as a family continued, albeit it in different ways. Also in Sweden the family discovered “that you were dealt with and judged in advance, instead of seeing who the person was and that there was the same stereotyped image of how Roma behave”. Ned was placed in an introductory class for newly arrived schoolchildren consisting of only Roma, which was called the gypsy class. He stayed there for two years and was then moved to an ordinary class:

“When I was moved to an ordinary class a Roma pupil in that class told me that I would have to stand up for myself and show that I was strong. I didn’t understand why. I was 10-years-old but later I understood. Several of the boys in the class said: ‘You gypsies cannot play football’, ‘you gypsies have no food in the fridge, etc’. This image was impressed on children who were 10-years-old. What was surprising was that I wasn’t surprised that they said things like this. It had already been drummed into me that this is what people thought about Roma in general” (Ned 15/3/2013).

The informant Birger was also bullied at school until he learned to defend himself: “In the end I had to fight and use my fists” (Birger 26/4/2013). Steven was often called “gypsy brat” at school (Steven 17/1/2014). Susanna kept herself to herself at school and was called “bloody gypsy” by other children (28/3/2014). When the teacher of Anna’s son discovered that he was Roma she was shocked: “she had an image of what Roma were like and judged them all accordingly” (Anna 26/4/2/2013).

In two towns in southern Sweden, Malmö and Helsingborg, Roma have been employed in recent years as bridge-builders in the Department of Education and Leisure and the Employment Agency in order to help as many Roma as possible to get jobs and to create better relations between schools and Roma parents. It is important that bridge-builders are people with Roma culture- and language competence. Paul is one of those who work as a bridge-builder and has the task of getting the children to go to school:

“The problem is that Roma children don’t go to school. It wasn’t so long ago that Roma children had no right to education. It was only in the 1960s that they were allowed to attend school. Before that they couldn’t. We work with this so that the parents understand that it is

OK to say that you are Roma and that you have the right to go to school. It is still ingrained in the parents that you won't get a job regardless of whether you go to school or not" (Paul 27/3/2013).

One of Paul's tasks is to find out which pupils are Roma in the different schools in the town, because many Roma pupils do not disclose their cultural identity/ethnicity to teachers and schoolmates. When he has found them, the parents are contacted and Paul visits them at home to tell them about the school. Roma pupils have the right to education in their mother-tongue, but according to Paul very few pupils in the schools in the town take advantage of this possibility. One reason for this is that other pupils in the school will know that they are Roma. Paul knows from his own experience that the denial of one's origins is costly:

"I have also felt shame. To not have the courage to say that you are Roma. We have an uphill struggle ahead of us to get those who are Roma to admit that they are Roma. They should dare to say that. They have heard their parents say that they shouldn't confess to being Roma. I didn't have any problems at school myself, but then I didn't tell anyone that I was Roma" (Paul 27/3/2013).

Maria was told by her grandparents not to tell anyone at school that she was Roma, but to say that she was Serbian. It was only in Year 7 that "I felt that I didn't want to keep on lying" and talked at school about her Roma identity, largely due to the fact that there were many Roma pupils at the school, which created a sense of safety (Maria 15/3/2013). Annika's grandchildren said nothing at school about being Roma, but said that they came from another country because "they risked being beaten up by other pupils" (Annika 17/1/2014). Birger, who is a Roma activist, says that he no longer fights for himself, but that things will be better for his children: "What we Roma experience every day and try to suppress and the fact that all Roma children grow up in these psychological conditions means that they end up in the risk zone for future addiction (Birger 26/4/2013). Other studies point to similar results, namely that Roma children and Roma families often keep quiet about their identity (Rodell Olgac & Dimiter-Taikon 2013, SOU 2010:55).

Stigmatisation begins early, especially when Roma children start school. Their schoolmates have preconceived ideas about Roma, which according to the informants is expressed in terms of derogatory comments, bullying and physical harassment at school. Like other stigmatised groups, Roma children often have a sense of "shame", in this case the knowledge that the Roma have a bad reputation and that they therefore have to hide their ethnic/cultural identity in order to appear "normal". This has a high price – a constant worry about being exposed (Goffman 1963/2007). The children therefore have to live a kind of double life, which affects their self-image and self-esteem (see also Rodell Olgac & Dimiter-Taikon 2013).

Discrimination and exclusion

In the Government Report "Roma's rights – a strategy for Roma in Sweden", it is noted that Roma are "to a very high degree excluded from the labour market". There are a number of

reasons for this, such as the disappearance of traditional occupations, discrimination, and a low level of education. Discrimination and insufficient access to the right to work are two of the most important factors behind the Roma's labour market exclusion (SOU 2010:55).

