

**THE EXPERIENCES OF ROMANI
LGBTIQ PEOPLE: QUEER(Y)(ING)
ROMA**

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ABSTRACT

Romani LGBTIQ people experience specific non-normative (queer) intersectionalities within mainstream, Romani and LGBTIQ communities on multiple grounds, including ethnicity/race, sexuality, gender, class, social status, age, religion etc. The research addresses a significant gap in knowledge by shedding light on an area of inquiry which remains understudied, leading to invisibility and inadequate awareness of needs. The lived experiences investigated herein are regionally diverse, allowing the research to highlight commonly shared experiences of queer intersectionalities.

Historically, non-Roma have romanticised and simultaneously vilified Roma, leading to stereotypical essentialist/essentialising representations of Roma, Romani identities and identifications; and resulting in embedding marked essentialist difference at the core of historic and modern negative social valuation of Romani ethnic identity. This thesis argues that the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people pose a fundamental challenge to stereotypical, one-dimensional, homogenising and essentialising representations of Roma.

Guided by the research question 'What are the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in and beyond Europe?', this qualitative research draws on ethnographic principles. It is concerned with investigating and highlighting the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people; and unpacking, uncovering and exploring the strategies deployed by Romani LGBTIQ people when negotiating multiple ethnic, sexual and gender identities and identifications, oppression, (in)visibility, exclusion, as well as inclusion, recognition, and belonging (or lack thereof) with, in and/or to mainstream societies, as well as Romani and LGBTIQ communities. The fieldwork for this research was undertaken between summer 2015 and autumn 2016. Data was collected in 14 interviews, 2 focus groups and at 2 conferences

where participant observation was undertaken. Thematic analysis sensitive to queer theoretical concepts, and to queer assemblages in particular, was used to identify key themes.

The investigation contributes to queer(y)(ing) Romani Studies by challenging dominant essentialist, homogenising conceptualisations of Romani identities; and to ongoing discussions about the under-development of sexuality within intersectionality, and the under-development of intersectionality within queer theorising. In order to help generate insight into Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectional identities and identifications, this thesis proposes to employ queer intersectionalities: they allow us to identify and interrogate the workings of interlocking axes of inequality whilst not assuming the supremacy of one axis over the other, hence not re-inscribing marked essentialist difference embedded within and constitutive of social norms, orthodoxies, and binaries. Simultaneously, employing queer intersectionalities benefits understandings of identities and identifications as rhizomic fluid assemblages that are not anchored in the notion of fixed 'groupness'. Queer intersectionalities thus enable an important reconceptualisation of Romani identities and identifications that dismantles norms and normativities, doing away with marked essentialist difference that has tended to fix and stabilise Romani identities and identifications.

The research found that although Antigypsyism — a direct manifestation of white-normativity — is a key aspect of the lived experiences of many Romani LGBTIQ people that often eclipses other forms of oppression, it is not the only aspect of Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences. Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectional stigmatisation as both Roma and LGBTIQ due to the interlocking negative social valuation of Romani ethnicity, non-heteronormative sexuality and/or non-cis-normative gender identity. These specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people are inextricably linked to

various degrees of ethnicised/racialised, sexed, gendered and queer intersectional (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility. Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of various degrees of (in)visibilities delineating difference and sameness that one may 'step in' or 'step out of' depending on how one 'reads' a given social setting and on how one is 'read' within that context employing the notional spaces of 'the closet' and/or passing: key survival that are constituted and reconstituted through social contexts and relationships, including through families and/or communities where both inclusion and exclusion are present. The dimension of gender, particularly with respect to femininity associated with some 'passive' gay men (receivers) and (trans)womanhood, is key to the specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people, especially lesbian women, some gay men, and trans and intersex people.

As mediators, bridges, halfies and in-betweens, in response to marked essentialist difference lying at the root of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy, some Romani LGBTIQ people seek to create commonality, and indeed, strategic sameness: the notion of a relational use of identities and identifications whereby connections are created across difference for strategic purposes. Strategic sameness is a political strategy of navigating spaces between difference and sameness; as such, strategic sameness does not read through assimilation, conformity and/or normalisation. Operationalised by and through (in)visibilities — and in some cases hyper-visibility — associated with 'the closet' and passing, and deployed in a queer way to defy and subvert dominant normativities within which it operates, strategic sameness is a positionality resisting norms and binaries that enables the queer bearer to deploy sameness in order to do away with social norms, orthodoxies and dualisms.

Queer non belonging by identification and disidentification is a transgressive, subversive

non/counter-normative positionality that some Romani LGBTIQ people may assume when negotiating queer intersectionalities. It enables re-conceptualisations of identities and identifications by identifying with aspects of ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identities that are empowering while disidentifying with those aspects that are hostile, restrictive and/or oppressive aspects. communities while disidentifying with the actual identities. Queer non belonging has an important political dimension: espousing a marked (stigmatised) category of identification can be understood as a strategically subversive act undermining key hegemonic systems of oppression: white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy.

This investigation may benefit service providers, civil society organisations, community initiatives and institutions in the area of application and policy recommendations and potentially feed into larger national and transnational policy frameworks.

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I also want to thank my family, especially my mum, my sister and my partner, for providing me with love and emotional support.

Candidate's declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Date

Chapter 1: Introducing the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people

1.1 Introduction

The starting point of this thesis is that Romani LGBTIQ people exist, are present in all walks of life and are visible: a notion I have been aware of ever since I started to be involved in the Romani rights movement, advocacy and research around 2000 in the Czech Republic and then around 2004 internationally. Sex and sexuality were still taboo topics in some of the Czech non-Romani and Romani families that I socialised with at that time. I knew of people and had friends and/or colleagues who were Romani LGBTIQ but only self-identified as Roma. Perhaps even more importantly, when I socialised in a number of gay and lesbian spaces in the Czech Republic, I would see not only Romani gays, lesbians and bisexuals, but also other Romani non-heteronormative — queer — people, including Romani trans people and cross-dressers. Due to racial prejudice towards Roma — which I will refer to hereinafter as Antigypsyism (for an explanation of this choice of terminology, see below) — rising after the end of Communism in 1989, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Romani presence in ethnically mainstream non-Romani clubs and spaces was quite unusual. Not that it did not happen in straight spaces; but in gay and lesbian clubs, despite having often argued with a number of lesbian acquaintances of mine who held prejudicial views of Roma, there seemed to be a somewhat greater sense of mutual solidarity between members of two marginalised and oppressed groups: non-Romani LGBTIQ and Romani LGBTIQ people.

The above brief observations regarding my involvement in the Romani rights movement, advocacy and research, which I will expand on in Section 1.3 to provide further information about the rationale for this research, represent an important link between the lived

experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, the main research question and the objectives of this thesis. This thesis, which is guided by the question ‘What are the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in and beyond Europe?’, is concerned with investigating and highlighting the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people; and unpacking, uncovering and exploring the strategies deployed by Romani LGBTIQ people when negotiating multiple ethnic, sexual and gender identities and identifications, oppression, (in)visibility, exclusion, as well as inclusion, recognition, and belonging (or lack thereof) with, in and/or to mainstream societies, as well as Romani and LGBTIQ communities.

The umbrella term ‘Roma’¹ used in this thesis is an endonym adopted by the first World Romani Congress in London in 1971, along with the Romani flag and anthem, and 8 April was designated as the International Roma Day. The adoption of the term ‘Roma’ represents a significant milestone in the emancipation of Roma that the Romani rights movement has been striving for; nonetheless, its usage is not unproblematic. Some communities, for instance those who ascribe as Gypsy and/or Traveller in the UK, feel that the term ‘Roma’ has been imposed on them by European structures. Other critics believe that its frequent use is partially responsible for perpetuating the stereotypical image of ‘Roma’ as a homogenous group. At the same time, as discussed below in Section 1.2, many Central and Eastern European Roma consider the use of the word ‘Gypsy’ a racial slur that has been historically imposed on Roma by majority non-Romani societies. Simultaneously, proponents of the terms ‘Roma’ and ‘Romani’ believe they best reflect the heterogeneity of the diverse populations, as well as the inclusive nature of the adjective to encompass not only Roma of Central and Eastern European heritage, but also Romani Gypsies and

¹ The term ‘Roma’ is understood here in line with the following definition, adopted by the Council of Europe in 2010, which encompasses numerous groups and subgroups: ‘The term “Roma” (...) refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies’ (Council of Europe 2012, 4).

Travellers of Romani heritage (Hancock 2002). In this thesis just like in my other research and past and present activism, as a non-Roma, I follow the rule of respecting the fundamental importance of every individual's right to self-ascribe and self-identify. That is why the terms 'Roma/Romani', 'Gypsy' and 'Traveller' are used where the persons at issue self-ascribe and self-identify as such and/or use the term to refer to other members of the same, similar and/or related grouping(s); the terms 'Gadjo' and 'Gadje' are used to refer to non-Roma. However, some of the conceptual problems associated with the use of term 'Gypsy' also inform my choice of terminology to refer to a very specific form of racism directed against Roma; Antigypsyism. In this thesis, I use the term 'Antigypsyism' in line with the following definition proposed by the *Alliance against Antigypsyism* (2016) to signify

a historically constructed, persistent complex of customary racism against social groups identified under the stigma 'gypsy' or other related terms, and it incorporates: A homogenising and essentializing perception and description of these groups; The attribution of specific characteristics to them; Discriminating social structures and violent practices (...), which have a denigrating and ostracising effect and which reproduce structural disadvantages. (...) The term Antigypsyism — in citing the *majority's projections of an imagined out-group of 'gypsies'* which simultaneously constructs an imagined in-group — is analytically more accurate and makes clear that other groups - Sinti, Travellers, manouches [sic], Egyptians — are equally affected (Alliance against Antigypsyism 2016, 5-6; emphasis added).

'Antigypsyism' is spelt with a lowercase 'g' to refer to the notion of an *imagined, essentialised group of 'gypsies'*, to whom non-Roma stereotypically attribute specific traits, thus marking them as essentially 'distinct', 'different'. This difference is then embedded systemically within dominant social structures and practices that (re)produced structural disadvantage and oppression. The concept of such a specific form of racism directed at

Roma is also referred to as 'Romaphobia' (see for instance McGarry 2017), Antiziganism (Agarin 2014) and/or 'anti-Gypsyism' (see for instance ECRI 2011).

The use of the abbreviation 'LGBTIQ' is not unproblematic either. Whatever form the abbreviation takes such as LGB, LGBT, LGBTI, LGBTQ, or if/when the umbrella term 'queer'² is used instead, it purports to encompass a given set of sexualities and gender identities. This 'fixity' may often lead to the exclusion of those who may identify only partially with any one of the 'labels'. In a similar vein, it has been argued that for example the tokenistic inclusion of the 'T' for 'trans' is a way of appropriating and assuming the lived experiences of trans people often without involving and/or engaging with them (Browne and Nash 2010; Stryker 2006; Namaste 2000; Prosser 1996); or, conversely, that 'it fails to recognise the contingency of sexual identities that refuse containment within these categorisations' (Browne and Nash 2010). In spite of these critiques, the abbreviation 'LGBTIQ' is used throughout this thesis to reflect how each of the research participants' self-identified. 'LGBTIQ' is not used in this thesis in situations where the names of specific events are referred to, such as the International Roma LGBT conferences; or where the 'q' is omitted as the English word 'queer' does not have an adequate corresponding equivalent in the original language. The Spanish abbreviation 'LGTB', which has the same meaning as the English 'LGBT', is kept in quotes as is its English equivalent LGBT. At times, the term 'queer' is used in line with its usage as an umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and queer. Therefore, I sometimes oscillate between 'queer' and 'LGBTIQ'.

Before providing a brief overview of the history of Roma in order to illustrate the nature and extent of the historic and modern persecution of Roma that has informed contemporary

² The use of 'queer' as counter/non-normative is explored in Chapter 3

expressions and manifestations of Antigypsyism, I wish to outline the structure of the thesis. The thesis consists of eight chapters, including this introductory chapter.

Chapter 2 investigates the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of identity in relation to cultural and ethnic identity. Starting off with conceptualisations of Romani identity primarily along ethnic lines, the chapter goes on to explore understandings of Romani identities facilitated by concepts such as hybridity, super-diversity, and intersectionality that take into account and cross-cut multiple categories of identification: ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, social status. The chapter argues that as a post-colonial critique and a critique of heteronormativity, within academic discourse, intersectionality has facilitated the inclusion of sexuality and gender identity that Romani Studies have largely overlooked.

Chapter 3 considers the usefulness of concepts emanating from queer theorising for conceptualisations of Romani identities and explores how queer theoretical concepts are informed by and communicate with notions of belonging, (in)visibilities, identifications and disidentifications. The chapter goes on to explore the benefits of using queer assemblages in conjunction with intersectionality and to propose that queer intersectionalities make it possible to attend to the notion that identities and identifications are multifaceted, unstable and fluid, always in the process of becoming and being shaped by asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodology of queer(y)(ing) the ethics of social science research, queer ethnography, and thematic analysis informed by and sensitive to queer assemblages. The chapter proceeds to explore the issue of researcher positionality and reflexivity in relation to social normativities and privilege when doing research with, for and/or on Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people. The chapter goes on to look at the methods used,

including recruitment, data collection; the research participants; and data analysis. The chapter concludes by reflecting on a number of methodological adjustments made in the course of the research and lessons learnt.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 provide the analytical basis for this thesis. Chapter 5 explores Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities particularly in relation to Antigypsyism and the intersection of Antigypsyism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of oppression. The chapter goes on to consider how Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectionalities through the social fabric of family and community. Chapter 6 explores Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences in relation to (in)visibilities in the notional spaces between difference and sameness: 'the closet' and passing. The chapter goes on to explore the notion of 'strategic sameness' as a subversive queer positionality that counters and defies normativity, complicity, and assimilation. Chapter 7 considers the notion of 'queer non belonging' as a queer, non-normative positionality in relation to how Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate the specific queer intersectionalities they face by identifying with certain aspects of ethnic, sexual and/or gender identities while disidentifying with others. The chapter goes on to consider how queer non belonging may epitomise the need for a strategic response to the 'queer identity dilemma' between fixed identity categories forming the basis of political power and the notion of 'queer' as non-normative, non-identitarian positionality countering societal normativities and orthodoxies.

In conclusion, Chapter 8 summarises the thesis in terms of its rationale, main theoretical milestones and key analytical contributions and proceeds to consider the wider implications of strategic sameness and queer non belonging as two context-dependent strategies that can complement each other despite the tension between them. The chapter then moves on to a discussion about queer intersectionalities and the role of gender. Finally, the chapter

concludes by considering the importance of the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people for potential future research.

In the following section, I proceed to offer a brief background on the history of Roma, which is highly contested. The information I gather here is based on secondary sources. Section 1.2 is followed by an account of and personal observations relating to more recent political, socio-economic and cultural developments that have impacted the lives of Roma over the past two decades. It was against this backdrop that the rationale for this investigation into the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people had been developing for many years.

1.2 Who are Roma? A brief history

Roma are diverse, heterogeneous populations scattered across continents as varied as Europe, North and South America, Asia, Australia, and Africa; and living in countries such as China and Singapore, according to some accounts (Hancock 2002, xx). In the European Union alone, Roma are estimated to number between 10 to 12 million (European Commission 2004, EU Fundamental Rights Agency³). Roma differ significantly from country to country, from region to region: this is reflected in the different names coming under the umbrella term 'Roma': Vlach Rom, Rumungro Rom, Kalderash, Sinti, Lavari, Manouche, Ashkali, Boyash, Tattare, Kale, Ursari, Luri, Romanishals, Yenish, Gitanos, and many more.

Many members of these diverse populations have maintained aspects of a shared culture and dialects of the Romani language since the 11th and 12th centuries when Roma are believed to have left India in a number of stages and waves (Hancock 2002). Starting with comparative philologists such as Grellmann (1783), a general consensus has been

³ <http://fra.europa.eu/en/theme/roma>

established amongst scholars and linguists, including Romani ones such as Hancock (2002), Horváthová (2002), Le Bas (2010) and Lee (2009), according to which the ancestors of European Roma are believed to have been a mixture of Indian Rajput troops (Kshatriya) and their camp followers, composed of many castes, sub-castes and social tiers (jatis). Roma are believed to have left the present-day northern India sometime between 3rd and 9th/10th centuries (Horváthová 2002, 9), during a series of raids led by Mahmud of Ghazni between 1000 and 1027 AD in an attempt to spread Islam. Nonetheless, the exact timing, manner and circumstances of the Roma's departure from India and arrival into Europe remain unknown (Horváthová 2002, Matras 2015, 159). There are clues to be found in the vocabulary of the Romani language, which shares its earliest and most basic words such as water (pani) or house (kher), as well as warfare and military-related words with other Indian languages such as Hindi, Panjabi, Gujarati, Nepali, Bengali, and many more (Lee 2001, Hancock 2002), including Greek (Horváthová 2002) and a minor influence of Persian (McGarry 2010). Importantly though, the legacy of the linguistic perspective has been challenged by a number of scholars such as Okely (1983), Willems (1997) and Lucassen et al. (1998), as Chapter 2 discusses more in detail.

Historic evidence suggests that Roma arrived in the Byzantine Constantinople between 810 and 1050 (Groome 1908, 485) — with evidence of a Romani presence there in a document from Constantine XI Palaiologos dating from 1283 (Hancock 2002, 15) — and later in other parts of Europe in the 14th and 15th centuries (Liégeois 1986, Hancock 2002). For example, the first official record of the presence of 'Egyptians' in Scotland is from 1505 and in England from 1514 (Kenrick and Clark 1995, 24): these groups are also referred to as Romani/y Gypsies and/or Travellers. Since then, dominant populations have given Roma various names often based on the majority's lack of information about who Roma were, and, at times, on direct hostility towards Roma. The names included, among others, the term

'Tsigan' (and regional variants of Tsingan, Cingan, Zingar, Cigany, Cikani/Cigani, Zigeuner), originating from the Byzantine Greek 'Atzinganoi/Atsigános' to refer to a group who was most likely Roma and who appeared on the mountain of Athos around 1068 (Horváthová 2002, 11); Gypsies, rarely spelt as Gipsies; the French variant Gitan or the Spanish Gitano; deriving from the word 'Egyptian' (Hancock 2002, xxi) since as the Roma's darker complexion was seen as foreign, and misinterpreted as having come from Egypt (Hancock 2002, Lee 2013), and/or to refer to an area called Little Egypt/Egypt Minor in the Venetian colony of Modon (present-day Methoni) in the Peloponnese peninsula where some Roma were settled for substantial periods of time (Fraser 1992, 50; Clébert 1961, 20; Liégeois 1986, 28-29; Horváthová 2002, Matras 2014). From the outset, the term 'Gypsy', which was imposed on the Roma by the respective majority societies, evoked negative connotations. Roma were also called Heidens (heathens, pagans) in Dutch. The misperception and the attendant mislabelling of Roma went hand in hand with anti-Romani measures and laws introduced and maintained by the Church, the state and trade guilds in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries. These measures stigmatised Roma even further as 'parasites', 'unwanted outcasts', 'outlaws' and 'criminals'. In 1568, Pope Pius V expelled Roma from the Holy Roman Church (Hancock 2002). In Romania from the 14th century until 1855 in Moldavia and 1856 in Wallachia (Matras 2015), Roma were not expelled but enslaved (Liégeois 1983, Hancock 2002). In south-eastern Moravia, Roma first started to settle at the end of the 17th century thanks to the local aristocracy's toleration, which meant that a very limited number of Roma were exempted from the 'anti-Gypsy' laws; this was conditioned by the tolerated individuals stopping all contacts with their families, and abandoning Romani culture, traditions and language (Horváthová, 2002). In Hungary under Maria Theresa's reign, in the 18th century, Roma were settled as part of her project of assimilation and sedentarisation. Roma were prohibited from speaking Romani or wearing traditional clothes. Romani children were often taken away from their families. In Spain,

Roma were forcibly settled, especially from the second half of the 18th century as part of the so-called 'great round-up' in Andalusia in 1749 (Liégeois 1983, Horváthová 2002).

Complementing the above treatment of Roma by non-Roma, and the ensuing wholesale stereotypical vilifying and stigmatising conceptualisations of Roma as an ethnic group was the romanticisation of Roma. Following the publication of Grellman's thesis in 1783 and the foundation in 1888 of the Gypsy Lore Society, academic discussions were under way about the Indian origin of Roma based on evidence that the Romani language is of the Indo-Aryan family of languages. In the 19th century, romanticised literary (for example, Maupassant, Hugo, Mácha, Borrow, Arnold, Dickens, Eliot, the Brontë sisters) and musical renditions of 'Gypsies' (for instance, Dvořák, Janáček, Verdi, Liszt, Bartók, Bizet, Strauss) constructed an image of Roma as 'bon sauvage'; this trend has persisted well into the 20th and 21st centuries. Meanwhile, the actual situation and living conditions of Roma across 19th-century Europe differed substantially. In the Czech lands, for example, many Roma who remained unsettled, hence itinerant, were punished for their 'vagrancy' in line with a number of Austro-Hungarian anti-Romani decrees and laws, especially the ordinance of the Viennese interior ministry 'on wandering Gypsies' No. 14015/1887 of 14 September 1888 (Zel'ová et al. 1994). As a result, 'vagrant' Roma were apprehended, prosecuted, jailed, expelled and/or conscripted into the Hungarian military, whereas in the neighbouring region of southern and south-eastern Moravia, many Roma succeeded in establishing permanent settlements as the foundations for integration and settlement had been laid since the 17th century through assimilation (Horváthová 2002, 39). Meanwhile, in Romania, Roma were enslaved for 500 years until 1855-56 (see above).

1.2 Roma in the 20th and 21st centuries

Over the past two centuries, Roma have continued to face rejection, marginalisation, oppression, forced assimilation, persecution, and, in the most extreme cases, extermination. In the first half of the 20th century, drawing upon the aforementioned 19th-century Austro-Hungarian anti-Romani measures, Central European states were resorting to repressive measures, regulating the movement of Roma, such as introducing 'gypsy identity cards', a special document including the holder's fingerprints instead of a photograph, as well as draconian laws against 'Gypsy nomadism', e.g. in France (1912), Bavaria (1926) or Czechoslovakia (1927) (Liégeois 1983, Horváthová 2002). On 14 July 1927, the Chamber of Deputies of Czechoslovakia's National Assembly adopted Act No. 117/1927 Coll. on 'wandering gypsies', defined as 'gypsies wandering from place to place and other vagabonds avoiding work who live the gypsy way of life' — customarily replaced by the general term of 'gypsies' which at that time did not have an ethnic meaning only — requiring persons aged 14 and older to carry with them at all times and produce upon request their 'gypsy identification card' (Horváthová 2002, 43). It prohibited foreign Roma's residence and regulated attitudes by the state administration towards travelling which was considered 'an inborn instinct' and/or even a 'racial feature' of all Romani people. The act also empowered local authorities to ban Roma from designated places, impacting partly on settled Roma, too, and resulting in the establishment of the Centre for Registering Nomadic Gypsies in Prague by Government Decree No. 68/1928 (IOM 2005, 5). Similar repressive policies applied across Europe led up to the so-called O Baro Porajmos (Porrajamos, Pharrajimos; the Great Devouring) during the Second World War. It also known as or Samudaripen, the Romani Holocaust, and refers to the annihilation of hundreds of thousands of Roma — including the so-called 'Gypsy half-breeds' and those perceived as Roma — across Central and Eastern Europe. Estimates of the numbers of victims range from 220,000 (Milton 1991) to 1,500,000 (Hancock 2005). Extermination in some countries

was thorough: for example, in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, only approximately one tenth of the 5,000 Bohemian and Moravian Roma survived (Schneider et al. 2009, 283). The rest were murdered in Auschwitz, resulting in the dialects becoming almost extinct.

Across what was the Eastern socialist bloc after the end of the Second World War, Roma continued to be assimilated under Communism. Some of the policies and measures included coordinated dispersal/resettlement, sedentary settlement, social engineering, eugenics in healthcare (i.e. coercive sterilisation), schooling, including special schools, and labour through state enterprise (Liégeois 1983, Horváthová 2002, McGarry 2010). These assimilation policies were aimed at uprooting the Romani language and centuries of cultural and spiritual traditions, customs, values and practices (Hübschmannová 1979, Horváthová 2002, Stewart 1997b, 87). In the second half of the 20th century, Roma throughout Western Europe faced both covert and overt rejection and discrimination due to what the majority perceived as an itinerant lifestyle (Liégeois 1983, 117-122). Different communist states across the former Soviet bloc applied different approaches to Roma. However, there was a common underlying attitude to Roma who were believed to not meet the criteria of an ethnic and/or national minority such as common language, territory, economy, beliefs and culture (Puxon 1973, 13). Roma tended to be seen through a social lens as a social group, or more precisely as an object of social policy before 1989 (Kusá 2014). In the period that followed after 1989, this has resulted in the newly emerged democratic states often overlooking the dimension of ethnicity/race, hampering the process of understanding the workings of Antigypsyism and of finding effective remedies.

The political, social and economic changes associated with the collapse of Communism in 1989 gave rise to unprecedented mobilisation for emancipation by Central and Eastern European Roma (Horváthová 2002, Vermeersch 2006, 45-63). Nonetheless, pressures

following the economic transformation started to weigh heavily on the most vulnerable elements of Central and Eastern European societies, including Roma. Consequently, Roma were increasingly relegated to the edges of society. Previously hidden and/or unexpressed racist or otherwise biased attitudes to the visible 'Other' such as non-white ethnic, and/or sexual minorities started to come to the surface with the revival of neo-fascist and neo-Nazi movements and ideologies, leaving many Roma in situations of vulnerability and danger. At the same time, the newly emerging democratic governments found it challenging to tackle decades-long issues inherited from the previous regimes such as segregated schooling, eugenics within healthcare, social engineering and socialist housing policies that became diametrically different within a span of several years. This was due to a series of factors, including sky-rocketing prices of basic commodities and housing. Institutional racism and hostile attitudes held towards Roma by non-Roma have become even more deeply ingrained. The confluence of these negative factors has made it very hard for many Roma to access key services such as employment, housing, education, healthcare or social services (European Roma Rights Centre 2007), pushing Roma out of mainstream education, the labour market and housing into the margins of society and hampering Roma's participation in social, economic, political and public life. As social tensions kept rising, the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century — also marked by the financial crisis — saw a dramatic increase in the numbers of racially motivated assaults, killings and murders of Roma across Central and Eastern Europe. Few effective measures have been implemented by national governments in order to stop the rise of far-right ideologies, political parties and movements. This was the state of affairs in which ten Central and Eastern European countries started the accession process, eventually joining the EU in 2004⁴ and 2007⁵.

⁴ The Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia

⁵ Bulgaria and Romania

The movement of Roma within Europe is not a new phenomenon; however, Romani mobilities intensified across the former Soviet bloc soon after the collapse of Communism in 1989 and the two EU accessions in 2004 and 2007. Often, due to racist persecution, many Roma left Central and Eastern Europe to start their lives over in Western states primarily within the European Union (EU) but also in Canada. In the 1990s, Roma did so as refugees and asylum seekers; following the two EU accessions, Roma used their right as EU citizens to move freely within the EU. This was met with an almost immediate backlash against freedom of movement, including anti-Romani measures such as expulsions, evictions, deportations, ethnic profiling and/or fingerprinting by the authorities in Italy (2008), France (2010) and/or the UK (2012, 2013). For instance, during the Italian Roma crisis in 2007 and 2008, Roma became targets of discriminatory policies, which constructed images of Roma as distinct from the Italian nation (McGarry 2011). Preceding the June 2016 referendum on Brexit, freedom of movement by economically weaker EU citizens, including Roma, from poorer EU states to more affluent western EU states was a key topic in the debates on whether or not the UK should stay in the EU.

The above information is by no means an exhaustive account of the history of Roma and the real extent of persecution that Roma have suffered for centuries. However, it offers a sufficient basis for understanding the historic depth of Antigypsyism, which has been embedded within European societies ever since Roma first appeared in Europe.

1.3 Rising Antigypsyism vis-à-vis increasing acceptance of LGBTIQ people: personal observations

The narrative in this section moves to my personal observations that I made in the Czech Republic where I had been living, studying and working until 2008. It was during my childhood, teenage and early adulthood years that I became aware of the existence of

Antigypsyism and experienced homophobia first-hand. In the Czech Republic in the early 2000s, openness about one's sexuality and/or gender identity was still quite rare. Prior to the collapse of Communism in 1989, non-heteronormative queer sexualities had not been visibly expressed in the public; in the wake of 1989, non-heteronormative people were slowly starting to become more visible. In turn, this resulted in rising levels of homophobia throughout the 1990s. Nonetheless, in the 2000s, from a legal and societal point of view, the situation was somewhat improving (FRA 2009, 2010). From a personal viewpoint, I recall having one or two lecturers at university who were semi-open about their sexuality thanks to the university's liberal environment. In my circles of friends and acquaintances, including Romani ones, despite many people still choosing to stay in the closet, myself included, some were starting to feel a bit more comfortable to come out in certain spheres of their lives, including in public. Importantly, the registered partnership act was adopted in 2005, entering into force in 2006, which contributed to positive changes in public perception of same-sex relationships and unions (FRA 2009). Nevertheless, despite the adoption of the anti-discrimination act in 2009, these positive developments with respect to LGBTIQ — or more precisely LGB — were not matched by the worsening life conditions and segregation of many Roma living both inside and outside Romani communities in the Czech Republic (Honusková and Šturma 2010, Gabal Analysis & Consulting 2006, 2009, Toušek 2010, Matoušek and Sýkora 2011).

Life in the Czech Republic at that time seemed to me like navigating and living in between at least four separate worlds embedded within one society: the non-Romani one; the Romani one; the straight one; and the LGBTIQ one. Yet, these worlds often intersected, and the people inhabiting them often interacted with one another. I was aware that for many Romani, as well as non-Romani LGBTIQ people working within the then predominantly patriarchal Czech Romani rights movement, it was taken for granted to self-identify and/or

to be identified ('read') as Roma or non-Roma. Yet, in spite of some of the aforementioned positive changes in relation to LGBTIQ people, within the Romani rights movement, it seemed harder to 'come out' as LGBTIQ. To the best of my knowledge, very few people did at that time. Based on the cases that I was familiar with, I could tell that the situation appeared to be even more challenging for Romani LGBTIQ people: an observation that was anecdotally made by other observers, too (Pechová and Štěpánková 2008, FRA 2009). Despite these actual and/or perceived challenges facing Romani LGBTIQ people, I recall that there were a number of very supportive, often female Romani colleagues, friends and acquaintances who were happy to go to a gay club with a group of closeted Romani gays and non-Romani lesbians, including myself. I also remember seeing similar expressions of support and solidarity from straight Romani women in a number of gay clubs in the city of Brno around 2000-2008: usually around 1 am, a group of Romani cross-dressers would arrive, accompanied by straight Romani female friends and/or relatives. Based on these observations, I drew the conclusion that, just like non-Romani LGBTIQ people, some Romani LGBTIQ people were experiencing acceptance, while others had to deal with rejection.

1.3.1 My journey as a researcher: From segregation in education to sexuality

In 2004/2005, I started to work as a researcher primarily in the third sector, conducting activism-driven research on the discrimination against Roma. Several other field researchers and I conducted a background research study concerning the segregation of Romani pupils in Czech education. The data were then used as evidence for the 2007 judgement *D.H and others v. the Czech Republic* delivered by the European Court of Human Rights.⁶ It was then that I was beginning to understand the importance of anecdotal

⁶ [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22appno%22:\[%2257325/00%22\]%7D](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#%7B%22appno%22:[%2257325/00%22]%7D)

data in the absence of statistical data. I learnt that where one was able to identify a pattern, but there was no 'objective evidence' readily available, one had to go actively searching for it; and that doing so allowed one to come up with innovative approaches and ways of thinking critically. I repeated a similar approach in 2008 when I conducted a Mapping survey of Roma who had moved from other European Union member states to England (Fremlova/European Dialogue 2009). In 2010, on the back of the mapping survey and my previous research, I designed and conducted an innovative pilot research study. It looked at the achievement of Romani children studying in mainstream education in the UK, who had been largely segregated into special/practical schools and/or classes for the mentally challenged with reduced curricula in Central and Eastern European school systems (Fremlova et al. 2011). The pilot study was my first attempt to 'de-essentialise Roma': to show that under different sets of circumstances, in a different schooling system and in a different socio-cultural context, Romani pupils' school achievement did not differ from the school achievement of non-Romani ones. Where there were differences in achievement, it was due to structural obstacles and systemic inadequacies posed by the educational system: the 'root cause' of underachievement does not lie in the pupils' ethnic/racial heritage, but in the quality of teaching.

Living, working and doing research in the UK has opened my eyes to other social phenomena related to how identities and identifications may be impacted and shaped in/by new environments post-migration. Many of the Romani respondents I interviewed for the 2009 and 2011 studies 'blended in' and became 'ordinary' (in Chapter 3, I explore 'ordinariness' in relation to belonging), as well as more comfortable, and, in fact, proud to self-identity as Roma. This 'ethnic coming out' was reported by many of the respondents as a major factor impacting positively also on their children's performance and achievement at school. There were naturally some challenges and problems involved; additionally, much

has changed following the General Election in 2010 in the UK, resulting in massive budget cuts, deteriorating community race relations and increasing levels of racism, associated with the government's austerity measures (Fremlova/FRA 2012) and the 2016 European Union referendum. The positives reported by many of the Romani respondents who had moved to the UK over the past two decades made me reflect on the role that relatively higher levels of openness to and acceptance of non-white-normative ethnicities and/or non-heteronormative queer sexualities play in different contexts and how, in turn, these identities are discursively shaped and formed by them. The following section describes how these reflections became the basis for doing research.

1.3.2 Rationale: Why research the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people?

While doing research on the educational experiences of Roma in the UK, I also began to perceive changes in relation to Romani people's perception of sexuality and Romani LGBTIQ people starting to 'come out of the closet' more frequently than I had previously seen. A key question was how to capture these experiences in a situation where the very topic of any potential research inquiry concerned what are possibly the most intimate aspects of one's privacy and still a social taboo in some Romani families and communities. In the early and mid 2000s, most of the LGBTIQ colleagues and acquaintances that I knew (of) — including Romani ones — kept quiet about their sexuality. Although I was aware of an MA thesis by Baker (2002) on the Queer Gypsy, it was not until around 2009 and 2010 respectively when the film 'Roma Boys', the book 'Gypsy boy' (followed by the 2011 sequel 'Gypsy boy on the run') and an academic article on Romani women, skin colour, gay pride and passing (Horváth 2010) came out that I started to perceive a gradual emergence of changes with respect to some Romani LGBTIQ people starting to feel comfortable enough to 'come out of the closet' as LGBTIQ. In 2010, I set up a closed, private Facebook group that brought together Romani LGBTIQ people and their friends and supporters where the

topic of sexuality could be broached. Initially, it had about 50 members, recruited for the most part from my circles of Romani LGBTIQ friends and acquaintances, as well as a number of like-minded non-Romani LGBTIQ and/or non-LGBTIQ allies. Gradually, it kept on growing; currently, the group has over 400 members, spanning over 15 different countries across Europe, North and South America.

In early 2013, the Council of Europe launched a study on young Roma's life experiences of multiple discrimination, including on the grounds of sexuality and gender identity. I became involved as a researcher and the main editor of the study, which was eventually published under the title *Barabaripen: Young Roma speak about multiple discrimination* (Fremlova and Georgescu, 2014). Despite being innovative, the study, which was designed as a learning resource for young people, had a limited scope: it offered a glimpse into the lived experiences of one Romani lesbian woman and two Romani gay men. Nonetheless, it was mainly thanks to this research study that I started to cooperate closely with the Czech-based, predominantly Romani LGBTIQ organisation ARA ART. Together, we organised the first and second International Roma LGBT conferences in Prague in 2015 and 2016 (see also Chapter 4).

In the meantime, more accounts of sexuality and of Romani gay, lesbian and trans experiences had been published: a blog about a Czech Romani young man living openly as gay in the UK (Leeming 2012), the Serbian version of *Dzuvljarke: Roma Lesbian Existence* (Kurtic 2013), followed by an English translation published by the European Roma Rights Centre in 2014; or *Roma rights quarterly (2015/2): Nothing about us without us*. Thanks to these and other publications such as Brooks' article '(Mis)recognitions: Romanies, Sexualities, Sincerities' (2009) and Nirenberg's *Gypsy Sexuality* (2011), Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of sexualities and multiple identities started to become more

visible. There was also anecdotal evidence suggesting Romani communities were accepting of Romani LGBTIQ people; and that Romani LGBTIQ people experienced hostility and rejection from non-Romani LGBTIQ people, grounded in Antigypsyism (Fremlova and Georgescu, 2014).

Over the past eight years, Romani LGBTIQ people have become more visible individually and collectively thanks to the emergence of organisations such as ARA ART (Czech Republic), Queer Roma (Germany), Ververipen: Roma por la Diversidad, and Asociación Gitanas Feministas por la Diversidad (Spain). A series of Romani LGBTIQ related events have taken place since 2014: the first national Roma LGBT workshop (May 2014); the Council of Europe conference 'United for dignity' (June 2014); the first and second International Roma LGBT conference (Prague, 2015-2016); the third International Roma LGBT conference 'Being Roma and LGBTI: at the crossroads of multiple discrimination' (Strasbourg 2017); Prague Pride with a special Romani LGBTIQ float (2014-2017); Budapest and Madrid/Valencia Prides (2015/2017); Christopher Street Day in Cologne with a Romani LGBTIQ float (2015-2017), to name a few.

Romani LGBTIQ people are gaining visibility in public spaces and at gay Prides across Europe, thus making a strategic political claim to be acknowledged and recognised by majority societies, LGBTIQ and Romani communities, and the LGBTIQ and Romani rights movements. Romani LGBTIQ people have been celebrating pride, often framed by experiences of Antigypsyism, homophobia and transphobia, by displaying the Romani flag next to the rainbow flag. In 2015, a Romani LGBTIQ group, in which I was present as well, participated in the Prague Pride march with its own Romani float and a Romani DJ. It was accompanied by approximately 40 people, including Romani cross-dressers, drag queens, Romani trans people, Romani lesbians, as well as some non-Romani and/or non-LGBTIQ

people and a traditional dance group of Romani women. At one point, the group, which carried a huge rainbow flag and a big Romani flag, was approached by a man who started yelling religiously motivated, homophobic slurs in Romani, suggesting that homosexuality is a sin against God. In this very important moment, the Romani LGBTIQ people and non-Romani LGBTIQ allies came together in one voice and answered back to him in unison: 'Opre Roma! Rise up, Roma!'. In the aftermath of this and the subsequent events that took place between 2015 and 2017, Romani presence at gay Prides has been fiercely criticised by proponents of the notion of Romani ethnic identity being heterosexual/heteronormative⁷ only. Various critics of Romani LGBTIQ people have proposed different 'rules' and 'regulations' governing when, how and by whom the Romani flag can be displayed.⁸ According to some, the Romani flag could/should not be displayed by Romani LGBTIQ people because of their 'promiscuous lifestyle' which allegedly contradicts Romani purity laws. Others opined that Romani LGBTIQ people could display the Romani flag, provided they 'behaved properly'; or that Romani LGBTIQ people should make their own rainbow flag incorporating elements of the Romani flag so that it was clear that not all Roma are 'faggots and dykes'.⁹ In extreme situations, Romani LGBTIQ people have received threats of physical violence, or even death threats. Visibility, which I discuss in Chapters 3, 5, 6, and 7, was key: the presence and representation of Romani LGBTIQ people became visible in particular social, geographical, relational and temporal contexts. This visibility, which

⁷ Exhibition called "Gays, don't touch the Roma flag!" opens for Prague Pride. August 2017. <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/exhibition-called-gays-don-t-touch-the-roma-flag-opens-for-prague-pride>
Renata Berkyová: Gays, hands off the Romani flag! August 2016. <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/renata-berkyova-gays-hands-off-the-romani-flag>

⁸ One of the public comments read as follows: 'It is quite important to know when I am allowed to use the Romani flag and I certainly wouldn't use it for your kind of representation. You have yours and if you like, you can make a joint international one where only lesbians and faggots will be represented together, I don't mind you but as of late I have a feeling that all of your events are a kind of promotion ... and it is becoming widespread, there are many more boys and girls who join your group. Does it serve as recruitment? you can make your own t-shirts and you can wear them BUT DO NOT ABUSE THE ROMANI FLAG FOR YOUR PURPOSES EVEN THOUGH YOU ARE ROMA! IT IS DISRESPECTFUL OF THE VALUE OF OUR ANCESTORS AND THOSE WHO HAVE IT AS A SYMBOL OF THE NATION!!!'

⁹ Čeněk Růžička: It's strange for LGBT people to hold the rainbow and Romani flags while speaking of Roma pride. June 2017. <http://www.romea.cz/en/news/czech/cenek-ruzicka-it-s-strange-for-lgbt-people-to-hold-the-rainbow-and-romani-flags-while-speaking-of-roma-pride>

generated some interesting, albeit problematic discussions about belonging (i.e. who can and cannot belong with, in or to Roma and under what circumstances), became the linking proxy, establishing a relationship between ethnic and LGBTIQ (queer) identities. In early 2014, against the backdrop of these events and at a time of increased political scaremongering and witch-hunting targeting Roma '[that] have revealed the dominant negative stereotypes of Romani communities and suggest that Romaphobia is still an acceptable form of racism' (McGarry 2013), it seemed very timely to undertake an in-depth qualitative ethnographic investigation based on and informed by the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people.