The city of Malmö can be named as an example of the serious situation of Roma with regard to the labour market, where there are about 10,000 Roma in a population of around 300,000. Of these, only about 10 per cent of those of working age are calculated as having a job (Söderman & Ström 2008 and Popoola & Söderman 2010).

Katrin, herself Roma, is employed as a bridge-builder at a job centre in southern Sweden and has the task of encouraging Roma to go there, register as unemployed and be supported in their search for work, further education or work experience. The stigmatisation that the Roma are exposed to means that there is a tendency for them to give up and not even try to find work. Katrin says that many Roma do not want to disclose that they can speak Romany on their CVs, because they will then be identified by the employer as Roma. Similar to the strategy employed by many Roma schoolchildren, they would rather specify which country they come from (Katrin 16/3/2013).

In her work as a bridge-builder, Katrin has come across cases where it has eventually been revealed that someone is Roma and that they have then been cold-shouldered by their colleagues. One job seeker was given a trial period of employment at a workplace, but when the employer found out that she was Roma she was asked to leave (Katrin 16/3/2013). The informant Steven had a good job with a furniture company, but when he told them six months later that he was Roma he was dismissed on the spot. He chose not to report the company for discrimination because he had no faith in the government authorities (Steven 17/1/2014). When Ned was applying for jobs he was invited for an interview and received strong signals that he would get the job – until he was asked about his origins. Ned said that he had been born in Czechoslovakia, but was Roma. The employer reacted immediately and never got in touch (Ned 15/3/2013).

The informant Cliff said that when it comes to looking for work “everyone lies and says that they are not Roma but something else. It has happened that when you get a job and it leaks out that you are Roma there is no more job” (Cliff 26/3/2013). There is great psychological pressure in constantly thinking that someone will discover that “I am Roma”:

“If you have a job and you are happy you don't tell anyone. You keep quiet because you don't want to spoil things. But it is stressful and you are always anxious about someone finding out. I haven't experienced this myself, but I know many who have. When you have eventually got somewhere” (Cliff 26/3/2013).

Anna also has experiences of not telling people that she is Roma at her various workplaces. She is currently working at a large cultural institution in southern Sweden and other Roma often ask her: “How did you get a job there? Did you tell them you were Roma?” No, I haven't said I am Roma” (Anna 26/4/2013). Anna says that having to constantly think about

whether to tell people that you are Roma or not when looking for work is “very psychologically trying, although it soon becomes common practice because it is something you learned as a child”. Susanna says that many of her Roma friends with jobs do not tell anyone in the workplace that they are Roma for fear of being sacked. Some people also change their surnames (Susanna 28/3/2014).

What the informants have in common, both at school and in the labour market, is that they often hide their Roma identity and live with the psychological stress of constantly being on their guard due to the risk of being “exposed”.

The informants talk about experiences of the housing market, where discrimination is also found: “No Roma would tell a landlord that they had a Roma background before signing the contract. And not even then, because they wouldn’t want to risk the contract being declared null and void” (Ned 5/11/2012). Cliff explains that: “in the housing market we often say that we are from Greece or Italy. If I say that I am Roma they say “no, no we don’t want you here” (26/3/2013).

In the interviews it emerges that discrimination and verbal abuse are very common, which has also been indicated above in schools and workplaces, when looking for somewhere to live and in the health service. But there is also a fear of being exposed to physical violence. Cliff, who is a Roma in his thirties and was born in Sweden, has many Roma friends who have been physically threatened and exposed to violence because they are Roma. “They have said that you are a gypsy and that you’ll be killed ... Swedes and other foreigners have all said this” (Cliff 26/3/2013).

Even though the threat of violence is ever-present, Birger thinks that the everyday suspicion that Roma are subjected to, and the negative associations that group affinity evokes, is even worse. This can be referred to as everyday racism, or everyday anti-gypsyism.

Stigma symbols

All the Roma who have been interviewed say that stigmatisation affects them in many everyday situations and restricts their quality of life. In practice, this means having to constantly think about in which context it is possible to reveal one’s identity, or whether Roma affiliation should be concealed in order to appear “normal”. The majority of the informants say that they can pass as southern Europeans because “phenotypically” there isn’t much that can “reveal” that they are Roma. Despite this, Doris says that she is identified as Roma due to her appearance (Doris 28/3/2014). However, as Roma there are signs other than the phenotypical that communicate social information to others about who they are – so-called stigma symbols (see Goffman 1963/2007).