Chapter 2: Identity, Romani identities and Romani Studies

Introduction

This chapter looks at the theoretical underpinnings of the concept of 'identity' that has been key to understanding Romani identities. Paraphrasing the title of Hall's essay 'Who needs identity?' (1996a), the chapter begins by asking 'What is identity?' and proceeds to offer an account of a number of different meanings of identity. Identity is an 'essentially contested concept' (Gallie 1956). This serves as a springboard to the first focus of the chapter: discussing identity based primarily on theoretical insights from and conceptualisations of this term in the work of Stuart Hall, particularly in relation to cultural and ethnic identity, or 'ethnicity.' I then proceed to apply these conceptualisations to understandings of identity in Romani Studies and the various disciplines of social sciences that have contributed to conceptualising 'Romani identity' such as Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology, and Political science. Starting off with conceptualisations of 'Romani identity' primarily along ethnic lines, I go on to explore understandings of 'Romani identities' facilitated by concepts such as hybridity; super-diversity; and intersectionality (hence also the distinction and oscillation between the singular 'Romani identity' and the plural 'Romani identities' throughout the present thesis). I do so because these concepts take into account and cross-cut categories of identification such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, age, social status. Having drawn on and borrowed from the above combination of identity and intersectionality literatures, I stitch together a mosaic of various conceptualisations of identity with a view to arguing that as a post-colonial critique, as well as a critique of heteronormativity, intersectionality has slowly paved the way to embedding within academic discourse the issues of sexuality and gender identity, which have been largely overlooked by Romani Studies.

2.1 What is identity?

In the 1996 volume *Questions of Cultural Identity*, commenting on identity, in his article 'From Pilgrim to Tourist — or a Short History of Identity' Bauman proposed that 'at no time did identity "become" a problem; it was a "problem" from its birth — was *born as a problem* (...), could exist only as a problem' (1996, 18-19; original emphasis). In the same volume, Hall commented on the 'tricky' nature of the concept of 'identity' (1996a, 2). So, what is 'tricky' about identity? Identity has a number of meanings and uses. To put it in the simplest of terms, in everyday life, when a person is asked to 'identify' themselves, they are expected to provide their initials and personal data, including citizenship and nationality (most often determined on the basis of their birth country), sometimes ethnicity. With the advent of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) and biometric data, unique biological identity markers are registered such as eye colour, other facial and/or physiognomic features, and at times fingerprints. Authorities and other institutions officially identify and recognise a given person amongst millions of other people based on these unique 'innate' identity markers. That is also how a person may identify themselves to individuals, authorities and institutions, including in the virtual realm of the internet. So, does identity refer to how people *identify themselves* or to how others *identify them*? Is it a combination of the two or does it imply something trickier than that? What sense do people make of their identities? How do people make sense of their lives?

In social theory, social sciences and philosophy, the question of identity has been beset by much complexity. Identity has been debated particularly since the second half of the 20th century in relation to the structural transformations and social changes that have affected modern societies. From an epistemological point of view, identity underwent major reconceptualisations particularly in the late 20th century as part of the process of 'fragmenting the cultural landscapes of class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, race, and

nationality (...), undermining the frameworks which gave individuals stable anchorage in the social world' (Hall 1992, 274). Particularly psychoanalysis, post-structuralism, feminism, post-colonial studies, lesbian and gay studies, and queer theorising have significantly contributed to theorising the implications of this loss of stable identity. The following section looks at some of these debates.

2.2 Individual identity, social and cultural identities and identifications

From the earliest moments of our lives, we start to perceive and are taught to make sense of our place as subjects and of our role as individuals in our respective societies and in the world around us through our *'selves'* as well as through others. Hall uses the term 'sociological subject' to refer to a modern, interactive conception of identity and the self where the inner core of the subject is formed in relation to "significant others" who mediate to the subject the values, meanings and symbols - the culture - of the world he/she inhabit[s]' (1992, 275). Cultural identities, according to Hall, are 'those aspects of our identities which arise from our "belonging" to distinct ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and, above all, national cultures' (ibid, 274). At the level of individual identity, or self-identity, this may entail what Hall refers to as the 'old logics of identity', or 'a notion of our true self, some real self inside there' (2000, 42). Thus, it may seem perfectly *natural* for us to think that this true, real self is our *essential* identity that makes us *us*. We may believe that we develop our identity intuitively, while discovering it almost as if it were in store for us somewhere in the future. Or as Hall puts it, '[w]e are never quite there, but always on our way to it, and when we get there, we will at last know exactly who it is we are' (2000, 42). This sense of our *selves*, of who we *really* are, is shaped by our contact with the people around us who speak and behave in various ways. We are almost constantly faced, consciously or unconsciously, with the question 'Who am I?'. As Bauman argues,

one thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right or proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence. 'Identity' is a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty (1996, 19).

These different behaviour styles and patterns, or simply *differences*, get more subtle and complex as we get older and become more aware of our 'collective social identities of class, of race, of nation, of gender of the West' (Hall 2000, 44); and of sexuality. How we move about individually and socially in the world as sexual, gendered, socialised, culturalised, raced/racialised and ethnicised individuals has implications for our individual identity, as well as for the collective social identities that we identify ourselves with and/or others may identify us with.

In his 1996 article 'Who needs identity?', Hall proposed that identity is inseparable from the discursive practice of identification as follows:

it seems to be in the attempt to rearticulate the relationship between the subject and discursive practices that the question of identity recurs — or rather, if one prefers to stress the subjectification to discursive practices, and the politics of exclusion which all subjectification appears to entail, the question of *identification*. (...) [I]dentification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or a group, or with an ideal. (...) [T]he discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed — always 'in process'. It is not determined in the sense that it can always be 'won' or 'lost', sustained or abandoned (Hall 1996a, 2; original emphasis).

Therefore, an individual's identity is a 'product', albeit evolving, as much as it is part of the ongoing 'process of identity formation' or 'identification'; it is constantly (re)produced and (re)constructed. We get 'born into' particular societies, cultures, ideologies and value systems which have been determined by different social, cultural, political and religious canons, norms, orthodoxies and histories. These, in turn, shape our identity with which they are in a discursive dialogue. This suggests, too, that a certain degree of preconditioning is involved in the construction of our identity. The notion that identity is both a constantly evolving product and ongoing process is contrary to previous Cartesian philosophical views on and essentialist understandings of identity as integral, originary and unified. According to Hall (1992, 275), these relied upon the Enlightenment's previous theorising about the Cartesian subject being self-determining, self-evident, self-sustaining, coherent, rational and stable; the inner core, with which the Enlightenment subject was endowed at birth, grew but remained essentially the same.

The 'erosion of collective social identities' (Hall 2000, 44) that took place in the latter part of the 20th century in response to the rapidly and permanently changing modern societies also impacted on the shifting of personal identities. Not only did this result in the loss of the Cartesian fantasy of a stable 'sense of self' but also in what Hall referred to as 'de-centering individuals both from their place in the social and cultural world, and from themselves — (...) a "crisis of identity"' (1992, 275). The post-modern subject was subsequently reconceptualised as fragmented, having 'no fixed, essential, permanent identity, (...) composed not of a single, but of several sometimes contradictory or unresolved identities.' Identity came to be understood as constantly (trans)formed 'in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us' and which are historically, not biologically defined (ibid, 276-277). Hall termed this paradigm shift 'the conceptual de-centering of the Cartesian subject' (1989, 15). The reconceptualisation of the

'old' logic of identity gave rise to the emergence of new types of collective social, or cultural identities which yield a much greater degree of plurality and fragmentation and which 'do not stitch us in place, locate us, in the way they did in the past' (Hall 2000, 63). As a result, Hall (1996a) called for a reconceptualisation of the subject — 'thinking it in its new, displaced and decentred position within the paradigm', and hence a reconceptualisation of identity as non-essentialist, not stable or unified, but instead 'function[ing] as points of identification and attachment only *because* of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render "outside", abjected' (1996a, 5; original emphasis). Identities are 'never singular but multiply constructed [within the play of power and exclusion], across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions (1996a, 4). Not only did this reconceptualisation help to spell out the contextual side of identities, i.e. the discourses, systems and paradigms within which the post-modern subject operates, and their effects on the post-modern subject by means of which it is constantly determined, shaped and transformed. It also 'revolutionised' the way in which the content and function of identities are understood.

2.2.1 Collective social identities

What was so crucial about the old social structures and the great collective social identities associated with them? Hall reminds us that they were established, staged and stabilised by lengthy and important historical processes such as 'industrialisation, capitalism, urbanisation, the formation of the world market, the social and the sexual division of labour, the great punctuation of civil and social life into the public and the private, the dominance of the nation state, and the identification between Westernisation and the notion of modernity itself' (2000, 45). These processes have come to characterise and to be associated with the modern world. At the same time, the old social identities that had been formed along the lines of ethnicity, race, class, nation(ality), sexuality, and gender, served

to stabilise the social order in that they ‘provided the code [of identity] through which we read one another’ (Hall 2000, 45). The collective social identities became sets of symbols and meanings, or discursive practices, deeply embedded within the social order as they produced, legitimised and were at the same time (re)produced by, the very same ‘system[s] of cultural representation’ (Hall 1996b, 612). As Hall observed,

(...) the great collective social identities which we thought of as large-scale, all-encompassing, homogenous, as unified collective identities, which could be spoken about almost as if they were singular actors in their own right but which, indeed, placed, positioned, stabilized, and allowed us to understand and read, almost as a code, the imperatives of the individual self ... (2000, 44).

This implies that class, race, nation, gender and sexuality as collective social identities stood at the root of organising people’s thinking about the social world inhabited by them. They came to represent the most fundamental units, or systems, of the social order through which people made sense of and gave meaning to their individual identities and the social world surrounding them. The following section dwells on the collective social identities of nationality and ethnicity that have been key to conceptualising Romani identities within Romani Studies.

2.2.2 National and ethnic identities

The collective social identities, or value systems representing sets of cultural symbols and meanings, were as imaginary and mythical a fantasy as the Cartesian subject: they came to be taken for granted and seen as essential, universal, homogenous, unified ‘already-produced stabilities and totalities’ (Hall 2000, 45). ‘National’ and ‘ethnic’ identities are not something that we are born *with*; rather they are something we are born *into*. Using Hall’s example of ‘a culturally constructed sense of Englishness and a particularly closed,

exclusive (...) form of English national identity' (Hall 1996b, 446), or, indeed, of any other national identity such as French, German, or Czech, or ethnic identity such as non-Romani or Romani, which at different points in time may have emphasised its *exclusionary* nature, we know what it means to be a member of that national and/or ethnic group on the basis of how that particular national and/or ethnic identity has come to be represented to us by that very national culture. It is represented to us as a set of meanings with which we are in a constant *dialogical relationship*, negotiating our national and ethnic identities. In Hall's view, the main source of our cultural identity in the modern world are the national and ethnic identities that we are born into. This poses a fundamental problem: to paraphrase Hall (1996c, 611-612), the notion that we get born into particular national and ethnic identities does not mean that these identities are 'imprinted in our genes'; yet some people may think of them as part of their 'essential natures', which might account for the persistence of nationalism over time and emotive ideas attached to a given nation and its preservation.

The fantasies of national and ethnic identities, or 'imagined communities' (ibid, 616) are interconnected, mainly due to the role of the modern nation-state in creating what Hall calls the notion of '*a pure, original people, or "folk"*' (ibid, 615; original emphasis). National cultures construct identities by producing unified symbols, meanings and narratives about the primordial *nation*, its history (origins, memories, foundational myths, invented traditions, desire of togetherness), and continuity of its heritage in the present and the future, with which people can identify. National cultural identities create a myth of unity, seeking to unite into one culture people who, in the modern European context, tend to differ in terms of their origin, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality 'through the exercise of different forms of cultural power, (...) offering [them] both membership of the political nation-state and identification with the national culture' (ibid, 613-617; original emphasis). Despite the proposal that

national cultural identities should be thought of as 'discursive devices' representing difference as unity or identity, they continue to be represented as unified.

The 'old', persistent essentialist logic of ethnic identity is then conceptualised, according to Hall, along similar lines of mythical unity. 'Ethnicity' as a concept is used to refer to 'cultural features — language, religion, custom, traditions, feeling for "place"' — shared by *one people*. Yet, Europe's '*modern nations are all cultural hybrids*' (ibid, 617; original emphasis) or 'nations of essentially mixed blood' (Renan 1990, 14-15, cited in Hall 1996c, 618). At the same time, we are reminded that ethnicity is not a biological or genetic, but a discursive category, which is constructed historically, culturally and politically, and grounded in the discourse of racism (Hall 1996b, 446). The 'old' collective social identities, the 'old' ethnicities have not disappeared. They have been fundamentally transformed, giving us a glimpse of a politics which is

able to address people through the multiple identities which they have — understanding that those identities do not remain the same, (...) that they cross-cut one another, that they locate us differently at different moments (Hall 2000, 59).

Here, by referring to the notion of multiple, multifaceted, fluid, constantly changing and intersecting identities, Hall signals a new approach in terms of conceptualising ethnic identities, or 'new ethnicities', which is explored in the following section. Hall understands 'new ethnicities' as encapsulating not only ethnicity/race, class and nation, but also sexuality and gender. This 'new' understanding of identities is in line with intersectional feminism, lesbian and gay studies, and queer theorising (a more detailed discussion follows in Chapter 3).

2.3 'New' ethnicities

In his article *New ethnicities*, Hall elaborated extensively on a significant shift in conceptualising the term 'black' in black cultural politics in the UK. He argued that in this shift, two phases were intermingling and overlapping. The first phase was grounded in the moment when 'black' started to be used politically by very diverse groups and communities with different histories and ethnic identities, who identified themselves with this term, as an organising category of the politics of resistance to challenge and remedy the dominant racist regimes targeted at the 'black subject' and the marginalisation of the 'black experience' in Britain. The second, or new phase occurred in response to the aforementioned reconceptualisation of the post-modern subject and identity as non-essential and fragmented (1996b, 441, 443). The latter phase, according to Hall, marked 'the end of the innocent notion of the essential black subject' in that it became obvious that the category 'black' was fundamentally politically and culturally 'constructed,' not biologically or genetically 'encoded.' In and of itself, this category entailed an extraordinary amount of diversity of individual, as well as social experiences, identities and positions, including those related to sexuality and gender. As a result, the black subject could no longer be conceptualised and represented without reference to class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity (ibid, 443 - 445). This 'new' logic of ethnic identity grounded in difference comes full circle in discursive social practices as discussed above since it enables us all to

speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture. (...) We are all, in that sense, *ethnically* located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are (Hall ibid, 447; original emphasis).

'Black' did not stop to denote the specific experiences of individuals who identified as 'black' and/or were perceived as such by others; however, it was no longer sustainable to reference ethnicity/race in its narrowest sense as the only defining aspect of identity. It was necessary

to account for other aspects of identity, or categories of identification predicated on *difference*. These locate each post-modern subject differently within different social and cultural system, paradigms and discourses. While ethnicity/race may be one of them, gender, sexuality and class must be attended to as well.

Sections 2.1 - 2.3 have outlined some of the main shifts in grasping 'identity' and 'ethnicity' based on theoretical insights from the work of Stuart Hall in particular. The following section will attend to how Romani identities have been conceptualised primarily in Romani Studies.

2.4 Roma and Romani identities

Section 1.2 provided a brief history of Roma: a heterogeneous, transnational ethnic minority 'grouping' of numerous sub-groups 'as divided and united as any other section of society' who have a 'non-cohesive group identity' (McGarry 2010, 129). Though citizens of nation states for the most part (i.e. with the exception of Romani refugees and/or internally displaced persons), Roma are regarded, and at times regard themselves, as a 'nation without a state': a notion that was first clearly articulated in the 'Declaration of a Roma Nation' (2000) asserting a right to self-determination as a non-territorial nation but making no claims to territory (Acton and Klímová 2001). Even though numerous members of these diverse sub-groups speak various versions and dialects of the Romani language (Matras 2002, 2013) and engage in similar cultural practices and customs (Acton and Mundy 1997), Roma are not united by one common language, religion, cultural practice, geographical location, occupation, physical appearance or lifestyle (Surdu and Kovats 2015; McGarry 2010).

Contrary to this complex reality, Roma and Romani identity have been subject to a plethora of misrepresentations and stereotypes. More often than not, Roma have been represented

as a homogenous ethnic group along essentialist lines, whose members' physiognomic features and behavioural traits are deemed genetic, thus allegedly determined before/at birth by nature of 'their' ethnicity. These 'representations' (McGarry 2014) have associated Roma with both positive and negative stereotypes: with, on the one hand, romanticising images of unchained freedom, passion, voluptuousness and exoticism (Oprea 2004, 1; Mayall 2003, 1), 'a welcome anachronism in modern society' (Mayall 2003, 2); and, on the other, with more sinister ones, portraying Roma as criminals, thieves, vermin, undesirable, a/anti-social, work-shy, foreign elements (Hancock 2002, Horváthová 2002, Liégeois 1983). In the 19th and 20th centuries, Roma were 'pathologised' as a separate, 'inferior', 'deviant' race (Balibar 2009, x). In the most recent history, a different image of Roma has been created, whereby Roma have been increasingly described as a 'problem' and associated with negative social phenomena (Vermeersch 2006) and European societies' ills such as mass unemployment, poverty, ill health, discrimination, and social exclusion.

A word of caution is required here since the above 'objective external circumstances' are often referred to as the 'common properties' or 'attributes' of the Roma (and some academic discourses are not an exception). Historically, stereotyping images imposed on Roma, often by non-Roma, from the outside have been instrumental in generating and maintaining negative perceptions and notions held by non-Romani people about who Roma are. Coupled with historic suppression of Romani cultural identity (McGarry 2010), these misrepresentations have come to be intrinsically associated with Romani identity, seen as the 'essential', 'defining', 'in-born markers' of Roma, and turned into 'common knowledge,' informing the views, beliefs and values of non-Roma, and at times those of Roma. This powerful negative, or pathological valuation of Romani identity has not only put Roma in 'double jeopardy' when trying to frame Romani identity in a positive way to mobilise around it in the face of negative narratives relating to Romani ethnicity (Vermeersch 2006). It has

also been fuelling the discrimination and racism explicitly targeting Roma even further, thereby facilitating the process of creating a 'stigmatised,' as well as 'closeted' Romani identity, explored more in detail in Section 3.2.

2.4.1 Essentialism v. constructionism

Thus far, scholarship on Roma has come up with two distinctive, though not mutually exclusive conceptualisations of Romani identity. The first, essentialist (or primordial) approach, defines Roma as a historical ethnic diaspora and an unassimilated ethnic group that shares a common origin, language, history and culture (Hancock 2002, Lee 2001, Fraser 1992, Horváthová 2002). A more radical form of this conceptualisation, which some authors view as a separate conceptualisation (Vermeersch 2006), concentrates on the issue of biological kinship, accentuating the notion of natural tribal bonds and genetic, or phenotypic, characteristics (Lee 2001, Hancock 1992, 2002). Some of these theories have been supported by developments in genetics, with scholars Iovita and Schurr, for instance, asserting that molecular genetic studies concerning European Roma unequivocally confirm the linguistic theory of the Indian origin of Roma (Iovita and Schurr 2004). However, biological theories related to Romani identity are problematic (Vermeersch 2006) considering the devastating impact that racist ideologies, the Nazi racial ideology and eugenics have had on Europe, as well as the US because of their claim that Roma are biologically 'deficient', i.e. the 'Romani gene'.

The second, social constructionist (or culturalist) conceptualisation has focused on issues concerning lifestyle and behaviour, elaborating on the idea that Roma share common 'culture' and cultural practices such as elements of religion, habits, purity laws, travelling, a set of beliefs, sometimes referred to as Romipen, Romanipe or Romanipen, the Romani identity, and occupy specific niches, particularly in the changing division of labour (Okely

1983). According to Lucassen et al. (1998), Roma are related to one another exclusively by their behaviour as they choose to be self-employed, work with their family and lead an itinerant lifestyle; as a result, Roma are an interest group rather than an ethnic minority with common roots and culture (Lucassen et al. 1998, 171). Other scholars such as Jakoubek and Poduška (2003), Jakoubek (2004) have made similar, albeit highly controversial claims suggesting that the common traits that Roma share are poverty and loyalty to kinship, which in their opinion does not constitute the principle of ethnicity and/or nationality. However, the legitimacy and validity of these radical versions of constructionism have been questioned by a number of Czech academics (Barša 2004; Elšík 2004) due to the implications and politically detrimental impact the research had on Czech Romani communities particularly at the local level.

As suggested above, some Romani Studies scholars have positioned themselves within the remit of the diasporic, or primordial conceptualisation of Romani identity while others have been critical of this conceptualisation. However, the distinction between the two conceptualisations is not always so clear-cut. Some scholars associated with, and at times critiqued for, their essentialising approach have moved between the two approaches. As suggested by Kóczé (2009), certain scholars such as Hancock use the term 'strategic essentialism' coined by Spivak in 1984 (Chakraborty 2010). This refers to the notion that some socially, politically or otherwise subordinate and/or marginalised groups may feel there is a temporary need for them to put aside group differences in order to forge a sense of collective identity through which it is possible to band together in political movements. As for those scholars who have been critical of the primordial conceptualisation, for instance Okely (1983) claimed that focusing on the Indian origin of Roma was a form of Orientalism, exoticising Roma by setting them apart as non-European, while Willems (1995) maintained that current ideas about Roma as an ethnic diaspora are part of a deliberate fabrication by

'gypsyologists' of Gypsies as a separate ethnicity in the 18th century. Belton (2005) argued that a racial and ethnic focus on Roma has given rise to an ethnic narrative of Romani identity whereby Roma only see themselves through an ethnic and/or racial lens. Instead, he claims that 'this group is made up of a melting of people from a diverse range of backgrounds and, as such, does not constitute an ethnic or racial whole' (Belton 2005, 3). Mayall (2004) pointed to inconsistencies within the current non-Roma scholarship on Roma (for instance referring to Liégeois' manner of treating the issue of the Indian origin of Roma) and concluded his study with the statement that Roma 'are and have been whoever people have wanted them to be' (Mayall 2004, 276-278). According to Mayall, non-Roma have constructed the group by setting boundaries and providing it with its own images. This does not mean that Romani identity is not real: the process of constructing borders can facilitate identity building and provide a basis for a strong, distinct collective identity (Mayall 2004). Le Bas warned of some of the dangers of over-accentuating the idea of Roma as a people living in diaspora, asserting that such an approach leads to perpetuating the image of 'the truest and purest Gypsies who never left India' (2010, 67-68). To sum up all of the above, whatever difference of opinion there has been among scholars as to where Roma came from and the significance of the 'origin' of Roma, it must be remembered that the archetype of the 'pure, mythic' Gypsy' never existed in the first place.

2.5 Romani identities across disciplines

Romani identity has been a *contested* terrain, generally beset by difference of opinion among scholars who disagree about what constitutes Romani identity. This is not only because of the contested Indian, allegedly non-European, origin of Roma, but also due to Roma having a 'contested ethnic identity' (McGarry 2010) characterised by heterogeneity, fragmentation and difference in sub-group identity around which Roma nonetheless unite.

In Romani Studies, there have been differences of opinion, overlaps and tensions not just because of the above duality of epistemological approaches (i.e. essentialism and social constructionism that have often overlapped), but also based on academic affiliations and disciplines. The following section focuses on some of the debates, themes, tensions and overlaps in terms of how Romani identity has been understood by academics in the various disciplines of Romani studies: Linguistics, Anthropology, Sociology, and Political science. Naturally, as with all disciplines, the boundaries between the individual disciplines are blurred; indeed, much Romani Studies scholarship is interdisciplinary. However, for ease of reference, I list them separately.

2.5.1 Linguistic inquiry

Due to there being very few known documented records of the Roma's migration westwards in medieval times, Romani Studies linguists have traditionally relied on linguistic evidence to support the theory that Roma originated in and migrated from India, particularly the region of Punjab in the North-west of India. Linguists have based their scholarship on 18th-century linguistic investigations and research by, most notably, Rüdiger (1782) and Grellmann (1783) who were the first ones to establish a link between the Romani language and the Indo-Aryan languages of India (Fraser 2000, 21). Grellmann's work went on to become much better known, translated and more widely disseminated than Rüdiger's despite his interpretation of Romani communities being deviant and having a deficit subculture. Importantly, their texts impacted on contemporary academic debate by establishing alternative images of Roma and conceptualisations of Romani identity (Van Baar 2011). Together with Borrow's work (1857), they are regarded as the 'forefathers' of the Gypsy Lore Society founded in 1888, which has, to date, maintained a problematic link with the present-day Romani Studies, 'oscillat[ing] around classical themes of anthropology (rituals, identities, religions, music and other cultural expressions), linguistics or historical research'

(Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2015, 41). Romani Studies are seen as the Gypsy Lore Society's inheritor and the legacy, characterised by a hierarchical attitude to the researched and affiliation to established centres of power (Brooks 2015). In her view,

the relation of the re-named *Romani Studies* journal to the present-day Gypsy Lore Society calls into question any temporal shifts or sea changes in Romani Studies as a field of inquiry (Brooks 2015, 58).

Apart from the early 'gypsiologists', Matras (2002) draws attention to the discussion on the presence of various populations of Indian origin outside of India, as well as to the debates in which scholars such as Pott (1844), Grierson (1922) and others elaborated on the possibility of a direct connection between the Roma and castes of commercial itinerant populations in India. Another key contribution to Romani linguistics was Sampson's monograph on Welsh Romani from 1926 (Matras 1999, 89). Modern understanding of the Romani language and its historical development has been reliant on reconstructing and comparing it with other Indo-Aryan idioms and the contact languages (Matras 2006, 2), as well as on reconstructing and reinterpreting history by speculatively putting together accounts of events (Matras 2002). For instance, Hancock's linguistic scholarship is based on his theory according to which Roma's ancestors were members of the military caste, who left India with their camp followers around 1000-1250 AD in response to a series of Islamic invasions led by Mahmud of Ghazni (2000, 1). The linguistic approach to Romani Studies (including sociolinguistics) has traditionally enjoyed a prominent position in the 20th century in central and eastern European countries, with linguists such as Hübschmannová, Elšík, Friedman, and others (Bakker and Matras 2003). However, it is worth pointing out that linguists have not restricted their inquiry strictly to linguistics since scholars such as Hancock, Matras and others have also written about Romani history, culture and identity.

Even though the evidence obtained thanks to linguistics continues to reveal historic routes of certain groups (Matras 2002), inevitably, this direct relationship between linguistics and history often puts Romani Studies linguists into opposition to some anthropologists, sociologists and political scientists. This is most often due to the aforementioned difference of opinion between, on the one hand, the proponents of the essentialist approach, and supporters of the constructionist approach, on the other. Linguists have also levelled criticism at Romani Studies scholars in other disciplines. For example, Matras has been critical of Okely's refusal to 'engage with the linguistic argument' (Matras 2013, 4), as well as of Stewart, Gay y Blasco or Jakoubek for the same reason (ibid, 5-5). He has also critiqued the Dutch constructionist approach represented by Cottaar, Lucassen and Willems mainly in terms of their 'de-construction' of the Indian origin and rejection of Romani groups as ethnic minority groups (ibid, 4-5). At the same time, Matras has criticised Liégeois for his essentialising definition of 'Roma, Gypsies and Travellers' produced for the Council of Europe: not only does it define Roma as outsiders and institutionalises the image of a fictional 'Gypsy' but it also 'avoids a partition between socioeconomic organisation in peripatetic communities and Roma as an ethnic-linguistic minority' (ibid, 7). However, this multiple critique of the anthropological, sociological and political scientific lines of inquiry have not offered a solution to the ongoing dispute between essentialism and social constructionism.

2.5.2 Anthropologic inquiry

The anthropologic inquiry has been generally informed by the social constructionist approach, including by some valid points made by the Dutch school's scholarship in respect of the 18th century nationalist framing of heterogeneous itinerant groups as one homogenous, non-European people originating in India: that is the Roma. Most anthropologists have generally steered clear of making 'an absurd social constructivist

claim that “the Roma do not exist” (Stewart 2010, 2) except for the aforementioned claim by Jakoubek and Poduška (2003).

Anthropologists writing *on* Roma have traditionally studied aspects of Romani ‘culture’ and ‘identity.’ They have focused on strategies of mobilising cultural resources by means of which Roma subvert majority social, cultural and economic structures and hierarchies through a continual process of articulating, constructing, and maintaining distinctive identities (‘Gypsy-way’ or ‘Gypsiness’) and semi-autonomous cultural space grounded in the Roma’s difference from non-Roma, and/or other Romani sub-groups (Okely 1983; Sutherland 1986; Stewart 1997; Gay y Blasco 1999; Lemon 2000). By so doing, anthropologists have helped to understand ethnic groups as the result of social and political processes of categorisation, and ethnicity as a form of social organisation rather than in terms of objective group characteristics or common properties. By extension, anthropologists have demonstrated that Romani identity is not a primordial ‘common cultural content’; instead, Romani identity is socially constructed and relational (Durst 2010). Contrary to the essentialist approach, according to which Roma had been an isolated tribe whose migration from India contaminated their once ‘intact’ culture, anthropologists such as Okely have contended that Roma are a people whose culture inhabits and constructs its ‘internal coherence alongside and in opposition to other dominant cultures; in the same geographical and political space’ (1994, 2010). This implies that Romani identity is ‘a product of classification struggles involving both classifiers and those classified as Roma’ (Vermeersch 2006, 13). Citing the situation of British Romani Gypsies, Okely opposed the notion of Romani Gypsies as ‘exotic outsiders’ who moved into and remained unassimilated in European societies, and argued that instead of referring to the pre-supposed Indian origin, scholars should attend to the socio-economic dynamics and processes at the time

of their arrival in Britain (1983, 12). Similarly, anthropologists such as Gay y Blasco (1999, 50) or Stewart (1997, 28) have stated similar disinterest in the Indian-origin theory.

In spite of the aforementioned contributions to existing scholarship on Roma achieved by anthropology, the discipline itself has not remained above criticism. Anthropologists, including Stewart, have been criticised by some sociologists for being too focused on cultural difference from non-Roma rather than on dynamics of similarities across populations, reifying the 'groupness' of Roma, Romani culture as 'coherent,' as well as producing a romanticised image of the 'originary' Roma in a situation where everyday poverty and other attendant social issues facing Roma are much more critical (Tremlett 2014b, 836, 837). As Brooks observes, 'the field of Romani Studies often echoes anthropology's focus on "culture" as the starting premise of its analysis' (2015, 57). Furthermore, anthropology, which methodologically rests on accounts by individual anthropologists of their fieldwork with Romani communities and/or 'a [Romani] person as an exemplar and performer of Gypsy/Roma distinctiveness' (Gay y Blasco 2011, 445), is prone to critique for its selective subjectivity as being 'merely personal' (Okely 2010). One such example is Oprea's claim that anthropological accounts of Romani communities, which are mostly written by non-Roma, result in 'turning a blind eye' to patriarchal practices, excusing them as the others' 'culture,' neglecting the daily realities of Romani women, and perpetuating a romanticised notion of Romani existence (2004, 30-31). These academic critiques suggest that there is a need for attending to the disconnect they perceive to exist between anthropologists' conceptualisations of Romani identities and the realities of multiple everyday Romani identities 'on the ground'.

Given the above critiques that anthropology has been facing, as well as the notion that 'the all-pervasive methodological nationalism of anthropological and other social scientific

approaches produces false and misleading accounts of Roman[i] lives in Europe today,' Stewart poses a constructive challenge to Romani Studies by suggesting that 'rich and honest analysis of Roman[i] lives demands that authors transcend the "ethnic" frame of reference' (2010, 2). How this plea has been responded to is discussed in below Section 2.6.

2.5.3 Sociological inquiry

A substantial part of the sociological inquiry in Romani Studies has been informed by writing about the situation of the Roma throughout Central and Eastern Europe, particularly in relation to poverty. A wide scope of sociological research initiatives and projects have stressed the growing hardship, marginalisation, oppression of, and persisting discrimination against Roma across the board (in housing, healthcare, education, employment social services). Sociologists have also written about Romani identity; for instance, Ladányi and Szelényi (2003) have taken a socio-historical approach to investigating the status and labelling of Romani minorities by suggesting the concept of 'underclass' as a suitable term to define the situation of Roma minorities today in Central and Eastern European countries. Guy (2001) noted that whereas communist policies framed the Roma question as a social one, the post-communist approach to the social issues facing Roma was to ethnicise Roma. In this connection, Gheorghe (1997) previously suggested that in the wake of the collapse of communism, Roma and Romani identity, which had been seen as 'social' and largely negative, ascended to a position of enhanced social respectability by means of 'ethnogenesis' (Gheorghe 1997; Mirga and Gheorghe 1997; Gheorghe and Acton 1992, 2001; Acton and Klímová 2001) whereby

a social group, previously occupying a despised and inferior position, moving from this position to some kind of respectability with a sort of equality with other social groups in the hierarchy of social stratification on the basis of a revised perception of their identity. The

achievement of this movement is a project for us because of Gypsy experience of marginalization, of inferior social positions, of carrying a stigmatised identity in society (Gheorghe 1997, 158).

Guy (2001) went on to argue that Romani identity is social rather than ethnic, derived from the Roma's subordinate position within the wider economy and society. Yet, the two aspects are not 'necessarily dichotomised opposites for population groups in human society have overlapping social and ethnic dimensions' (2001, 4, 8). Guy claimed that the dominant experience of Roma as Europeans has been the continued persecution and discrimination Roma have suffered, which, in turn has shaped perception of Roma by others and stigmatised Roma self-perception as having a 'pariah social identity' (2001, 5). At the same time, he proposed that Romani identity and 'culture,' understood broadly, are not unique, isolated, fixed entities despite showing some characteristic elements: they are constantly shaped and (re)constructed 'out of and [in] response to the nature of the symbiotic relationship between Roma and the wider majority communities' (2001, 7). This provided a very constructive sociological insight. On the one hand, it succeeded in acknowledging the historical reality of many Roma, while, on the other, by taking more of a social constructionist approach, it recognised the importance of the process of identity construction within the larger social fabric.

While making an important commentary on the current state of affairs in the changing political terrains of post-communist countries moving towards neoliberalism (Emigh and Szelényi 2001; Ladányi and Szelényi 2006), some of these accounts have come to be seen as 'objective descriptors' of the social reality and 'common properties' of the lives of sizeable numbers of Roma. Even though the inequalities suffered predominantly by — and hence 'attributed' to — Roma have been so widely documented and publicised that they have become common knowledge (Vermeersch 2006), Roma are referred to by some

sociologists and demographers as a ‘hard to see’ (Stewart 2010, 1) or ‘invisible’ (Okely 2010) minority.

Sociological research and demographic data collection have been used, at times successfully, by sociologists and human/Roma rights organisations. They have contributed to documenting aspects of the current socio-economic situation of Roma across Europe such as lack of equality of opportunity in accessing mainstream education; to accounting for some of the underlying socio-economic reasons; and/or to litigating breaches of fundamental rights before domestic or European courts. However, as Vermeersch notes,

‘difficulties [...] mark all attempts at conceptualising [Romani] identity as an objective property. (...) [I]t is difficult to find any reliable statistical representation of [the deplorable situation of Romani populations] (2006, 20, 23)

As discussed above in Section 2.5.2, critique from sociologists was levelled at anthropologists mainly due to their focus on ‘culture’ as an allegedly ‘common property’ of Roma. In turn, sociologists writing in Romani Studies have faced similar criticism from anthropologists for their focus on poverty as a defining feature of Roma. In Tremlett’s view, ‘[t]his is an important debate as it pivots on whether culture has been dismissed as poverty or whether poverty becomes the overwhelming feature of a community’ (2014b, 837). Additionally, Tremlett argues that despite the premises of the two disciplines having been historically divergent, a similar effect is achieved in both cases in terms of conceptualising Romani identity through an ‘ethnic lens.’ Irrespective of the level of social constructionism that has informed sociological and anthropologic inquiries, both end up producing essentialist conceptualisations of Romani identity, ‘centred on asking what the most important feature is that makes up Roma people’s characters and experiences of their lives’ (ibid 831). Diversity becomes thus centred on looking at different types of poverty, or

language, or culture — a heterogeneous approach to diversity that still keeps the notion of an overall “group”.’ A whole host of other significant ‘identity components’ involved in the process of Romani identity formation are thus overlooked: gender and gender identity, sexuality, socio-economic status, class, age/generation, legal/immigration status (Ibid, 831). This means that with a number of exceptions, perhaps unwittingly, sociology has perpetuated some of the dominant essentialist conceptualisations of Romani identities, anchoring Roma in the notion of fixed ‘groupness’ and failing to portray Romani identities as multifaceted, constantly shaping, evolving and fluid.

2.5.4 Political scientific inquiry

Informed by both the essentialist and social constructionist perspectives, political science has made its mark on Romani Studies by taking stock of the scholarship on Roma generated by all of the above academic disciplines and bringing a new, fresh perspective. Political scientists have explored Romani identity as a ‘politicised,’ ‘ethnicised’ (or ‘racialised’) conception in post-communist, neoliberal European nation-states where state reforms create new mechanisms of Romani marginalisation, and in the context of political discourses relating to Roma (Balibar 2009). They have also paid attention to the contemporary socio-economic and political conditions amidst which Romani identity becomes a political-expert ideological, as well institutional construction along ethnic lines, which maintains and reinforces exclusionary practices and policies targeting Roma, poor and deprived ones in particular (Kovats and Surdu 2015). Van Baar (2011), for example, has examined the Europeanisation of Romani representation at a time of the (re)emergence of nationalist and populist rhetoric and movements across Europe, as well as the importance of recognising the Romani Holocaust in the process of Romani identity formation at a transnational level (2010). The issues of Europeanisation and transnationality have also been examined by Vermeersch (2006) and McGarry (2010) in relation to the

situation of Romani communities in selected Central and Eastern European countries. They have studied the relationship between, on the one hand, Romani communities and non-governmental organisations representing and speaking for the Roma (i.e. the Romani social and political movement), and on the other, the recently emerged political structures such as national and international governing bodies, institutions and organisations. Vermeersch makes an important observation in relation to the paradoxical discourse of exoticising and orientalisising Romani identity as non-European while the actual ‘interests,’ or ‘concerns’ of Romani communities are labelled negatively as ‘issues,’ or ‘problems’ which have been pan-Europeanised (2006, 172-174). This implies the notion that at a general societal level, Roma and Romani ethnic identity are being conceptualised homogeneously and constructed as non/un-European ‘strangers’ and ‘non-citizens’ while at the same time supporting the negative narrative of Roma being a drain on the resources of European nation states.

Political scientists have acknowledged the challenges facing Roma, especially in terms of the deeply embedded marginalisation, discrimination and racism targeting Roma along ethnic lines — Antigypsyism, also referred to as Romaphobia — that are endemic to most European societies. In his latest book, McGarry (2017) defines Antigypsyism/Romaphobia as follows:

Romaphobia places an emphasis on how non-Roma construct Roma as a particular identity group, distinct from the majority. (...) Romaphobia is a complex of ethnic discrimination and prejudicial attitudes that target groups and individuals based on assumptions of inferiority. Prejudice is ‘an antipathy based on faulty and inflexible generalizations’ (Allport 1954: 9), or what we might term stereotypes. These generalizations are harmful because they reduce all Roma to negative attributes and characteristics simply because they are Roma. Instead of ‘that Rom is a criminal’, we hear ‘all Roma are criminals’. The jump from the individual to the collective is achieved through the negative ascription of group identity (2017, 95)

McGarry (2017) holds nation-states accountable for consistently excluding Roma communities from equal citizenship, actively constructing Roma as a deviant 'other' that threatens the fabric of the nation, and deliberately maintaining the negative ascription of Roma identity (2017, 245). Political scientists have investigated Romani ethnic identity and the role it has played in the process of Romani ethnic mobilisation and (dis)unity particularly since the early 1990s (Vermeersch 2006; McGarry 2010). They have also studied the significance of a common ethnic identity as a prerequisite for legitimate 'interest articulation' and representation by the transnational Romani movement (McGarry 2010). Political scientists have been writing from a predominantly social constructionist viewpoint. While acknowledging that 'Romani identity is (...) "real"' (Vermeersch 2006, 5), they have argued that identity 'always works in relationship to, and interacts with other social processes and variables' (McGarry 2010, 51) and 'is clearly dependent on social and political negotiation' (Vermeersch 2006, 5). This perspective has not denied Roma the reality of lived experiences as a result of identifying and/or being identified as Roma; at the same time, it refrained from seeing it as the 'objective property' of Roma, Romani identity, or as 'part' of Romani culture. Instead, it has offered insightful commentaries on the socially constructed dynamics of the current political discourses in Europe and their impact on the process of identity construction vis-à-vis Romani rights in Europe.