Not being allowed onto camping sites is a recurring theme for Roma. As Andrej says, “the attendants come up with all kinds of excuses with which to turn Roma away”. Birger has

experienced something similar: “We have encountered problems at camping sites and have not been allowed in simply because we are Roma”.

According to Birger, he and other Roma no longer report the camping sites for discrimination; they have tried doing this in the past without success. Anna agrees, and claims that many Roma feel that they will not be taken seriously by the police. She also says that some Roma dare not buy large caravans with special curtains for the windows now, because they don't want to be identified as Roma (Anna 26/3/2013). Caravans have become stigma symbols through which the Roma can be identified.

Cliff also underlines that as a Roma you don't report incidents of abuse. “As a Roma you daren't report things to the police. You are outside society” (Cliff 26/3/2013). In other words, the number of unrecorded incidents is probably great with regard to the reporting of hate crime and discrimination.

In some cases one's name can reveal a Roma background and serve as a stigma symbol. John was unable to find work and changed his name: “With my real name I was unable to get a job. The minute I changed my identity I got a job” (John 17/1/2014).

Other powerful stigma symbols are the traditional costumes that some Roma women wear; something that the women notice when shopping in different shops and are often treated as potential shoplifters, which they experience as offensive: “This feeling of being pointed at and regarded as a thief or in some way inferior. Why is it that just the Roma group is treated in this way?” (Ned 11/5/2012) It has been shown that almost 70 per cent of the approx. 230 reports from Roma sent to the Equality Ombudsman between 2004 and 2010 were from Roma women. The majority of these reports, around a hundred, were from Roma women alleging that they had been discriminated against and harassed in shops while buying food or clothes. Likewise, Roma women reported discrimination when they booked into a hotel or went to a restaurant (Equality Ombudsman 2011). Gender and ethnicity go hand in hand. The Equality Ombudsman notes that while buying food in a shop is an ordinary and unproblematic act for the majority population, for many Roma women and children it is a psychological ordeal. It is not uncommon for children to watch their mothers being exposed to this type of abuse (The Equality Ombudsman, Roma Rights 2011).

Although Doris does not wear traditional Roma clothes she still is identified as Roma due to phenotypical markers when she shops, which have made her “hate going into shops”. In the shops she is watched by staff who she perceives as checking that she doesn't steal. “I feel that I am discriminated against every time I set foot in a shop, but for me it's an everyday occurrence” (Doris 28/3/2014). The harassment of Roma in public places highlights an historic continuity when it comes to people's approaches and attitudes towards Roma.

There is an overriding aspiration among all the informants to be able to express their Roma identity without fear of reprisals. There is also a strong desire and wish to “keep their

language and their culture”. In order to facilitate integration in Swedish society, the Roma group to which Annika and John belong took the decision to not wear their traditional costume on an everyday basis when minority status was granted in 2000 in order to “blend in better and not be stared at in shops” (17/1/2014). There is also an anxiety among the interviewed Roma that integration in Swedish society will lead to the abandonment of that which is associated with the Roma culture and language. With regard to Travellers, the strong stigmatisation had meant that many have chosen to deny their travelling background completely. To a large extent this group has been assimilated into Swedish society.

Jakob grew up in a travelling family, but the family concealed this in order to protect him. They didn't speak Romany when they thought he might hear them, although he still remembers that the older members of the family spoke a special language when other relatives were present. It was only when his grandfather was dying that his grandmother told him that they were Travellers. Later, his mother told him that “grandma had been sterilised, as had many of his grandfather's brothers. She talked a lot about orphanage children and compulsory care. Many horrors in the family” (Jakob 5/3/2013).

Jakob is now a spokesperson for the Travellers group and is actively engaged in keeping the Travelling Romany language alive, especially as it is in danger of disappearing now that Travellers have become part of the majority population. Other Roma groups also face a similar danger of becoming an invisible part of the majority society and thereby losing their cultural roots, or continuing to be an excluded group.

Conclusions

Sweden is a society that wants to appear as equal for all groups of people and in some respects improvements have been made with regard to the group Roma. However, in the interviews it is clear that these advances are feeble. The police database shows that there is a big gap between official discourses and apologies for how the Roma have been treated in Sweden historically and the everyday reality of the Roma. The database shows that prejudices against Roma as a group have deep structural roots. The database has stirred up anger and strong reactions in Sweden among the Roma, and many non-Roma have reacted with sharp criticism. At the same time, the police have a credibility capital among the majority population, which means that the connection between Roma and criminality is in danger of being strengthened. For anti-Roma forces the database can be interpreted as a confirmation of their own stereotyping of Roma.