Political scientists have attended to conceptualisations of Romani identity in theoretical approaches to citizenship rights (McGarry 2010, 68-70). For example, McGarry details two theoretical approaches that have informed governmental and international policy towards Roma: the 'social integration' and the 'racial discrimination' schools of thought. According to the former, which has its roots in Enlightenment, Roma are un-integrated and framed as 'primitive natives.' They need to be uplifted from their dire circumstances by Western civilised people whose moral duty it is to make them become full citizens by forcing them to

go to school and work. Communism hoped to transform Roma through assimilation; these days, 'social integration' has been replaced by the euphemism 'social inclusion' continuing the Enlightenment tradition nonetheless, including through the work of neoliberal initiatives such as the World Bank, Open Society Foundations, and at the level of the European Union. The latter approach has its roots in Romanticism, emphasising Roma's liberty of culture and lifestyle. According to this approach, Roma are framed as Rousseau's 'bon sauvage' (i.e. uncorrupted by mainstream, non-Romani constructed society) and are victims of underrepresentation, marginalisation and discrimination due to negative perceptions of their socially stigmatised group identity. However, institutional racism is a tricky concept because it allows governments to deflect away from social processes that stand at the root of racism (McGarry 2010, 68-70). These analyses have facilitated a better understanding of the role of social inclusion discourses and policies that are devised, implemented and promoted by European political institutions and transnational — often Romani — organisations in order to 'help uplift and emancipate the Roma', in the construction of a particular conceptualisation of Romani identity as a political/politicised, ethnic/ethnicised (or racial/racialised) construct. The perpetuation of this essentialised political ethnic conception of Romani identity engenders toxic non-Romani/Romani relations and a vicious cycle that by definition continues to marginalise Roma.

Political scientists have also interrogated the following dominant, previously largely overlooked understandings of Romani identity as defined by members of Romani communities and Romani grassroots politics:

- i/ as a separate, non-territorial nation without a kin state (whose members have never demanded their own state);
- ii/ as a national minority within nation-states (protected by minority and human rights instruments);

iii/ as an 'ethnoclass', i.e. an ethnic group resembling a class at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder (Vermeersch 2006, 160-166).

Those who understood Romani identity as an 'ethnoclass' tended to stress the precarious social circumstances of Roma; as a result, the main focus of these scholars has been on social rights such as education, housing, and employment (Vermeersch 2006, 166). The concept, as described by Vermeersch, is particularly interesting when considered as an 'escape mechanism' used by Roma to avoid association with the generally negatively perceived, hence stigmatising Romani ethnic identity, which is also highly visibilised — or hyper-visible — in political discourses and the media (I discuss the issue of hyper visibility in Section 3.3.2 and develop it further in Chapters 5, 6 and 7). Vermeersch goes on to explain that ethnoclass as an alternative understanding of Romani identity was used by some due to the conflation between Romani identity and 'pathological,' 'abject,' and 'objectionable behaviour.' Consequently, Romani identity has become 'a closet': some Roma who would declare their ethnic identity in private would not do so in public for fear of being associated with the 'Romani problem' (2006, 182), would sometimes downplay Romani ethnicity or would at times try to pass as non-Romani (see Section 6.2). As Section 3.2 will demonstrate, since sexual/gender and ethnic/racial identities are distinct and separate, they entail very different histories, materialities and lived experiences that cannot be equated. The distinct processes of exclusion, however, have some important parallels. Consequently, the notion of 'stigmatised,' 'closeted' and 'pathologised' Romani identities and queer identities is particularly salient.

This thorough, multi-disciplinary insight into the various conceptualisations of Romani identities has led political science scholars in Romani Studies towards establishing an understanding of Romani identities as 'contested,' not 'cohesive,' 'constantly shaped and reconstructed in and across political contexts,' a consequence of social processes where

ethnicity plays the role of 'a unifying agent' uniting Roma who are otherwise not united across religious, cultural, occupational and linguistic lines (McGarry 2010, 42, 141). Making an observation about Romani identity from a somewhat different angle, Kovats and Surdu note that

Roma is a dynamic political identity constructed mainly from above and from outside by political and expert communities and thereafter applied and adopted by people subjected to public labelling and policy interventions. Furthermore, this social categorisation produces effects on those assigned to a category in a looping effect (...) by which external ascription becomes self-ascription in a normative sense (Kovats and Surdu 2015, 7-8).

The conceptualisation of Romani identity construction as a 'complex process of labelling, categorisation and self categorisation' (Vermeersch 2006, 3) is very much in line with the perspective proposed by the present thesis as it also allows for the inclusion of other perspectives such as those offered by intersectionality and queer theoretical concepts discussed in Chapter 3.

2.6 Romani identities: individual v. community

Dominant academic, as well as popular understandings of the heterogeneity of Romani identities have tended to conceptualise Roma in a very narrow, essentialised sense as a single entity: Romani ethnic identity. Accentuation of shared aspects of collective ethnic identity has led to Romani individuals being conflated with Romani communities; and/or Romani kinship: an important concept explored in Romani Studies (San Roman 1973; Okely 1975; Gay y Blasco 2000; Martin and Gamella 2005; Budilová and Jakoubek 2007; Cahn 2009; Tesár 2012) which would merit a deeper investigation (as proposed in Chapter 8) but cannot be followed through in this thesis. In this collective conception of Romani ethnic identity, the assumed characteristics of unspecified, amorphous Romani communities

represent and 'speak' for all Romani individuals. Those who self-identify and/or are identified as Roma get associated with the stigmatised group identity always through the proxy of Romani communities. Identity thus becomes a means of reducing all members of a group to possessing the same set of assumed characteristic traits and values. As discussed above in Section 2.4, Roma have been romanticised and simultaneously vilified. Consequently, Romani identities and those individuals who are believed to possess them have come to be understood as an over-ethicised/over-racialised, homogenous group identity, as a problem that is both pan-European and non/un-European at the same time (Vermeersch 2006, 172-174). This has serious consequences for belonging discussed in Chapters 3 and 7. Social movements such as the Romani movement, the LGBTIQ movement, the women's movement, the civil rights movement and others have been able to challenge some of the dominant cultural codes and change societal attitudes without not necessarily changing the law (Melucci 1996). Nonetheless, as McGarry (2017) explains, non-dominant groups are more at risk of experiencing a negative ascription based on majority society's norms, traditions and values. As a result of their non-dominant position, individual members of these groups, including Roma, are often unable to change cultural scripts in terms of values rooted in marked difference being ascribed to some groups and not to others (McGarry 2017, 96). Consequently, the assumed stereotypical characteristics of these communities — whether negative or positive — result in perpetuating the projection of a homogenous image of Roma as a group/community, hence enhancing the negative social valuation of Romani identity.

Romani communities have been theorised and conceptualised by research as a group/collectivity that is allegedly essentially distinct and different from mainstream communities in almost every respect: birth rates, life expectancy, infant mortality rate, lack of education, engagement with service providers etc. I say this fully aware that some of my

previous research on coercive sterilisation (Fremlova 2006), segregated education (Fremlova and Ureche 2009, Fremlova et al. 2011), and multiple discrimination (Fremlova et al. 2014) could be interpreted that way. While such research studies may be important when describing inequality and/or the possible remedies that are available, the often-unintended effect is that they, too, may contribute to re-inscribing the essentialist marked difference that non-Roma often attribute to Roma. Yet, there is evidence within research that Roma possess identities characterised by hybridity, (super)diversity and intersectionality (Tremlett 2009, 2014b; Kóczé 2009). As in the case of Romani LGBTIQ people, for example, *being Roma may not necessarily be the most pertinent category of identification*. That is why it is important for research to attend to how some individuals may identify as Roma but may simultaneously experience other categories of identification as more important; and/or that Romani ethnic identity can be experienced in ordinary, mundane ways (Tremlett and McGarry 2013). This would help to facilitate more nuanced understandings of both individual and collective Romani identities. It would also help to demonstrate how Romani communities ordinarily operate outside the scope of marked, essentialist ethnic difference that has framed discourses on Antigypsyism and discrimination: for instance, ways in which Romani communities function as important social units and fundamental safety nets to support each other through good, as well as bad times, including providing support to their LGBTIQ members (an insight which this research hopes to provide to a certain extent). Such research would give rise to knowledge production that does not construct Roma as a particular ethnic identity group, distinct from the majority.

This section has outlined key perspectives on understanding Romani identities across the academic disciplines that have traditionally formed part of Romani Studies. It has attempted to describe some of the challenges and criticisms faced by Romani Studies and its scholars for sustaining homogenised and essentialist representations of Roma, and for perpetuating images of the 'true,' 'mythic' and/or 'eternal Gypsy' (Tremlett 2009, Willems 1997, 46).

Drawing on the two previous sections, the following section attempts to capture the theoretical crossroads at which Romani Studies currently finds itself as a discipline by looking at alternative ways of understanding Romani identities beyond ethnicity, which allow for conceptualisations of Romani identities across and at the intersection of numerous facets of identity. Conceptualisations that I believe mark, to paraphrase Hall (1996b), *the end of the innocent notion of the essential Romani subject*.

2.7 Transcending the 'ethnic' frame? Alternative conceptualisations of Romani identities

For some time now, Romani Studies has been at a crossroads in relation to the essentialist versus social constructionist dichotomy discussed in Section 2.4.1, as well as in terms of de-colonising the process of *knowledge production*. Though not for the first time, the need for a new, critical direction was emphasised at the October 2014 conference 'Nothing about us without us' (Dunajeva, Kóczé and Cemlyn 2015). That Romani Studies as an academic field has been on the verge of an 'existential crisis' became quite clear at the turn of 2014/2015 when plans for the launch of the European Roma Institute¹⁰ were announced. Some scholars hailed it as 'the radical and fundamental paradigm shift that has been long time coming in Romani Studies' (Clark 2015), expressions the hope that new voices, Romani voices will increasingly be heard. Others were cautious (Kovats 2015), or pessimistic (Matras 2015). What emanated from the widely publicised discussions was that there were numerous Romani Studies scholars, including those of Romani heritage, who welcomed the prospect of this 'paradigm shift' in knowledge production. At the same time, others were less reluctant to admit that Romani Studies, a discipline historically dominated

¹⁰ The European Roma Institute (ERI) is intended to be an institution created in joint partnership between the Council of Europe and the Open Society Foundations to strategically and sensitively convey and represent heterogeneous issues of Romani culture, identity and politics.
<https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/voices/two-milestones-put-romani-cultural-discourse-hands-roma-themselves>

by non-Romani (male) scholars, needs to change in order to 'decolonise' the process of producing knowledge about Roma by accommodating the much-needed authoritative Romani voices. As Mirga-Kruszelnicka points out (2015), the discipline is limited not only geographically, but also methodologically and paradigmatically, lacking in plurality of voices, including Romani ones. Referring to the 2014 Gypsy Lore Society Annual Conference, she makes the following observation, which seems to be an apt summary of the current state of affairs in Romani Studies:

Out of 103 papers presented during the conference, only five reached in their scope beyond continental Europe (papers on Roma in the US, Brazil, Brazil/Canada, Algeria/Iraq and Egypt). The vast majority of papers oscillated around classical themes of anthropology (rituals, identities, religions, music and other cultural expressions), linguistics or historical research. The other portion dealt with state policy on Roma, or within the area where public policy and academic research intersect. Eight papers were comparative (or quasi-comparative, including data gathered in more than 1 country). Five papers dealt with questions of gender-relations or women specifically. And out of all 100 plus speakers, fewer than 10 were of Romani background (Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2015, 41).

The issues of 'knowledge production' and 'ownership' in Romani Studies, as well as the question who exercises control and power over it, are, indeed, critical ones as they determine which authoritative voices are included and which ones are not. Romani Studies has been lacking a critical perspective from within Romani communities as Romani scholars, 'the outsiders within' are still underrepresented despite their numbers having increased significantly over the past two decades (Mirga-Kruszelnicka 2015). Other scholars, some of whom are also of Romani heritage, have expressed similar concerns at Romani Studies' reluctance to engage critical views, including from Romani scholarship (that is scholarship by academics of Romani heritage). For instance, in her paper 'Towards

“Critical Whiteness” in Romani Studies’, Vajda (2015) raises fundamental questions about the structural positionality of white non-Romani scholars in a monological and monocultural vacuum without the input of those most acutely affected by academic racism, i.e. Romani scholars. Consequently, in its current form Romani Studies actively contributes to recentering hegemonic white power structures as well as setting up a framework of research that is academically exclusionary, non-activist and potentially heteronormative. Echoing Spivak’s (1987) ‘epistemic violence,’ Brooks (2015), for instance, uses the term ‘epistemological erasure/invisibility’ to refer to the absence of Romani subjects, Romani communities, Romani knowledge and its production, whose silence, or allegedly inexpert status, continue to conserve the West as Subject (2015, 57, 61). Brooks makes the following proposal:

If we are to salvage Romani Studies from its Gypsyologist origins, it is crucial that we take on the hierarchies that are implicit when Romani ‘culture’ is seen as bounded, and outside of, the subject of the West, and when Romani subjects are only seen as objects and subjects of analysis, rather than as producers of knowledge – about Roma and about non-Roma alike. (2015, 58).

What is the relevance of this debate on the direction of Romani Studies to Romani identity and its various conceptualisations in Romani Studies? The ‘revolutionary’ voices, and not just the Romani ones from within Romani Studies call into question the nature of Romani Studies, which has not made a clean break with the essentialist legacy of the Gypsy Lore Society. The notion that Roma ‘are [still] seen only as objects and subject of analysis’ (Brooks 2015) in Romani Studies, dominated by Western, white ethnocentric and paternalistic epistemology, means that this field of inquiry in its current formation cannot be — and is not — an adequate reflection of and response to the plurality, heterogeneity and diversity of the lives and identities of Roma. In order to adequately attend to the pluralist,

multidimensional identifications that members of the various heterogeneous groups and sub-groups of Roma make, it is inevitable that Romani Studies acquires a plurality of voices, including Romani, non-Romani, feminist, intersectional and/or queer ones.

2.8 Understanding Romani identities through hybridity and super-diversity

The previous sections, particularly Sections 2.4 – 2.7 have examined the essentialist/social constructionist dichotomy in grasping Romani identities. It showed that with some exceptions, despite employing the social constructionist approach, the effect of theorising Romani identities in Romani Studies has been predominantly an ‘essentialising’ one. As observed in Section 2.3, Hall felt that the ‘old’ collective social identities, including ethnic identities, have not disappeared. They still exist but have been transformed so fundamentally that this shift has given rise to new ethnicities that require a new conception of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity (1996b, 447). As a result, there exists a dichotomy of ‘old’ and ‘new’ identities, which for instance Brubaker (2015) writes about by referring to

a sharpened tension between idioms of givenness, essence, objectivity, and nature on the other on the one hand and idioms of choice, autonomy, subjectivity, and self-fashioning (2015, 2).

Although Hall wrote primarily about the black experience in the UK, his theoretical insights appear to be very relevant to the experiences of Roma all over Europe, especially in terms of the duality of ‘old’ and ‘new’ Romani identities. Echoing Hall, to avoid the trap of cultural essentialism, Tremlett (2009) suggests introducing the concept of hybrid identities (hybridity) to account for the multifaceted diversity of the various Romani identities,

‘effectively mov[ing] away from homogenising terms’ in which Roma end up being portrayed. Tremlett argues that hybridity entails recognising that

[w]ith all people ‘ethnically located,’ the possibility is opened for people to have a voice that is not constrained by one ethnic identity. Plurality of identities becomes not just a possibility but rather recognition of how identity is lived day to day (2009, 24).

Tremlett (2009) goes on to claim that a Romani person may be deeply engaged with the cultural practices of their group, yet they may be, at the same time, undertaking activities considered typical for the majority culture. They may also be influenced in different situations by their age, gender, sex, class, nationality, sexuality, social status etc. This means that potentially, hybridity may be considered useful for conceptualising the multiple identifications Romani people make ‘across groups or formations’ (Ibid 25), including at the intersection of ethnicity/race, sexuality and gender/gender identity.

Hybridity as a way of conceptualising Romani identity has been commented upon also by Okely (1994) who was careful to use it in relation to Roma ‘because it carries with it the suggestion of incongruity’ (1994, 62). Silverman discusses both the viability as well as the more problematic nature of using hybridity to conceptualise Romani identities, culture and music:

The fact that Roma embrace hybridity and that Romani music is hybrid is perhaps obvious, but if the concept is to have any validity we must show how this hybridity works, why it exists, and how it differs from other explanatory models. (...) Hybridity, however, can be a problematic concept because of its vagueness and its theoretical positioning. (...) Hybridity also brings up the problem of antecedent purity. (...) Either hybridity is everywhere, thus losing its theoretical force, or else it exists in specific places and is contrasted with the nonhybrid (2012, 42).

Elaborating on the notion of hybrid identities, Tremlett (2014b) suggests that ‘super-diversity’ best encapsulates the much-needed shift in how ethnicity, heterogeneity and diversity are currently used in Romani Studies, ‘still leaving the potential of limiting talk about “the collective world view” of “the Gypsies” that can easily slip into essentialised talk’ (2014, 838). ‘Super-diversity’ is a concept coined and introduced by Steven Vertovec (2007) as a means of looking ‘beyond ethnicity.’ Writing about the experiences of (im)migrants to the United Kingdom, Vertovec (2007) defines ‘super-diversity’ as

a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the [UK] has previously experienced (...), distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade. (...) Such additional variables include differential immigration statuses and their concomitant entitlements and restrictions of rights, divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents. Rarely are these factors described side by side. The interplay of these factors is what is meant here, in summary fashion, by the notion of ‘super-diversity’ (2007, 1-2).

Just like members of other ‘constituencies,’ Roma form a part of (post)modern societies and as such are constituents of a plethora of ‘neo-tribes and elective communities’ (Belton 2005, referring to Hetherington 2000, 93). Super-diversity, according to Tremlett (2014b), epitomises a shift away from previous multiculturalist perspectives focused primarily on ethnic groups which were inadequate in capturing the ‘new patterns’ of ways people are living (Vertovec, 2007, 2010), and towards a focus on hybrid group dynamics, as well as the problematic nature of group categorisation. Super-diversity has a ‘potential to engage more deeply with the diverse life experiences and structural positionings of people’ (Tremlett 2014b, 831). Whilst seeing the above benefits to using ‘super-diversity’ for the purpose of

conceptualising Romani identities, Tremlett outlines some of the problematic aspects of applying this concept to Roma. She sees them primarily in terms of its provenance (i.e. specific to UK's contexts, realities, and histories); the challenge that the proposition of looking 'beyond ethnicity' might entail in terms of 'losing sight' of ethnicity; its potential to reify the stereotypical image of Roma as 'nomadic' by focusing on (im)migration; and super-diversity's lack of theoretical territory as being potentially problematic since the concepts of 'race' and 'ethnicity' are over-used and under-discussed in Romani Studies (2014b, 838-840). This means that even though both are overarching concepts as detailed in Section 2.5, ethnicity in particular is referred to as a defining, essential(ist) feature of Roma — or all 'ethnic minorities', for that matter — when in fact it can be considered a universal denominator for everyone as all people are '*ethnically* located' (Hall 1996b, 447, original emphasis). Tremlett goes on to make a strong case for applying super-diversity to conceptualisations of Romani identities based on Hall's work, particularly in the arena of reconceptualising 'identity' and 'ethnicity'.

Up until now, the line of argumentation put forward by the present thesis has been similar to that of Tremlett, especially in its deployment of Hall's anti-essentialist and anti-identitarian approach to identity, including Hall's notion of 'new ethnicities' predicated on diversity and difference. However, at this moment, the thesis takes a different direction. The two theoretical terrains that I wish to apply to theorising the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people are 'intersectionality' and 'queer theorising'.

I open the following section by examining intersectionality and its application to and use in conceptualising Romani identities in Romani Studies. This will allow me to outline in Section 3.6 the 'pros' and 'cons' of intersectionality, and to sketch out in Section 3.7 ideas how queer theorising, and particularly Puar's (2007) concept of queer assemblages can be read

in conjunction with intersectionality in order to better attend to and account for the multifaceted complexity and fluidity of Romani identities.

2.9 Understanding Romani identities and identifications through intersectionality

Intersectionality is a concept fundamental to understanding the workings of hegemonic power relations that exist in inequitable ways. Intersectionality signifies ‘the complex, irreducible, varied, and variable effects which ensue when multiple axis of differentiation — economic, political, cultural, psychic, subjective and experiential — intersect in historically specific contexts’ (Brah and Phoenix 2004, 76). The key assertion of intersectionality is that the various systems of societal oppression intersect, interlock and interact with each other. They do not exist in isolation: they do not act independently of each other, nor can they be separated out into discrete and pure strands.

Intersectionality is gaining ground in Romani Studies as it is increasingly used by Romani feminist scholars as a theoretical approach to account for the ‘gender difference’ and multi-dimensional, intersecting experiences predominantly of Romani women, as well as *other* Roma such as Romani LGBTIQ people, who have been historically left out of Romani academic and activist discourses. Within Romani Studies, intersectionality, as a post-colonial critique on the one hand, has challenged the role of white maleness in the production of knowledge on Roma. As a critique of heteronormativity, on the other, it has been challenging Romani Studies’ focus on certain Romani subjects while not including others.