Before the media revealed the police database of Roma in the autumn of 2013 there was an air of optimism among the representatives of the various Roma organisations in southern Sweden; something that was also reflected in our interviews. In many ways the Roma's situation had been highlighted in e.g. government inquiries, and there was confidence that improvements would be made when minority status was obtained. However, the Roma informants paint a very dark picture of the conditions they live under in Sweden today, despite the fact that in many respects their lives are much better than those of Roma in other

parts of Europe. As a collective they are clearly stigmatised, which more or less affects all areas of life and situations as long as they are identified as Roma.

The interviewed Roma's narratives clearly show that prejudices against and the discrimination of Roma are part and parcel of the everyday and influence their lives in many respects. The narratives are about how already as children the Roma learn to conceal their Roma identity. Several of the informants talk about how they are forced to live a kind of double life because they are afraid of being "exposed" as Roma; something that is very psychologically stressful. It is also a psychological strain to have to deny your origins – a kind of structural injustice that we think should be called bias-motivated crime. In many ways, society shows that it is assimilation that is required in order to be accepted. Not being able to choose your identity is also a gross violation in itself. So, even though Anna says in an interview that she has learned this as a child, she means that it is "psychologically very trying".

The interviewed Roma have been affected by hate crime or similar incidents and have been discriminated against in different situations just because they are Roma. Although they appear to be personally affected, the group as a whole knows that they can get into difficulties just because they belong to the group Roma. The damage that hate crime does is spread beyond the individual to the victim's entire group (Iganski 2003, Iganski 2008, McDevitt, Balboni, Garcia & Gu 2001). These crimes constitute "message crimes" and tell the victim's group that they can also be targeted (Lawrence 2003).

According to Perry (2003), an important explanation as to why hate crime occurs is when the power relations between the different groups start to change in society – when subordinate groups assert their rights to equal treatment and hate crime perpetrators respond by trying to restore the old order. When the Roma were granted Swedish minority status their conditions improved in several ways and the old power order, where Roma are marginalised, began to change. At the same time, anti-Roma forces were mobilised that sought to restore the old order; something that Anna talks about when her family was exposed to hate crime and similar incidents after the police database was made public. The strong reactions of many people in Sweden to the database, and the enormous media hype where the Roma were given huge preferential right of interpretation, also activated anti-Roma forces. That Roma claimed compensation for being listed also means that the Roma do not "know their place" in the hierarchy, and in that sense have overstepped the boundaries and should therefore be "punished" by hate crime perpetrators.

Some of the interviews (Jakob and Cliff) show that as a Traveller/Roma you are exposed to physical violence and death threats. Despite this, Jakob and Cliff choose – probably like the majority of other victims – not to report such incidents. This suggests that the number of unrecorded cases could be considerable. There may be a number of reasons for this, but one important explanation is the suspicion of government agencies – agencies that during the 20th century tried to control, discipline and sometimes "eradicate" by sterilisation. The authorities' actions are considered to lie at the heart of many of the group-based violations that the

interviewees have been exposed to, as exemplified by Andrej's statement about institutions' everyday harassment of Roma. In the interviews, the biased nature of anti-gypsyism is emphasised as being particularly obvious among the police authorities (cf. also Wigerfelt, Wigerfelt & Kiiskinen 2014). The connection between prejudices, structural/institutional discrimination and individual hate crime incidents is strong (cf. Perry 2001). The popular, stereotyped discourses of "gypsies" and "vagrants" converge with the authorities' historically based view and treatment of these groups and correspond with verbal and physical hate crime incidents rooted in anti-gypsyism. In other words, hate crimes/bias-motivated crimes against Roma are based on structural and individual factors (cf. also Wigerfelt & Wigerfelt 2014).

The hate crime concept as it is used judicially in these cases has great limitations, because as a rule these forms of "subtle" everyday racism and institutional/structural racism are not regarded as criminal according to Swedish law (cf. also Essed 1990 and Perry 2009). On the whole, the hate crime concept does not take account of structures. Instead, it is the individual perpetrator who is at the centre of attention (Card 2001).