Intersectionality has a long history, particularly in the US. It is important to acknowledge the ‘roots’ of intersectionality going back to an enslaved woman Sojourner Truth’s 1851 political statement ‘Ain’t I a Woman?’ (1850) that captures all key aspects of intersectionality by

fundamentally shaking up and challenging essentialist notions of womanhood, and particularly black/non-white-normative womanhood. The concept of intersectionality was first used in an academic discourse advanced within Critical Race Studies (the Combahee River Collective 1977; hooks 1981; Davis 1982; Lorde 1984, 1988; Mohanty 1982). The term itself was 'introduced by and became solidified as a feminist heuristic through Crenshaw's analysis of U.S. antidiscrimination legal doctrine' (Puar 2012, 51), particularly in relation to black women's unemployment, through her texts 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics' (1989) and 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color' (1991). Drawing on the concept of intersectionality, an intersectional approach to Romani women's experiences was first heralded in Romani Studies by Oprea (2004). Intersectionality was then elaborated on in Romani Studies by Kóczé (2009), who argued that as a tool, it best accounts for the notion that Romani women (activists) are at the intersection of two or more identity components such as ethnicity, gender and class. It also brings more inclusive discourses and transforms internal discourses within the Romani movement. It is also a concept which has been gaining ground particularly among those Romani rights activists and lawyers who are interested in the legal aspects and definitions of multiple discrimination such as compound, or also additive and intersectional discrimination (Fremlova et al. 2014).

Notwithstanding, intersectionality is *still missing*¹¹ from Romani Studies. Dunajeva et al. (2015), who reiterate assertions previously made by Oprea (2005), Kóczé (2009), Brooks (2012), Gelbart (2012), and Schultz (2012), comment on the issue of lacking intersectional analysis plaguing Romani feminist scholars. The absence of intersectionality seems to be

¹¹ A paraphrase of the title of Kóczé's paper *Missing Intersectionality: Race/Ethnicity, Gender, and Class in Current Research and Policies on Romani Women in Europe* (2009), and Jovanovic and Daróczy's paper *Still Missing Intersectionality: The relevance of feminist methodologies in the struggle for the rights of Roma* (2015)

all too symptomatic of the narrow, homogenised and essentialist view of Romani identity as discussed above. Yet, it is much needed given ‘the intense marginalisation of Romani women and the oppression they experience both from the dominant society and within communities (...) alongside their absence within mainstream feminist and anti-racist discourse (...)’ (Dunajeva et al. 2015). Discussing the specific situation of Romani women and Romani LGBTIQ people, they go on to argue that

[a]s a result of restricted views of what being a Romani involves, these and other commentators point not only to the failure to address the rights of Romani women and sexual minorities, but also to the losses to the wider Roma rights movement since many voices may be silenced and lives rendered invisible. Lack of recognition of intersectionality within the Roma[ni] Movement is at odds with the activity of Romani women all over Europe, fighting against gender oppression and racism (...). The involvement of Roma in Gay Pride marches and conferences proclaiming and publicly celebrating LGBTQIA identity represent a highly significant political act in itself given the invisibility surrounding them. (...) While discussion of intersectionality in the Romani feminist and LGBTQIA literature has referred to a range of dimensions of oppression, the most prominent are ethnicity, gender and sexuality. There are other dimensions reflecting other Romani lives that will hopefully be further explored through both activism and theory, including disability, age and transgender (2015, 75, 76).

In the same volume, Vajda (2015) notes that a critical approach to whiteness would perhaps entail a more intersectional approach to Romani Studies ‘where researchers and activists alike (...) acknowledge (...) the influence of their race, (...) class, gender, disability or sexuality upon their work’ (2015, 56). Jovanovic and Daróczi (2015) provide an outline of the essence of intersectionality as a concept and method, and its benefits and relevance to Romani Studies. They stress the critical importance of feminist theoretical approaches, and intersectionality in particular, in the transnational Romani movement as follows:

Romani men and women do not have an equal share of experiences of sexism, anti-Gypsyism, classism, heterosexism, islamophobia, ageism (.)... Family background, socioeconomic status, place of residence and many other factors help build power structures within the group. Statements implying that 'we are concerned with national or ethnic identity' in the struggle for the rights of Roma assume that all Roma are in the same power-position in each context and disregard all other dimensions of our identities as those of high political relevance (2015, 80).

Jovanovic and Daróczy (2015) claim that within the Romani movement, Romani feminist scholars endorsing intersectionality has at times resulted in 'a discursive creation of [them] as outsiders.' In this connection, they argue that 'the Romani movement must incorporate intersectional approach to a higher extent in order to avoid a narrow Romani identity politics that assumes national identity as having exclusive relevance to experiences of Romani people at any given time' (2015, 79, 80). They propose that one of the steps in the process of applying intersectional approaches is to include Romani men of various age groups. In their view, this may potentially lead to increased awareness and understanding of certain contexts and situations in which Romani (young) men are un(der)privileged (2015, 79, 80). Here, intersectionality makes it possible to look at how the dominant discourse ignores contexts in which certain groups of Roma, such as boys, vulnerable men or young women who had been institutionalised, are vulnerable to specific forms of trafficking in human beings, and fails to examine gender relations, socioeconomic status, ethnic belonging, age, sexuality and so on.

Within Romani Studies, intersectionality as a post-colonial critique has recently challenged the role of maleness, and particularly white-normative maleness, in the production of knowledge on Roma and in maintaining patriarchal conceptualisations of Romani identities supporting one-dimensional understandings of Romani identities as being ethnic only. As a

critique of heteronormativity, it has been challenging Romani Studies' focus on certain Romani subjects while not including others. By focusing on the multi-faceted, intersecting experiences of predominantly Romani women, as well as *other* Roma who have been historically left out of Romani academic and activist discourses, intersectionality has slowly paved the way for the inclusion of issues pertaining to sexuality and gender identity, previously deemed a social taboo. Intersectional feminist discourses, initiated and maintained within Romani Studies predominantly by Romani women over the past two decades, have problematised conceptualisations of Romani identity even more by extending it, in due course, to Roma who self-identify as LGBTIQ. Nonetheless, until quite recently, sexuality as a specific 'category of identification' has been omitted, at times avoided within Romani Studies scholarship.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 offered insight into different conceptualisations of 'identity' and 'ethnicity' in Romani Studies where, with some important exceptions, Romani identity has been understood primarily along ethnic lines. Interrogating Hall's anti-essentialist understandings of individual and collective social identities and identifications provided a springboard to discussing cultural identities such as national and ethnic identities. Applying Hall's conceptualisation of 'new ethnicities' enables conceptualisations of Romani identities as encapsulating ethnicity/race, class, sexuality, gender and other categories of identification. The essentialist versus social constructionist binary in Romani Studies has not been conducive to understandings of Romani identities beyond ethnicity that would help to better attend to the multifaceted fluidity and instability of Romani identities, not 'anchoring' Romani identities in the notion of fixed, essentialist 'groupness'. Nonetheless, in an attempt to transcend the ethnic frame, a number of scholars across Romani Studies have used concepts such as hybridity, super-diversity and/or intersectionality in order to challenge

persisting essentialist conceptualisations of Romani identities within both the essentialist and social constructionist circles of Romani Studies scholarship. These important paradigm shifts within Romani Studies have contributed to ushering in *the end of the essential Romani subject*. As this chapter has demonstrated, intersectionality as a tool for theorising hegemonic social oppressions characterised created and sustained by asymmetrical power relations and inequalities has already provided new ways of understanding Romani identities. The following chapter considers the possibility of applying — in conjunction with intersectionality — other concepts that may be more attuned to the multifaceted fluidity of Romani identities and identifications.

Chapter 3: Queer intersectional theorising: belonging, (in)visibilities, identification and disidentification

Introduction

Here, following on from Chapter 2, I wish to contribute to the ongoing debate in Romani Studies about avoiding homogenising conceptualisations of Romani identity that have tended to be framed primarily through ethnicity from the perspective of queer theoretical concepts. I believe that the capacity of queer theoretical concepts to disrupt these homogenising, stereotypical accounts of Romani identities by nature of being counter/non-normative and anti-essentialist makes it possible to attend to the multifaceted fluidity, instability and non-fixedness of Romani identities, including Romani LGBTIQ identities. This chapter first explains what concepts emanating from queer theorising and queer of colour critique can do. Having discussed their viability, applicability and relevance to conceptualisations of ethnic, sexual and gender identities, it proceeds to stitch a conceptual mosaic of how queer theoretical concepts are informed by and communicate with notions of belonging, (in)visibilities, identifications and disidentifications. The chapter then goes on to examine the advantages and pitfalls of intersectionality and queer assemblages. It concludes by exploring the benefits of using queer assemblages in conjunction with intersectionality. While intersectionality as a concept is a useful tool for theorising hegemonic social oppressions characterised by asymmetrical power relations and inequalities, queer assemblages make it possible to theorise identities and identifications as multifaceted, fluid, non-normative, always in the process of becoming, without necessarily fixing them in and pinning them down to the individual, yet interlocking axes of oppression and inequality.

3.1 Queer theoretical concepts: 'queer' and 'queerness'

What is queer and/or queerness? How can it be useful for understanding Romani identities?

Comparing 'queer' and 'queerness' to similar arguments in ethnic communities in which 'boundaries, identities, and cultures are negotiated, defined, and produced' (Nagel 1994, 152), Gamson (1995) defines 'queerness' as follows:

Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics has been built, taking apart the idea of a 'sexual minority,' and a 'gay community,' indeed of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and even 'man' and 'woman.' It builds on central difficulties of identity-based organising: the instability of identities both individual and collective, their made-up, yet necessary character. It exaggerates and explodes these troubles, haphazardly attempting to build a politics from the rubble of deconstructed collective categories. This debate, and other related debates in lesbian and gay politics, is not only over the *content* of collective identity (whose definition of 'gay' counts?), but over the everyday *viability* and political *usefulness* of sexual identities (is there and should there be such a thing as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' 'man,' 'woman'?) (1995, 390).

From the above quote from Gamson, it follows that queer theorising is a critical, counter-normative, anti-identitarian and anti-assimilationist theoretical approach that interrogates dominant social normativities, orthodoxies and dualisms. It has the potential of taking apart not only the notion of a 'sexual minority' and a 'gay community', but also the notion of the 'Romani minority' and the 'Romani community' as unstable collective identities that have been based on a particular type of identity-based organising: the Romani movement. Halperin describes queer as 'an identity without an essence',

a positionality vis-à-vis the normative—a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or feels marginalized because of his or her sexual practices (1995, 62).

Employing queer, non-normative concepts in relations to conceptualisation of identities makes it possible to take essentialism out of the ‘traditional’ equation. What emerges as a result of employing queer and queerness as a positionality is the possibility to see previously essentialised identities — be they ethnic/racial sexual, gender identities etc. — in relation to the dominant norms irrespective of whether they are established and maintained along the lines of sex, sexuality, gender/gender identity, ethnicity/race and/or for instance class/social status.

In this thesis, I focus on four dominant normativities governing the social: patriarchy that has historically subordinated women to men, and resulted in sexism as a specific expression of this subordination and systemic oppression; white-normativity that has historically subordinated non-white people and people of colour to those identifying/identified as white, and resulted in racism(s) as a specific expression of this subordination and of systemic oppression; heteronormativity that has historically subordinated lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex non-heteronormative people and their sexualities and gender identities to heterosexuality, and resulted in homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia as specific expressions of this subordination and of systemic oppression; and finally cis-normativity that has historically subordinated trans and intersex identities, and resulted in transphobia as a specific expression of this subordination and of systemic oppression. Here, it is also important to mention the notion of homonormativity (Duggan 2002, O’Brian 2007, Richardson 2004, 2005) in relation to ways in which power relations and social and political hierarchies intersect with and crosscut ethnicity/race, sexualities and gender identities. Homonormativity thus puts some gays and

lesbians at a privileged advantage while disadvantaging and marginalising other racialised/ethnicised, classed, gendered and sexualised queers (Seidman 2002, Hines 2007, 2010, Bryant 2008, Taylor 2007, 2001, Taylor et al. 2011, Lim and Browne 2009, Browne et al. 2013). As Chapter 7 will illustrate, this is relevant to the lived experiences of some Romani LGBTIQ people.

Informed by scholarship emanating from post-structuralism, feminism, lesbian and gay studies, as well as reconceptualisations of identity as discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to Hall's notion of 'new identities' and 'new ethnicities,' queer theorising understands fixed identity categories as historical and social constructs, or 'regulatory fictions' (Butler 1990, 32), shaped by histories, practices, taboos, social rules, customs and traditions, that are necessary, viable and politically useful (Gamson 1995). The fundamental premise of queer theorising lies in problematising the ways in which norms and categories are constituted, deployed, maintained and reinforced.

Queer theorising highlights the unstable and fluid nature of identities, whilst disrupting and doing away with fixed identity categories and socially, discursively produced binaries such as man/woman, gay/straight, heteronormative/homonormative (Browne, Lim and Brown 2007). It deconstructs and sabotages dominant hierarchies and normativities, taking them 'beyond the heterosexual/homosexual binary to a usage of queer theory as an approach that critiques the class, race and gender specific dimensions of heteronormativities as well as homonormativities (...) that does not simply describe and reify the spaces of sexual "others"' (Oswin 2008, 96). Queer theorising has a number of important dimensions: temporality, turning queer into action, a verb (Butler 1993, 223); spatiality in terms of 'where queer plays out and ways to make it an active proposition so that it re-creates experimental space' (Probyn 1996, 14); as well as movement (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1993):

The word 'queer' itself means *across*—it comes from the Indo-European root—*twerk*, which also yields the German *quer*, Latin *torquere* (to twist), English *an thwart* (1993, xii).

Queer theorising explores and unpicks how identities are constructed through the process of identification. Just as Hall (2000) calls for an anti-essentialist 'politics of recognising that all of us are composed of multiple social identities (...) through their diversity of identifications' (2000, 57), in which identity becomes a 'movable feast' always (trans)formed by how we are represented and addressed in the surrounding cultural systems (1996c, 598), Butler (1993) suggests that identities are open to continuous negotiation and influence. It is in relation to the circumstances surrounding us that we locate our sense of 'self':

Identifications are never fully or finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted, and as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability. They are that which is constantly marshaled, consolidated, retrenched, contested and, on occasion, compelled to give away (1993, 15).

Queer theorising sees heterosexuality as a dominant, yet unstable system that is dependent upon individually constructed performances of identity, and on excluding homosexuality to maintain its very identity. As Butler claims, 'that heterosexuality is always in the act of elaborating itself is evidence that it is perpetually at risk, that is, that it "knows" its own possibility of being undone' (1991, 23). In this vein, she issues a warning that 'as expansive as the term "queer" is meant to be, it is used in ways that enforce a set of overlapping divisions' (Butler 1993, 228). Even though queer theorising started off by predominantly conceptualising sexualities in ways which conceive of sexual power as 'embodied in different levels of social life, expressed discursively and enforced through boundaries and binary divides', it problematises and interrogates areas which normally would not be seen as the terrain of sexuality'; i.e. queer theorising offers queer readings of other identities, too,

as 'identities are always on uncertain ground, entailing displacements of identification and knowing' (Stein and Plummer 1996, 182). Framed in this way, queer theoretical concepts and queer theorising as a proposition offer an opportunity to read Romani identities in different, non-essentialist ways; an opportunity to 'queer(y)' Roma, so to speak.

Some scholars have critiqued queer theorising for overlooking and maintaining structural and epistemological silences on racism and transphobia (Helen (charles) 1993, Cohen 2001, Haritaworn 2007) and for having a tendency to neglect the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations (Yekani et al. 2010) and to gloss over the institutional character of sexual identity and the shared social roles that sexual actors occupy, consequently constructing 'an undersocialised "queer" subject with little connection to the empirical world and the sociological forces that shape sexual practice and identity' (Green 2002, 522). Others have challenged what they see as the radical deconstructionism of queer theorising, referring to its capacity to shake terms and concepts such as 'gay,' 'lesbian,' or 'coming out' (Castle 1993, 13). Importantly, Ferguson (2004) and Oswin (2008) have argued that despite queer theorising's call for anti-indentitarian politics, some queer theorising is not exempt from creating its own regulatory regimes, and the politics of normalisation. Additionally, certain queer scholarship has been critiqued for failing to include bisexual and trans people, as well as non-white subjects (Puar 2002; Ferguson 2004; Oswin 2008). Queer theorists gradually started to question the dominance of white subjects in queer theorising texts. For example, Eng et al. (2005) asked:

What does queer studies have to say about empire, globalization, neoliberalism, sovereignty, and terrorism? What does queer studies tell us about immigration, citizenship, prisons, welfare, mourning, and human rights? (2005, 2)

These critiques resonate with earlier lesbian of colour scholarship on multiple relations of oppression advocated by Lorde (1984), Anzaldúa (1987), Hull, Scott and Smith (1982; 1983). As a result, new strands of queer theorising have emerged such as queer of colour critique. It is a critical, interdisciplinary response to racism in predominantly white queer theorising, and to heterocentrism in ethnic studies and in communities of colour, aiming to dissect 'the ways in which discourses of sexuality are inextricable from prior and continuing histories of colonialism, nationalism, racism, and migration' (Gopinath 2005, 3; Reid-Pharr 2002; Eng et al. 2005). Ferguson describes queer of colour critique as an

interrogat[ion] of social formations as the intersections of race, gender, sexuality, and class, with particular interest in how those formations correspond with and diverge from nationalist ideals and practices. Queer of color analysis is a heterogeneous enterprise made up of women of color feminism, materialist analysis, poststructuralist theory, and queer critique (Ferguson 2004, 149).

Despite the argument by Hall and some queer scholarship that identifications are made 'through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what's been called its *constitutive outside*' (1996a, 4; original emphasis), queer of colour theorists have proposed alternative conceptualisations of identity. Anzaldúa (2002), for instance, outlined new forms of relational, inclusionary identities based on affinity, modelling a flexible process for personal and collective identity formation through inclusion rather than exclusion since

[m]any of us identify with groups and social positions not limited to our ethnic, racial, religious, class, gender or national classifications. Though most people self-identify by what they exclude, we define who we are by what we include - what I call a new tribalism (Anzaldúa 2002, 243)

Queer theorising and queer of colour critique have been key in producing scholarship relating to dominant hegemonic normativities and orthodoxies with respect to sexualities, gender and transgender identities, and increasingly class, and ethnicity/race. In this section, I have attempted to show that concepts emanating from queer theorising and queer of colour critique represent theoretical tools that may help bypass the essentialist/social constructionist dualism still present in Romani Studies. Employing queer (i.e. non-normative) concepts in relation to Romani identities can facilitate this by dismantling fixed identity categories, socially constructed binaries, dominant hierarchies and hegemonic normativities.

3.2 'Closeted', 'stigmatised' identities: sexual and ethnic difference

Sections 2.2 and 2.3 looked at Hall's anti-essentialist reconceptualisation of identities, allowing for the emergence of 'new ethnicities' that cross-cut class, gender, sexuality, and other categories of identification. While Section 2.4 pointed to a number of concerns in relations to Romani Studies being caught in the trap of cultural essentialism, it also signalled that new approaches to conceptualising Romani identities have been taking off in Romani Studies: hybridity; super-diversity; and intersectionality in particular. Seeing identity formation as a process whereby it is constantly shaped and reconstructed in and across social processes and political contexts, it also discussed the prism of negative social valuation through which Romani identity came to be seen due to Romani ethnicity being associated with 'pathological' and 'abject' behaviour. Since Romani identity has been a socially stigmatised and stigmatising marker for many Roma, it has also become a kind of 'closet' for them.

According to Baker (2015), sexual identity formation and ethnic identity formation differ fundamentally as the former denotes a politics driven by and associated with particular

desires while the latter is usually seen through an essentialist lens as (pre)determined at birth (2015, 88). In a similar vein, Butler (1993) opines as that ‘there are clearly good historical reasons for keeping “race” and “sexuality” and “sexual difference” as separate analytic spheres’ (1993, 123). Sexuality, gender identity and ethnicity/race are distinct and separate identities and as such entail distinct histories, materialities and experiences, particularly when it comes to oppression. The distinct processes of oppression, exclusion and stigmatisation based on marked essentialist ethnic/racial and sexual/gender difference may have parallels; however, the identities, lived experiences and historical legacies cannot be equated. For example, Haslanger’s (2012) analysis focuses on gender and race in relation to group-based oppression with respect to groups that have formed due to oppression. She examines how social norms, symbols, identities and such are gendered or raced’ (2012, 7). In doing so, she interrogates patterns of social relations that constitute women, including trans women who are ‘presumed to have female biological features observed or imagined presumed to be evidence of a female’s biological role in reproduction’ (Haslanger 2012, 230), as gendered and subordinate to men; and social relations that constitute people of colour who are ‘socially positioned as subordinate [to Whites] along some dimension (economic, political, legal, social, etc.) and are “marked” as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of ancestral links to a certain geographical region’ (2012, 236) as raced/racialised. Queer sexualities, gender identities – that is LGBTIQ – and Romani ethnicities can thus be understood as ‘marked terms’ in contrast to the ‘unmarked’, normative terms of ‘heterosexual/heteronormative’ and ‘non-Roma/white-normative’ where the former is ‘thus reduced to the function of an accident as opposed to the essentiality of the latter’ (Laclau 1990, 33). To echo Hall’s words, both are ‘constructed through, not outside difference, (...) through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks’ (1996, 4-5). Marked categories of identification were discussed earlier in this section in

relation to Butler's (1991) notion of heterosexuality/heteronormativity, white-normativity, and by extension cis-normativity being dominant, yet unstable social orthodoxies aware of constantly being at risk. Since there is no heteronormative, cis-normative and white-normative 'normal', heteronormativity, cis-normativity and white-normativity thus dependent upon individually constructed performances of identity by excluding non-heteronormative, non-cis sexual/gender identities and non-white-normative ethnic/racial identities to maintain their own existence. Consequently, marked categories of identification have a potential to be disruptive and subversive to the dominant orthodoxies: hence they are counter/non-normative (queer). According to Butler (1993) 'because what can be seen, what qualifies as a visible marking, is a matter of being able to read a marked body in relation to unmarked bodies, where unmarked bodies constitute the currency of normative whiteness' (1993, 125). At times, both sexuality and ethnicity/race need to be concealed; other times, they can be revealed. Just like being in and stepping out of 'the closet'. Before proceeding to discuss 'the closet' further, I will make some remarks about the construction of racialised/ethnicised sexualities and sexed/sexualised races/ethnicities that came to be seen as 'pathological', 'deviant' and 'perverse'.

Historically, Roma and Romani sexuality have been marked as *different*, and 'pathologised' as non-normative, 'deviant', 'abject' or 'perverse' in ways similar to Black sexuality (Ferguson 2004) or Jewish sexuality (discussed below). As Hancock (2008) observes, around the time of the publication of Grellmann's 1783 book about Roma, newly emergent sciences were focusing on differences amongst non-Whites by identifying social and moral distinctions between groups, their 'essential' markers of difference and grounding them in nature and science. Race and sexuality came to be seen as measurable, permanent, categorised and medicalised — hence rationalised — differences; they were applied across various non-White ethnicities and incorporated into emerging discourses of race and

sexuality. Describing the perceived sexual difference in Romani men, Hancock (2008) writes that male Romani slaves in the Balkans were seen as a threat to white womanhood (2008, 184). As regards Romani female sexuality, Charnon-Deutsch argues that the danger of the Romani woman, who is a threat to the family, social system, the nation, and sexuality itself since she can 'castrate' men, and her racial difference were represented as reduplicating the seductive danger of her sexual difference (2004, 240-241). Codur (2011), who writes about artistic representations of Romani female sexuality during Romanticism, remarks that 'Gypsy women have continuously aroused all kinds of fantasies revolving around the repressed desired of transgression of sexual norms' (2011, 6) while Okely (1983) claims that

in England, a stereotype of the Spanish Gypsy is often thought to be typical, and is often depicted in popular paintings: a black-haired girl in décolletage, with flounced skirts and swaggering walk, hand on hip... sexually available and promiscuous in her affections (1983, 201).

Having referred to the Romani sexual and ethnic difference in relation to the 19th century racial theories and eugenics, and the 20th century Nazi ideology, it is worth remembering that Roma, Jews, LGBTIQ people, as well as other minority groups were targeted (for extermination) due to 'deviance' in the form of their supposed racial and/or sexual difference and deficiency. In this connection, it may be useful to look at the 'Jewish sexual difference.' According to Boyarin et al. (2003), there has been a long-standing notion that Jews embody non-normative sexual and gender categories, attributing 'softness' to Jewish men, and manliness to Jewish women (or 'female sexual inverts') who were paradoxically seen as being at once too much and not enough of a woman. The rationalisation of Jewish racial difference, which came to be deeply embedded within mainstream non-Jewish societies, was all the more powerful for being drawn through stereotypes of sexual difference.

Popular, as well as scientific literature featured claims insinuating Jewish male's sexual difference from other men. Modern Jewishness became as much a category of gender as of race: it is the Jewish male's difference from 'normal' masculinity (i.e. inability to embody and perform 'proper' masculinity) that was the indelible evidence of the racial difference of Jews as a group from non-Jews (Boyarin et al. 2003, 1, 4 - 5). In a manner which is highly resonant with Romani sexuality being perceived as raced, deviant, abject, perverse, or pathological, they go on to argue that

[b]ecause homosexuality was initially characterised as a matter of sexual, or gender, inversion (a characterisation that understood the 'bad' object choice as effect not cause), the Jew's gender trouble was seen to bear more than a family resemblance to the homosexual's sexual inversion. Significantly this crossing went both ways, for a cluster of nineteenth century stereotypes of the Jew came to circle around the homosexual as well. (...) [I]t is not just that the modern Jew was being secularised and homosexualised — the 'homosexual' whom scientific sexualis and its various practitioners were so busily identifying and diagnosing, was also being 'raced' (2003, 3-4).

Since there appears to be no detailed account of the nexus of social arrangements, processes and discursive practices through which modern Romani and LGBTIQ — or queer — identities have emerged and been constituted by each other, it may be of use to consider how sexual difference and racial difference were mutually constituted in the case of Jews. Boyarin et al. (2003) thus illustrates the Jewish-queer proximity, which is highly reminiscent of the Romani-queer proximity:

[T]he circuit Jew-queer is not only theoretical but has had — and still has— profound implications for the ways in which Jewish and queer bodies are lived (...) and have died. (...) While there are no simple equations between Jewish and queer identities, Jewishness and queerness yet utilise and are bound up with one another in particularly resonant way. This

crossover also extends to modern discourses of antisemitism and homophobia, with stereotypes of the Jew frequently underwriting pop cultural and scientific notions of the homosexual (2003, 1).

The authors propose that ‘if queer theory is to be more than a fancy way of saying more of the same - then it is necessary to work at the in-between spaces in which no one difference is elevated above all others’ (Boyarin et al. 2003, 8-9). They go on to make a suggestion: to establish links and find connections between Jewish cultural studies and queer theorising, between Jew and queer, between Jew and LGBTIQ without closing down differences between, among and within each point of comparison in order to recognise the cross-cutting multiple social relations. This constructive proposal appears highly relevant to the Romani/queer proximity.

Having outlined some of the possible ways in which Romani sexuality, similar to Jewish sexuality, has come to be marked as different, ‘deviant’ from white non-Romani sexuality, and hence stigmatised, it is now time to turn to the aforementioned notion of Romani identity being ‘a closet’. In her *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), queer theory scholar Kosofsky Sedgwick makes connections, as well as distinctions between ‘the closet’ of gay identity and ‘the closet’ of Jewish and Romani identity.

Vibrantly resonant as the image of the closet is for many modern oppressions, it is indicative for homophobia in a way it cannot be for other oppressions. Racism, for instance, is based on a stigma that is visible in all but exceptional cases (...); so are the oppressions based on gender, age, size, physical handicap. Ethnic/cultural/religious oppressions such as anti-Semitism are more analogous in that the stigmatized individual has at least notionally some discretion — although it is never to be taken for granted how much — over other people’s knowledge of her or his membership in the group: one could ‘come out as’ a Jew or Gypsy, in a heterogeneous urbanized society, much more intelligibly than one could typically ‘come

out as,' say, female, Black, old, a wheelchair user, or fat. A (for instance) Jewish or Gypsy identity, and hence a Jewish or Gypsy secrecy or closet, would nonetheless differ again from the distinctive gay versions of these things in its clear ancestral linearity and answerability, in the roots (however tortuous and ambivalent) of cultural identification through each individual's originary culture of (at a minimum) the family (1990, 75).

'The closet' is a powerful analytic tool providing an opportunity for an in-depth insight into and understandings of the workings of hegemonic power relations, dominated by the heterosexuality/homosexuality binary, with respect to the concealment/ revelation, denial, oppression of non-normative (queer) sexualities. Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) uses 'the closet' of queer — or as she terms it 'gay' — identities as a metaphor for similar workings of discrete forms of identity, in this case ethnic/racial identities, which, however, work along what she believes to be the different lines of 'ancestral linearity and answerability.' In the case of discrete queer sexual/gender identities, there tends to be no queer link with the 'originary culture of the family', at least according to Kosofsky Sedgwick. Therefore, Kosofsky Sedgwick seems to suggest that there is an assumed binary opposition between the somehow *less obvious, unancestral* 'queer closet' and the *ancestral* 'ethnic closet'. Underpinned by (in)visibilities, 'the ethnic closet' and 'the queer closet' are constructed in specific ways, hence leading to very specific constructions of ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities. Although some of the manifestations of 'the queer closet' and 'the ethnic/racial closet' may be somewhat similar — i.e. a 'knowing by not knowing' commonly associated with 'the closet' (Tucker 2009, 10) — their specific configurations and the resulting distinct cultural meanings may differ contextually and relationally: that is at specific times, in specific spaces and in specific communities.

Tucker (2009) draws attention to some problematic, ethnocentric aspects of theorising 'the closet' in a very Western sense, and of applying it elsewhere. According to him, 'the closet'

is just one way of conceptualising the heterosexual/homosexual binary that only works in a very narrow epistemological framework. However, he opines ‘the closet’ allows one to examine the workings and reproduction of a particular binary heterosexual/homosexual within Western culture in the process of identification *as/with* (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990, 61), as well as ‘a means of personal identification’ (Halperin 2002), bringing a particular subject position — the queer subject — into being through enacting power. ‘The closet’ is based on the notion of the Western queer subject — informed by the Foucauldian conception of the ‘medicalised homosexual’ — that keeps on persisting in a strongly oppositional relationship to heterosexuality. Consequently, according to Tucker, its own identity can only be authentic when it is situated in semi-public and open opposition to heterosexuality. This presents a series of issues when attempting to conceptualise queer sexualities in societies/communities in which the heterosexual/homosexual binary may have been constructed in the context of specific realities. Tucker makes this potent argument by referring to a very specific, raced/racialised configuration of black, coloured¹² and white gay sexualities in Cape Town’s District Six under Apartheid. There, despite measures limiting the movement ‘of non-whites’, the relative openness due to the hybridity of its inhabitants coming from across Africa and South Asia made up for a particularly eccentric social fabric in which local coloured gay men, particularly queer effeminate men and cross-dressers, were able to enact their queer identities (Tucker 2009, 74-78). This is reminiscent of another study (Fremlova et al. 2014), in which a local Romani community in Serbia, living in a shanty town in which most men had either died in the Yugoslav war, were in prison and/or were not present for other reasons, depended exclusively on smithery and other manual labour being provided by two lesbian Romani women openly living together

¹² Here, coloured refers to the descendants of inter-racial sexual ties and unions between the first whites from Europe, their slaves from Indonesia, Madagascar, Mozambique, Angola, Bengal, South India and Sri Lanka, and the original inhabitants Khoi-khoi pastoralists and San hunters (Tucker 2009, 71)

and accepted by the community. The confluence of very specific contextual, relational and material circumstances, as well as the history of the location contributed to a specific construction of the heterosexual/homosexual binary, and hence to a very specific negotiation of sexualities. These two examples illustrate one of a series of aspects of the importance of the spatial, temporal and material specificity in which the heterosexual/homosexual binary gets constructed, and consequently impacts on the negotiation of sexualities in a fundamentally specific manner. This specificity also means that queer sexualities configured under those circumstances may relate to heterosexuality differently, and may choose to 'come out' in very specific ways that may not necessarily be the same as the sexual liberationist notion of coming out of the closet of 'inauthentic secrecy'. Such use of 'the closet' analytic fails to acknowledge the contextual, temporal and material specificity of non-Western queer individuals, communities and societies (Tucker 2009, 8-11). As Chapter 7 will show, these contextual, temporal, material, and, indeed, ethnocentric considerations are highly relevant to the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people coming from various cultural traditions across and outside of Europe. The sexual, gender and ethnic identities of Romani LGBTIQ people, which get constructed and negotiated under very specific circumstances, including through the 'queer closet' and the 'ethnic closet', significantly impact on Romani LGBTIQ people's sense of (not) belonging, (in)visibilities and (dis)identifications as discussed below in the Sections 3.3 and 3.4 and in Chapters 6 and 7.

3.3 Belonging

Just as identity is essentially a contested concept (Gallie 1956), so is the notion of belonging in, with or to that identity and/or any number of identities that one may — or, as well shall see shortly, may not — identify with. Belonging is often considered a naturalised part of everyday practices (Fenster, 2004): yet, it is by no means straightforward, clear cut and/or

neatly delineated. Often associated with feelings of safety and security (or lack thereof), belonging is not a taken for granted objective, factual reality that is either good or bad. Belonging is a dynamic, discursive, affective process shaped by hegemonic power relations that often exist and manifest themselves in inequitable way. Belonging encapsulates 'the ways in which individuals and groups are caught within wanting to belong, wanting to become' (Probyn 1996: 19). Belonging can be associated with the desire that individuals have to belong and the knowledge of the impossibility of ever really and truly belonging', as well as with 'other manners of being and desires for becoming-other' (Probyn 1996, 5-6). Indeed, the dynamic nature of belonging may symbolise the constant oscillation between sameness and otherness (Theodosiou 2011), often creating tension as a result. The desire, or the wish to belong epitomised by this dynamic 'movement of and between categories' thus challenges and defies 'a certain logic of identity [politics], which proceeds through division and designation, ultimately producing polarisation' (Probyn 1996, 9-10). This subversive dimension of belonging is developed by Probyn (1996) who introduces the concept of 'outside belongings', posing it against identity politics. Thus, she creates an analytic space in which it is possible to conceive of belonging outside of the divisive nature of categorising, allowing for the coexistence of different forms of social relations and different modes of belonging. The concept of 'outside belongings' renders visible the forces that constitute the delineation of what is inside and what is outside, where belonging is situated as the threshold separating the public from the private, and the personal from the common. Outside belonging is highly relational as it is performed with the experience of being within and inbetween sets of social relations (Probyn 1996, 9-10, 12, 13). This subversive dimension of belonging will be discussed more in detail in Chapter 7.

Belonging is fraught with tension and contestation as its dynamics apply differently to different groups under different circumstances. Belonging may become articulated, formally

structured and politicised especially in situations where it is threatened (Yuval-Davis 2011, 4), including when belonging is associated with group identities that may have been or still are stigmatised. Chapter 2 established that due to the negative social valuation propelled by Antigypsyism that sits at the root of neoliberal democracies (McGarry 2017), Romani identity has become a socially stigmatised and stigmatising marker for many Roma. In turn, this impacts on how Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people may and/or may not belong.

3.3.1 Roma and belonging

Roma are citizens of nation states, 'recognised as national and ethnic minorities as legally constitutive *of* and belonging *to* the state and nation' by the post-communist democracies that have sprung across Central and Eastern Europe in the aftermath of the end of communism in 1989 (McGarry 2017, 22; original emphasis). This is so in the vast majority of cases: that is with the exception of those persons of Romani ethnic heritage who are stateless due to conflict or as a result of not having been issued with personal identification documents. Some states such as France, which does not recognise any minorities, do not recognise Roma as an ethnic minority. However, recognition as a member of ethnic minority is not straightforward and does not yield benefits only. As McGarry aptly observes, being recognised as belonging to an ethnic minority means being marked as different from the national ideal and can result in stigmatization and potentially persecution (McGarry 2017, 22). Notwithstanding, when it comes to Roma, belonging is a very complex notion fraught with historic, as well as modern contradictions.

With respect to belonging to the dominant nation-state, it becomes apparent that the parameters and modes of belonging have always been determined and regulated by majority, non-Romani society. Particularly in the case of Roma, belonging has historically had a number of challenging connotations. For instance, under slavery in 19th century

Romania, Roma belonged to — were the property — of a non-Romani master (Achim 1998, 31). Modern modes of Romani belonging can be seen as being no less problematic. Through ethnic visibility, which served as a ‘proof’ or ‘demonstration of belonging’, Roma were issued with special passes because they were believed to belong with vagrants, tramps and criminals in 1920s Czechoslovakia. Belonging with Roma in the 1930s and 1940s in Europe meant an almost certain death sentence in Nazi concentration camps. The nexus of Roma and nomadism has reinforced the belief, including at policy levels, that Roma do not belong to and/or need to be managed by a ‘nervous sedentarized state’ (Clark 2004, 244). The visible ‘presence of domestic or migrant Roma in public spaces is considered to be a security risk and is sufficient to allow the authorities to take special measures, including eviction, confiscation of property and ethnic profiling through fingerprinting’ (Van Baar 2015, 77). Writing about Antigypsyism in relation to ‘the constellation of belonging, space and identity [...] mediated in a highly racialized environment, where the subjective articulations of belonging are frequently denied’ (2017, 74), McGarry demonstrates how Roma communities have been highly visibilised, or hyper-visible, and used by nation states to generate ideas of solidarity, belonging and identity among non-Roma. Fostering mainstream non-Romani society’s sense of belonging came at the price of excluding Roma from mainstream society. Due to lack of territorial claim to an ‘originary state’ (as opposed to, for instance, the territorial claim to Israel made by Jews), negative perceptions of Roma communities as not (worthy of) belonging — and not wanting to belong to mainstream society anyway since they ‘apparently enjoy’ being excluded and marginalised into settlements, camps and ghettos, separated from non-Roma (Szalai 2014, 21) — have fuelled powerful negative stereotypes about Roma in spite of Roma having resided on European territory since before the creation of nation-states (McGarry 2017, 43). Roma have thus been constructed as a ‘problem’ that is simultaneously pan-European and non/un-European, which has severe implications for belonging.

In response to exclusion, stigmatisation, marginalisation and discrimination, Roma and Romani rights activists have been claiming equal rights, equality of access and opportunity, and protection from discrimination, thus asserting the notion of belonging to the dominant national identities. While this rights-based approach achieved in a number of positive legal changes, for instance in the field of education, it has resulted in reinforcing the difference between Roma and non-Roma. Mobilising around fixed identity categories is the basis for political power, but also the basis of oppression: this represents a 'queer dilemma' (Gamson 1995); or more generally an 'identity dilemma' (McGarry and Jasper 2015) explored more in Section 7.3.

As for the 'insider' concept of Romani identity and belonging, the notion of Romanipe(n) — also spelt as Romipe(n) — encapsulates the idea of common belonging as Roma that all Roma allegedly share (see Section 2.4.1): a common culture and cultural practices such as elements of religion, habits, purity laws, and a set of beliefs. As diverse and heterogeneous as the cultural and linguistic identities of the various Romani communities, group(ing)s, sub-groups are, so is the concept of Romanipe(n). Not all Roma necessarily share the same concept of Romanipe(n); in fact, some may not subscribe to Romanipe(n) at all. All of these factors impact greatly on the sense that Roma make of belonging both in terms of belonging to the dominant national identity of a given nation-state — one that may be hampered by experiences of exclusion that exacerbate the struggle for acquiring the sense of belonging (Anthias 2006) — and Romani identity.

Yet, belonging can also be associated with ordinariness, as discussed by Browne et al. (2013) in relation to queer commonplace ordinariness:

Commonplace does more than allowing for LGBT people to be in-place, who once were out-of-place. It goes further to transcend this binary. When you are commonplace, you are not

only 'in place', but common to the place itself. Place can then be shared or inhabited in common, as well as collectively created in ways that do not necessarily impose normative agendas. (...) Our conceptualisation of ordinariness, through considerations of being or becoming commonplace, enables moves beyond the binaries of marginalisation/inclusion, normalisation/queer. However, it does not exist in opposition to critiques of normativity. Rather, ordinariness can be strived for and sought because people continue to feel out of place in new sexual and gender landscapes and seek to be included (...). The potential of commonplace is the possibility that anyone can become ordinary and this challenges the power relations that idealise particular normalised lives (2013, 191).

The concept of the everyday and/or ordinariness has been applied in Romani Studies, too (Tremlett 2014a, 2014b, 2017; Tremlett and McGarry 2013; McGarry 2017). Tremlett, who has written (2014a, 2014b, 2017) and done art-based research (2014) on the everyday ordinariness of Roma people's lives, proposes that a conscious effort be made by non-Roma in order to accurately understand Roma by going beyond the historically constructed prejudiced stereotypes about Roma while also addressing the history of oppression that has resulted in negative and distorted imagery portraying Roma. She claims that

if 'Roma' is foregrounded as the subject, even a non- stereotypical approach can reproduce 'difference' (from a supposed 'norm'). 'Roma' is thus, at the moment, still strongly linked to a notion of ethnicity that is seen as different and racialized (Tremlett 2017, 1).