Hall (2005) points out that in a judicial context hate crime is dealt with as a series of isolated, distinct and separate incidents, but should instead be seen as an ongoing process that is embedded in time, space and place. This is very clearly illustrated by the Roma group as a minority that is regularly exposed to incidents based on prejudice. Many of the incidents are often regarded as insignificant by the majority population if they are seen as isolated events. However, if one looks at how they repeatedly affect people in a number of areas and erode the self-esteem of individuals, the consequences are very serious (cf. Bowling 1999).

Despite its limitations, the hate crime concept in the sense of stiffer penalties for crimes in which the aim is to violate someone could be a way of changing norms and behaviour in the longer term. Stiffer penalties facilitate an actual risk of coming up against legal sanctions and secondarily by an additional risk of experiencing social sanctions. In the longer term and supported by social norms, the law can also influence people's attitudes. It often takes one or more generations for radical change to take place. It is primarily the legal potential to influence the social norms in society that initially determine whether a law will live up to its intentions.

If legislation is to work it requires groups like Roma/Travellers to dare to and want to report incidents, despite the historical background of not trusting the authorities, especially the police, who are also considered to violate Roma individuals due to their Roma affinity. A lot of work still needs to be done if the Swedish authorities are to gain the confidence of Travellers and Roma. Politicians cannot just sit back and imagine that stiffer penalties will solve the underlying problems of racism/anti-gypsyism without more political measures being put in place. Although hate crime is clearly a big problem, it comes across in the interviews that more or less subtle discrimination is an even bigger problem (see also Donnelly 2008). Camping sites, shops, places of entertainment and workplaces are the most common places in which Roma are particularly exposed to bias-motivated crime.

Anti-gypsyism is still an important part of the Roma people's everyday experience and a contributing factor to the lack of trust of Swedish society. Measures must therefore be taken that challenge stigmatising prejudices and counteract anti-gypsyism in all its forms. Romanis are still often viewed as passive recipient of policies. Instead they must be seen as actors in the implementation of these anti-racist policies.

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This paper was subject to open peer review

Open Peer Review Comments

Wigerfelt, B. and Wigerfelt, A.S. 'Anti-Gypsyism in Sweden: Roma's and Travellers' Experiences of Bias-motivated Crime'

I am very pleased to act as 'open reviewer' of this article and applaud this very process as we should all be prepared to stand by what we say.

Wigerfelt and Wigerfelt have examined the 'hate crime' experiences of Roma and Travellers in Sweden from a qualitative perspective in this article and I would suggest their work is excellent on a number of fronts:

1. The authors have employed a comprehensive and clear methodology that informs their discussion in an effective and reflective fashion. The article fulfils its aims by providing a grounded, empirical account that is able to engage with theoretical concerns and move discussion forward in the areas of hate crime and anti-Gypsyism.
2. The article presents powerful data that evidences the prejudices and crimes that Roma experience and considers how individual experiences of stigmatisation transfer within communities, resulting in a community-wide sense of victimisation. The resultant denial of Roma identity and subsequent fear of potential exposure and abuse affirms and augments other studies in this area.
3. Theoretically the article is particularly useful in recognising the interconnectedness of the structural and individual causes of hate crime. By engaging with the work of Perry and Iganski among others (the paper is well referenced and therefore acknowledges the breadth of discussion in this area), the paper is able to effectively discuss how the 'everyday racism' experienced by Roma can be understood as part of a continuum of hate that is perpetrated by individuals and institutions and which serves dominant, historic power structures.

I would be very interested in the authors pursuing some issues further in future publications:

1. In relation to institutional discrimination the paper shows how the police are often the most feared of institutions. Further consideration of this area would be particularly interesting as evidence of the implementation gap between policy and practice is sorely missing in this area in European studies.
2. The paper makes a distinction between Travellers and Roma which is particularly interesting. Previous studies have shown that the nomadic nature of many Gypsies, Travellers and Roma determines their experiences of prejudice, discrimination and crime. This paper suggests however that the acceptance of 'Travellers' as a social group led to the displacement of their previously experienced stigmatisation to Roma people. This is highly contentious, though often cited as a rationale for increased victimisation of racial groups of Roma, Gypsies or Travellers (in the UK specifically). It would therefore be valuable to consider this matter in greater depth with a preparedness to address the racial divide between different groups of Gypsies, Travellers and Roma.
3. The authors note that the Roma they spoke to hid their identity in order to exist more freely in their environments, though this was often challenged by other markers that symbolised their Roma roots and augmented their stigmatisation. On reading the paper I wondered whether

other aspects of their identity had an impact on the hate crimes, prejudices and discrimination they experienced. For example, it was noted by the authors that some participants originated from other parts of Europe, including post-Soviet countries. Such participants may have experienced increased levels of prejudice due to the intersection of multiple aspects of their identities as represented by other 'stigma symbols'.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this paper and feel it is worthy of publication and inclusion within the wider hate crime literature.

Reviewed by Dr Zoë James
Associate Professor (Senior Lecturer)
Plymouth University

Open peer-review, regarding Anti-Gypsyism in Sweden: Roma's and Travellers' Experiences of Bias- motivated crime.

David Brax, Post doc at Department of Philosophy, Linguistics and Theory of Science at the University of Gothenburg, and Center for European Research, Gothenburg University (CERGU)

Review First of all, this reviewer wishes to thank the authors of the paper and the editors of this journal for the opportunity to express his thoughts on this important matter. As my perspective on bias-motivated crime is from the vantage point of philosophy and legal theory, my comments will for the most part be of a theoretical nature, and thus primarily engage with the introducing and concluding sections of the paper.

So let us begin: I have two main issues with the paper that I wish to bring to the authors attention. They appear already in the abstract, and reoccur throughout the more theoretical parts of the paper.

The first issue is the claim that the "connection between prejudices, structural/institutional discrimination and individual hate crime incidents is strong. Hate crimes/bias motivated crimes against Roma are based on structural and individual factors."

This is vague as it stands, and it seems at points to be challenged by the authors themselves. What does it mean that there is a strong "connection"? And what is the nature of the connection? There are at least two very distinct types of possibilities:

1. Structural/institutional discrimination is positively related to hate crime incidents. i.e. The more extensive the structural discrimination, the more frequent hate crime incidents become. The mechanism, presumably, is that structural discrimination provides background justification for hate crimes.
2. Structural/institutional discrimination is *negatively* related to hate crime incidents. I.e. When structural discrimination diminishes, hate crime becomes more frequent. The mechanism here is that some people are threatened by the rising status of certain groups. Hate crime, then, is the attempt to put them back in their place.

The problem is that the authors refer to both these possibilities briefly, but do not address the issue that they are, as they stand, contradictory. It is, of course, very important which of these theories is correct (perhaps a more complex mechanism must be inferred). If the first is correct, a rise in hate crime incidents is a symptom of things getting worse. If the second is correct, it would be a symptom that things are getting better.

The second issue is the recurring complaint that the hate crime concept "as it is used judicially" is "limited" as it does not encompass "subtle" or everyday racism and institutional/structural racism as criminal events.

"On the whole, the hate crime concept does not take account of structures" They authors also point out that the concept is limited by putting individual perpetrators at the centre of attention. Now, as they recognize, the concept of hate crime they are speaking of is the concept derived from criminal law, even though the term "hate crime" does not occur in Swedish law or, indeed, in any law. Criminal law is primarily concerned with individual perpetrators, with fair trials and with avoiding punishing someone that does not deserve it. The concept as used in criminal law thus have to be concerned with incidents that are above the threshold of what would be criminal even absent the bias element, and with the guilt of the individual. But it is also the case that structures are being taken into account insofar as it is only bias elements corresponding to groups that *are* structurally discriminating against that are being taken into account in criminal law. The penalty enhancement statute in Swedish law *is* rather neutrally formulated, for formal reasons, but it is almost exclusively applied to cases where the victim belongs to structurally disadvantaged groups. By the end of the paper, the authors write "...structural injustice that we think should be called bias-motivated crime". But it is hard to see how this could be construed as a crime.

These are my two main concerns with the paper. I will now proceed to deal with more particular points. !

First: In the **introduction**, and later in the text, the authors refer to the large database of people of Roma origin held by the police in Skåne. This is taken as an example of institutional/structural discrimination and as a symptom of the prevailing prejudices about Roma people in Sweden. They are right that a subsequent crisis in trust occurred, but the aftermath have been somewhat mixed. The fact that this amounted to a scandal and an outrage can, for instance, be seen as evidence that the prejudices are *not* as entrenched as they used to be. It is also unclear how, because of the importance of this revelation, and the fact that the material is based on interviews with the *targets* of bias-motivated crimes, the material should be presented in a different way. The influence of this revelation should perhaps be assessed as a potent explanatory factor in itself, comparable to the role played by 9/11 in assessing attitudes towards Muslims in the U.S. It may undermine the purpose of giving a *general* view of anti-gypsyism in Sweden. At the very least, comparison with other groups of Roma origin from other parts of Sweden would be useful as a sort of control.

Second: The translation of the Swedish hate crime statute is tricky. You mention that "in Swedish legislation, hate crime is actually a non-juridical umbrella concept consisting of harassment of ethnic groups, unlawful discrimination and stiffer penalties based on the perpetrators' motives in criminal acts"

!

Actually, this use of 'hate crime' as an umbrella term has a loose formal standing. The police use it in this way, but the official statistics reserve the term for crimes with bias motives. This is also the use that is most in keeping with how it is used internationally, for instance by OSCE-ODIHR. A second comment on this: you describe the penalty enhancement statute as

being for "crimes relating to violations of individuals, ethnic groups" etc. "on grounds of race" etc. In fact, the formulation is a bit more convoluted and less inclusive. It states that a the court should treat it as an aggravating circumstances if a motive of the offender was to insult/violate a person on one of these grounds.

Third: related to one of my main points above, the authors quote Gerstenfeld (2007) on the risk that harmful acts based on prejudice may fail to reach the level of criminal acts, and thus may fall between the cracks and not be addressed by hate crime policies. This is of course true, but this is hardly relevant to the issue of whether the hate crime concept is too narrow or not. There are harmful events that we need to address using other means, and other concepts, than the ones available to criminal law.

Fourth: In the section called "Analytical framework" the authors write that Many researchers claim that hate crime is worse than other crimes because it signals to the group to which the victim belongs that it should "know its place", and that some hate crime victims, compared with other victims, suffer long-term psychological damage..."

This is true, but it is important to note that these are two different, albeit related, things: we have the idea that hate crimes send a *message* - which is sometimes treated as a factor in itself, threatening the social standing of the group. And then we have the idea that hate crimes have particular *effects*, i.e. that they are more *harmful* than other crimes. One could say that the extra harm is created by the message, but to establish that would require some work. It is, this, reviewer believes, important to distinguish these two aspects clearly.

Fifth: The authors write that structural racism is closely connected to the concept of institutional racism. I think it's important to note that "structural racism" is often used to describe structures that arise out of everyday encounters, fueled by unconscious bias, social codes etc, and may thus continue even if institutions were somehow to rid themselves of such elements.

Sixth: it would be good to have a source to the claim that the majority population in Sweden is prejudiced against Roma, and an operationalization of what this prejudice involves.

Seventh: in "Result and analysis" the authors mention that a family has been exposed to hate crime and similar incidents due to being listed (in the police database mentioned above). But there is no mention of how the basis of this connection. Was the family identified by the perpetrators via the list? This occurs in the concluding section as well, where the authors write about anti-Roma forces being mobilized "that sought to restore the old order" after the police database was made public. It seems that either the database shows that

the "old order", i.e. Roma being discriminated against, was shown to prevail by the existence of the database, and the explanation of the mobilization would have to be otherwise established. Or it did not, but then many of the ideas of this paper would seem to be put into question.

Eighth: In the **conclusion**, the authors say that the interviews shows that the improvements for the group of Roma are "feeble". This is unclear, as the study does not make any comparisons with similar interviews made earlier. Again, the authors mention that before the revelation of the police database, there was an "air of optimism". This suggests that the advances have not been feeble, and that reactions to the database may account for most of the pessimism. It then becomes important whether to treat the database as typical thing or not. Again, the issue should be addressed whether the study actually concerns the reaction to this database on the perception of anti-gypsyism in Sweden.

Ninth: The authors write that the hate crime concept in law (i.e. penalty enhancement) could be a way of changing norms and behavior in the long term. It amounts to a risk of coming up against legal sanctions and experiencing social sanctions. - It is, however, difficult to see such results. In general, the idea that laws change social norms have been questioned. And when they seem to, it can often be interpreted the other way: social norms change, and then the law changes. One thing that the authors does not address is that the law in itself cannot work as a deterrent, if it is not used. And it is a well known fact in Sweden that the hate crime rule is very rarely used. The risk of of being punished by it is thus very small, and the potential of deterring would- be criminals is not put to the test. There is, however, an argument that the existence of the law *expresses* disapproval, and thus support for the victimized groups, which may be of importance even in the absence of preventive impact.

Review of Anti-Gypsyism in Sweden: Roma's and Travellers' Experiences of Bias-motivated Crime

By Dr. Caroline Mellgren, department of criminology, Malmö University

In this review I give general comments on the paper along with some specific issues that in my opinion merit more discussion. Minor proofing and stylistic comments will be sent in hard copy to the authors.

As the authors point out, anti-Roma crimes and discrimination against the Roma are an under researched topic in Sweden. As such the article makes an important contribution to hate crime studies, internationally, but in particular it sheds light on a national problem. This article has definite merit as the researchers have collected original data on a hard to reach community and I recommend it to be published.

1. In the third section of the introduction the authors write that “The Roma we interviewed...” but this is before the purpose of the present paper is stated and the reader does not yet know that the paper have made use of interviews with Roma people. My suggestion is that this paragraph is developed into a statement of the aim of the article so that it is being made clear to the reader what to expect from this text already from the beginning (now stated on page 5).

2. Goffmans notion of Stigma is not fully developed in the framework section and capitalized on in the analysis and conclusion. It could be used more effectively to illustrate the consequences of (fear of) hate crime victimization and with support of Bowlings notion of the cumulative process of victimization explain why it is important to take even minor victimization experiences seriously. This finding is actually one of the most interesting aspects of this paper and should be given a more central role in the results section as well as in the background section of the paper (see also no 4). For more on stigma consciousness, see for example Surdu (2013, Stigma Consciousness in the case of Romanian Roma Activists).

Also, Link and Phelans

(Conceptualizing stigma. *Annual Review of Sociology* 2001;27:363-385) model of stigma where a component of structural discrimination is introduced may be of interest.

3. The authors describe the problems Roma face in Europe in general as well as in Sweden but fail to make clear the differences that Roma face in Sweden and in Europe. This is related to the information given on the informants, which is limited. The problem could be partly solved by describing in more detail who the interviewees are in terms of background information such as education, employment status and for how long they have lived in Sweden. This kind of information is offered on some of the informants, in text, but the reader would get a better sense of who make up the empirical material if such information were perhaps provided in a table. This would also give the reader an opportunity to compare the background of these informants with informants in other studies. I for example suspect that the Roma who have lived for a longer period of time in Sweden has a higher educational level

and thus a different social situation compared with newly arrived immigrants in Sweden as well as in other European countries.

4. The article could have benefited from providing a short summary at the start on who the Roma are, how they are the same/different from the “Traveller” communities, since both are mentioned. For example, on page 24 the authors write that Travellers have been assimilated into Swedish society. How and why are they different from other Roma groups? Also the authors could discuss whether the issues these communities face are particular to Sweden or whether some of the issues are similar across Europe.

Differences are touched upon in the text but it would be useful to know in relation to the informants. Visibility is an important risk factor (related to stigma) for exposure to crime and discrimination and it should therefore be made clearer how visibility affect perceived risk and discrimination in the different groups. Also, consider that individuals with concealable stigmas face unique stressors than those with visible stigmas.

5. The methodology needs to be discussed in light of the methodological literature relating in particular to studying vulnerable groups. Since the Roma may be a difficult group to identify and access, studies on such groups may benefit from considering and elaborating on the challenges facing researchers. There are some problems linked specifically to studying vulnerable groups such as the Roma, see for example Kósa and Adány, (2007, Studying vulnerable populations: lessons from the Roma minority). The authors should also consider the consequences of the snowball method when initiated by community organisations and leaders (selection bias and gate keeper bias). It would also be interesting to know whether the authors experienced any difficulties in getting access to the group.

6. Provide more information on the informants (see also no 2 above). Are all activists? How may this have affected the results? Were interviews carried out both before and after the Roma register was revealed? Please comment on how the results may have been affected by this special event.

7. The method and material section states that the article is mostly based on interviews and later that newspaper articles are included, could newspaper articles be mentioned here, in the beginning of the section? It is also unclear how the 53 newspaper articles have been used as part of the empirical material and in the analysis. I cannot find references in results or conclusion and it seems as if the only reference made appears on page 13: “The themes and patterns that appear in our interview material are also highlighted in several of the newspaper reports.” My suggestion to the authors is either to cut the part about newspapers or further develop the analysis. As it is now the reader expects a media analysis, which is not provided.

8. Make sure that all assertions made are backed by evidence/reference, two examples:

- Interesting point, please elaborate and give reference: “Researchers have also contributed to strengthening and maintaining a negative view of Roma, based on the idea that the Roma themselves are to blame for their marginalised position in society. However, some research is

different.” This could be related to stigma. Corrigan (2005) argues that the degree of stigmatization is related to the perceived responsibility of the individual for the particular attribute (Corrigan, P. W. (Ed.) (2005). *On the stigma of mental illness: Practical strategies for research and social change*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association).