In a 2014 exhibition entitled "The Roma – from 'extra' to 'ordinary'," Tremlett sought to show 'how Romani lives are not so different from those of everyone else, with a focus on the banal and everyday, rather than the sensational.'¹³ Tremlett (2014a) also demonstrated how the UK-based Channel 4 reality show *Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* used essentialist and

¹³ [https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/en/activities/the-roma--from-extra-to-ordinary\(d8cd06c9-a6b6-4c4d-922f-788103de0a6b\).html](https://researchportal.port.ac.uk/portal/en/activities/the-roma--from-extra-to-ordinary(d8cd06c9-a6b6-4c4d-922f-788103de0a6b).html)

essentialising TV imagery of Roma as different by nature of being portrayed as extraordinary despite claims made by the series that it offers a unique insight into the lives of ordinary members of a marginalised community. Tremlett and McGarry (2013) opined that majority society discourses 'labelling Roma as "a" group (...) often [produce] negative images' (2013, 8). As a result, social divisions are reinforced, along with the image of the 'Roma problem' as if the Roma were a community which is a bearer of problems, collapsing the group. They go on to remark that '[i]t could be due to this negative labelling why party politics also frequently does not interest "ordinary" Roma people.' They end up making the following suggestion:

It is through very detailed, thorough, empirical research on the everyday lives of local ("ordinary") people, including comparisons with people from non-Roma backgrounds, that we can build on and critique previous research and further our understanding of the social, economic and policy landscapes (2013, 10).

In his latest book, McGarry (2017) makes the following statement:

I am aware that I run the risk of painting Roma as a hopeless community beset by stigma and persecution, a picture that disregards the wonderfully mundane and ordinary lives of many Roma. (...) One charge that is consistently levelled at the Roma elite is that many lack any sense of community with or understanding of the majority of Roma: if someone receives a wage from an international organization and spends time attending meetings with policymakers in Brussels, Strasbourg or Warsaw, then is it possible for them to understand what life is like for ordinary Roma people, irrespective of a shared ethnicity? (2017 6, 120).

Located between (in)visibilities and acceptance, ordinariness can thus be understood as a form of belonging, or as belonging as ordinary that is available to Roma, too.

As discussed above in Section 3.2, ethnic/racial identities and sexual/gender identities are separate and distinct with very different histories, historical legacies, materialities and experiences that cannot be equated. At the same time, when considering the distinct processes of oppression, exclusion and stigmatisation, there are some parallels between ‘the closet’ of queer (i.e. sexual and gender) identities and ‘the closet’ of Romani ethnic identities that come to intersect, impacting on how Romani LGBTIQ people feel they may and/or may not belong. Simultaneously, the dominant patriarchal and heteronormative conceptualisations of Romani identity as being exclusively ethnic, which have been the subject of critique by Romani intersectional feminists discussed in Chapter 2 (also see Fremlova and McGarry, forthcoming), has impacted on how Roma who are not male, heterosexual/heteronormative or cis feel they can/cannot/do not belong. Intersectional critique in Romani Studies can be seen as having slowly paved the way for inclusion of issues pertaining to sex, sexuality and gender identity. Nonetheless, it remains the case that until quite recently, sexual and gender identities have been omitted, at times avoided by Romani Studies scholarship. This has led to the invisibilities of Romani LGBTIQ people, and particularly that of Romani lesbian women and trans people. In turn, all of these partial or full exclusions, silences and invisibilities have consequences for how Romani LGBTIQ people may identify and/or disidentify with the groups that they supposedly belong or do not belong in, with or to. Before discussing identification and disidentification in Section 3.4, I explore non-normative queer and ethnic hyper (in)visibilities in Section 3.3.2; and passing in Section 3.3.3.

3.3.2 Non-normative queer and ethnic (in)visibilities

Section 2.5.3 established that some sociologists and demographers refer to Roma as a ‘hard to see’ (Stewart 2010, 1) or ‘invisible’ (Okely 2010) minority. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 have established how (in)visibilities are linked to Antigypsyism and ‘the ethnic closet’ by virtue of

'a stigma that is visible in all but exceptional cases' (Kosofsky Segdwick 1990, 75); and how hyper visibility — or being highly visibilised — has featured in excluding Roma from dominant hegemonic modes of belonging to the national identity groups. Indeed, ethnic visibility was understood and employed as a proof or demonstration of belonging by repressive totalitarian regimes to assimilate, forcibly settle, persecute and/or to annihilate Roma and many aspects of these tendencies have persisted until today. In that sense, Romani ethnic visibility has been turned into hyper-visibility, making Romani identity both 'stigmatised' and 'stigmatising'. According to McGarry (2014, 2016, 2017), the issue for Roma is that visibility is outside Roma's control since nationalist parties, other groups, and indeed, nation states construct Roma as a 'plague', a 'disease' and a 'parasitic' community threatening the fabric of the nation (McGarry 2014, 2017), with negative attitudes fuelled by relentless negative coverage in the media. Even though Roma communities are present in the public sphere, others (including media and politicians) have determined this positioning and modes of belonging in order to serve political ends; at the same time, the invisibility of Roma as ordinary, full-fledged citizens in everyday life 'suggests a refusal of recognition within broader social, cultural and political discourses which could mean that a community does not exist, indeed is actively denied existence by the majority' (McGarry 2016, 272). Therefore, the relationship between belonging and (in)visibilities is very delicate and needs to be approached as such.

Visibility matters: 'it suggests a presence in public life and recognition of existence as the first step' (McGarry 2016, 272); and it has consequences for acceptance and/or appreciation (or lack thereof) of difference (Tucker 2009). According to Tucker (2009), 'visibility and appreciation of difference depends on the way particular groups [within communities] have developed elsewhere' (2009, 5). Writing about Roma and LGBTIQ visibility in relation to pride parades, McGarry (2016) argues that Romani and LGBTIQ

communities attempt to appropriate public space, through which the process of visibility is mediated, in order to control the very process of visibility and the attendant cultural codes; visibility brings communities and identities into the open, requiring others to take notice, shaping social identities and affirming Romani and/or LGBTIQ identities (McGarry 2016, 272). By virtue of being spatial, visibility therefore renders visible what was previously invisible; or it renders hyper-visible what was previously (somewhat) visible. Visibility gives an opportunity for group acceptance by enabling individuals, including Romani LGBTIQ people, to make themselves known to the wider community (Tucker 2009). This establishes an important link between visibility, acceptance and safety: Browne et al. (2013) cite acceptance — or ‘broader societal “acceptances”, feelings of safety, possibilities of enacting LGBT identities in taken for granted, indeed ordinary ways [as a key factor enabling safety, which] is more than an absence of abuse’ (Browne et al. 2013, 135-136; Browne, see also Bakshi and Lim 2011). Those who are highly visibilised — or hyper-visible — due to having an identity that is perceived as ‘stigmatised’, such as Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, may not feel safe.

Visibility makes it possible to recast what are often conservative, as well as ‘stigmatised’ conceptions of ethnic, sexual and gender identities by bringing the very identities into the context of a particular space, time and materiality. As McGarry (2016) notes, visibility is important for individuals and groups who want to affirm their belonging, including through pride parades as a means to publicly celebrate individual and collective their LGBTIQ and/or Romani identities. Such visibility performs the belonging of Roma and LGBTIQ individuals to wider society, thus providing an opportunity to control the narrative of collective identity maintenance by invoking solidarity and attempting to change the meaning and content of a stigmatised identity by challenging dominant negative stereotypes (McGarry 2016, 270). However, to be/become visible and visibly queer as LGBTIQ and/or Roma, or as Romani

LGBTIQ, may also mean to be/become objectified. To be queer and visible — in some cases highly visibilised, or hyper-visible as Roma — ‘is to have enmeshed oneself at some point within wider systems of control that allow for visibility and invisibility’ (Tucker 2009, 18). In the case of Romani LGBTIQ people, that may mean enmeshing oneself within systems of hegemonic oppression such as white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. The consequences of being (in)visible or hyper-visible within different spaces governed by these normativities — acceptance/inclusion, rejection/exclusion or partial acceptance/partial inclusion — have repercussions not only for Romani LGBTIQ people’s sense of (not) belonging as discussed above, but also for Romani LGBTIQ people’s sense of safety in order to be able to come out as both Romani and LGBTIQ; or lack thereof, which may result in adopting survival strategies such as ‘passing’ discussed in the following section.

3.3.3 Passing

The term ‘passing’ denotes a process, often a protective survival strategy whereby a person belonging to what is often understood as a non-normative, ‘stigmatised’ ethnicity/race, sexuality, gender and/or gender identity takes on the ‘guise of privilege’ of the ethnic/racial, sexual, gender and/or gender identity norm: white-normative; heteronormative/straight; male; and cis-normative. Passing refers to the act of *moving* from one category of identification to another and to *crossing* identity boundaries: and as Chapter 6 will show, this *movement* may entail more than just one category of identification. As a result, passing can be also considered a transgressive, subversive process that destabilises dominant hegemonic power relations, social and cultural norms and binary orthodoxies.

Passing is about identities: their creation or imposition, their adoption or rejection, their accompanying rewards or penalties. Passing is also about the boundaries established

between identity categories and about the individual and cultural anxieties induced by boundary crossing (Ginsberg 1996, 2).

Passing — whether in terms of one's ethnicity/race, sexuality, gender and/or gender identity — involves a certain degree of 'destabilization, transgression, mimicry, rupture, hybridity, breakage, travesty, masquerade, iterability, performativity, citationality, camouflage' (Ahmed 1999, 89). The person involved in the act of passing *moves*, or *crosses* consciously or unconsciously from one social position, determined by their perceived or actual belonging with, in or to an identity, over to another: often from a non-normative 'minoritarian' (Muñoz 1999) social position over to a normative, 'majoritarian' one.

From the second half of the 19th century, African-American authors in the US wrote about the phenomenon of racial passing 'as a way of investigating the complexities and contradictions of the category of race (...) in terms of the black/white divide (Rottenberg 2003, 435-450). Examining Nella Larsen's 1929 novella, *Passing* (1994), Butler (1993) comments on the societal and institutional (re)constitution of whiteness through blackness as follows:

It is only through that disavowal [of blackness] that [...] whiteness is constituted, and through the institutionalization of that disavowal that [...] whiteness is perpetually — but anxiously — reconstituted (1993, 126).

As examined in Section 3.2, sexuality/gender identity and ethnicity/race are distinct and separate identities. Consequently, the attendant lived experiences and historical legacies cannot be equated, which has implications for the fundamentally different ways in which racial passing is operationalised under white-normativity and sexual/gender passing is operationalised under heteronormativity. At the same time, both ethnic/racial passing and sexual/gender passing are subversive to the dominant ethnic/racial and sexual/gender

normativities in as much as the (re)constitution of normativities — white-normativity and heteronormativity relies on the presence of non-dominant ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities.

In response to her own invitation to consider ‘how and where we might read not only the convergence [of sexuality, sexual difference and ethnicity/race], but the sites at which the one cannot be constituted save through the other’ (1993, 123), Butler offers a queer reading of *Passing*. She bases her queer reading on Larsen’s linking of queerness — where queerness refers to ‘an array of meanings associated with deviation from normalcy’ —

‘with a potentially problematic eruption of sexuality (...). As a term for betraying what ought to remain concealed, “queering” works as the exposure within language — an exposure that disrupts the repressive surface of language — of both sexuality and race. (...) [Q]ueering is what upsets and exposes passing; it is the act by which the racially and sexually repressive surface of conversation is exploded, by rage, by sexuality, by the insistence on color’ (Ibid, 130-131).

Here, I would like to recall the discussion in Section 3.2 about the queer, subversive quality of marked categories of identification investigated in relation to Butler’s (1991) notion of heterosexuality/heteronormativity, cis-normativity and white-normativity being dependent upon excluding non-heteronormative, non-cis sexual/gender identities and non-white-normative ethnic/racial identities to maintain their very existence. Drawing on Butler’s *politics of drag* (Butler 1990), where the non-heterosexual, non-cis drag parodies, and thus subverts the essentialism of heterosexuality/heteronormativity and cis-normativity, the above quote by Butler (1993) could be paraphrased as follows: where heterosexuality/heteronormativity and cis-normativity depend on non-heteronormative sexualities and non-cis genders for their (re)constitution, whiteness/white-normativity

depend on the disavowal of non-white ethnic/racial identities, including Romani identities, for their (re)constitution. In that sense, the very essence of passing — whether ethnic/racial or sexual/gender — is non/counter-normative, transgressive, and hence queer in line with understandings of ‘queer’ and ‘queerness’ investigated in Section 3.1.

Concerning sexual passing, and particularly in relation to gay men and lesbian women passing as straight, Bell et al. (1994) comment on the double-coding represented by the presence of hyper-masculine ‘skinhead’ gay men and hyper-feminine ‘lipstick’ lesbians in everyday straight spaces. The physical appearance of their identities has the potential of looking/being read as heterosexual. As a result, protected from homophobic violence by passing as heterosexual, hyper-masculine men and hyper-feminine women can pass as/for heterosexual, deriving the privileges that come with heterosexuality, producing spaces that can be interpreted as straight and having an opportunity to transgress sexual norms:

[T]he last thing any straight person expects skinheads to do is to hold hands in public, or to gently kiss. When this happens, people notice. By behaving in this way the gay skinhead can disrupt or destabilise not only a masculine identity but heterosexual space. Can you ever be sure again that you can read the identity of others or the identity of a space? And if not, then how can others read you? (...) The lipstick lesbian is the feminine desiring the feminine, breaking the last stable concept of heterosexuality. Whilst butch-femme seemed to outsiders to reinforce the validity of the heterosexual original, the lipstick lesbian, with her subtle mixing of heterosexual signifiers within a feminine disguise, reveals that the heterosexual ‘original’ was, as Butler (1990) argues, only an imitation after all (Bell et al. 1994, 36, 42).

This means that *thanks to* passing, which is a political, strategic, transgressive and subversive response to white-normativity and heteronormativity’s symbolic epistemic violence towards non-white ethnic/racial identities and non-heteronormative sexualities and

genders, it is not absolutely clear whether individuals who may be perceived as white are white/white-normative; by the same token, it is not evident whether masculine men and feminine women navigating everyday spaces are gay, lesbian, heterosexual and/or cis-normative.

Ethnic and queer (in)visibilities, acceptance/inclusion and/or rejection/exclusion impact not only on Romani LGBTIQ people's sense of (not) belonging (see Section 3.3.2), but also on Romani LGBTIQ people's potential adoption of protective survival strategies such as 'passing' explored in Chapter 6; that is provided Romani LGBTIQ people are able to do so. Additionally, as discussed in the following section, as Chapter 7 will demonstrate, they impact significantly on the identifications and/or disidentifications that Romani LGBTIQ people make with the respective categories of identification.

3.4 Identification and disidentification

All of the four concepts investigated above — (in)visibilities, belonging, 'the closet' and passing — may be seen as having a mutual rapport with the process of identification. They impact profoundly on the identifications and/or disidentifications made by individuals, and particularly by 'minoritarian subjects' (Muñoz 1999) who are located outside the range of dominant societies such as queer people of colour, including Romani LGBTIQ people. As such, minoritarian subjects encounter numerous obstacles while attempting to enact identifications by virtue of the 'minority identifications [often being] antagonistic to other minoritarian positionalities' (1999, 8). In the introduction to her *Epistemology of the Closet*, Kosofsky Sedgwick writes of identification as follows:

What, then, would make a good answer to implicit questions about someone's strong group-identification across politically charged boundaries, whether of gender, of class, of sexuality,

of nation? It could never be a version of 'But everyone *should* be able to make this identification.' Perhaps everyone should, but everyone does not, and almost no one makes more than a small number of very narrowly channelled ones. (...) After all, to identify *as* must always include multiple processes of identification *with*. It also involves identification *as against*; but even did it not, the relations implicit in identifying *with* are, as psychoanalysis suggests, quite fraught with intensities of incorporation, diminishment, inflation, threat, loss, reparation, and disavowal (1990, 59-60, 61; original emphasis).

The various processes of identification (*with/as*) are by no means straightforward or easy and there is no uniform way of identifying. As both Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) and Muñoz (1999) observe, identifications are fraught with what are often conflicting intensities, and structured by and through multiple sites of identification; yet, they tend to be 'accessed with relative ease by most majoritarian subjects' (Muñoz 1999, 5). Those outside the dominant society and norms find these processes much more difficult in the face of 'the power and shame of queerness' (Ibid, 5) where, queerness can be read as both sexual/gender and ethnic/racial non-normativity. Due to not being able to identify with majority society's paradigms, codes, values, meanings and norms — and in order to be able to survive in what may feel as a hostile and exclusionary majority society — queers of colour rework and reconfigure these normativities: what Muñoz calls disidentification:

Disidentification is meant to be descriptive of the survival strategies the minority subject practices in order to negotiate a phobic majoritarian public sphere that continuously elides or punishes the existence of subjects who do not conform to the phantasm of normative citizenship. (...) Minority subjects (...) must work with/resist the conditions of (im)possibility that dominant culture generates. (...) Their emergence is predicated on their ability to disidentify with the mass public and instead, through this disidentification, contribute to the function of the counterpublic sphere. (...) The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the

encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture (1999, 4, 6, 7, 31).

For some, disidentification is a survival strategy that works both within and outside the normative scripts of dominant societies. For others, disidentification may not always be an adequate form of resistance: sometimes, resistance may have to be pronounced and direct; other times, minoritarian subjects need to follow a conformist path to survive. Disidentification thus sits located within the dominant hegemonic normativities; as a strategic positionality, it does not require one to align 'with' or 'against' them, thus bypassing the assimilationist/separatist dualism.

Importantly, coming from the perspective of queer of colour critique and recounting the works of Anzaldúa and Moraga, particularly *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Colour* (1981), Muñoz espouses an *intersectional* optic in relation to monocausal paradigms, which 'are established through the reproduction of normative accounts of woman that always imply a white feminist subject and equally normalizing accounts of blackness that assumes maleness' (1999, 8). Muñoz borrows both concepts from Crenshaw, thus locating his conceptualisation of disidentification amidst queer theorising and intersectionality (discussed further in Section 3.7). Disidentification thus emerges as a strategy enabling intersectional readings of the process of de/re/constructing and negotiating dominant scripts and normativities.

At this point, having investigated the concepts of identification and disidentification, I would like to explore the tense, conflicted relationship between 'intersectionality' on the one hand,

and queer theorising, especially Puar's concept of 'queer assemblages', on the other. I will first go through the benefits and pitfalls of each of the two analytics with a view to proposing in Section 3.7 to employ both when attending to conceptualisations of Romani identities.

3.5 Why intersectionality?

At this juncture, I come back to intersectionality. Section 2.9 discussed the application of intersectionality in Romani Studies. Intersectionality, especially its popularisation, is largely attributed to Crenshaw's two essays published in 1989 and 1991 respectively. As a theoretical approach, Crenshaw's conception of intersectionality presented a proposition that the experiences of black women and other women of colour were not sufficiently served by existing feminist theorising and demanded new paradigms. This new analytic frame disrupted the tendency to treat race and gender as mutually exclusive identity categories. Compared with 'the multidimensionality of Black women's experiences,'

[t]his single-axis framework erases Black women in the conceptualization, identification and remediation of race and sex discrimination by limiting inquiry to the experiences of otherwise-privileged members of the group. (...) The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism [and] any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated' (Crenshaw 1989, 140).

Crenshaw's 1991 article revisited intersectionality in relation to identity politics, emphasising the suggestion that intersectionality should not be understood as 'some new, totalizing theory of identity'. Instead, it was meant to encapsulate 'the need to account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed' (1991, 1244-1245). This is an important point to remember, especially in relation to the contested relationship between intersectionality and queer assemblages. Before discussing the

possibility of reconciling the two concepts and making them work together in Section 3.7, this section and Section 3.6 outline a number of ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of employing intersectionality with a view to locating — just like Muñoz (1999) did (see Section 2.4 above) — conceptualisations of Romani identities and identification, including those of Romani LGBTIQ people, amidst queer theorising and intersectionality.

Feminist scholarship has been central in theorising the intersectional power nexus of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity/race, age, disability and other social divisions, which are created artificially, as a symptom of the hegemonic power relations that exist in inequitable ways. As Johnson (2014) cautions, “there is nothing “natural” about these divisions (...), rather, they emerge through institutionalized practices and processes that label and position particular “others”” (2014, 84). As a concept, intersectionality was devised to tackle the way in which the various divisions and systems of social oppression such as racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism etc. interact and intersect. They do not act independently of each other: consequently, they are transformed through their intersections.

According to Taylor, Hines and Casey (2010), there has been an under-development of sexuality in the application of intersectionality; at the same time, intersectionality has been underdeveloped within queer theorising. They comment on the potentials and limitations of applying intersectionality, and the possibilities of critiquing and extending it beyond the ‘mantra’ of race, class and gender to consider sexual absences and advances (Puar, 2007).

They express the following concern:

sexuality is apparent within scholarly work on ‘intersectionality’ as a spoke on the ‘intersectional wheel’, but these intersections are often minimally gestured towards rather than empirically substantiated, demonstrated and ‘delivered’; the formalistic addition and

repetition of 'intersectionality' leaves out the intimate interconnections, mutual constitutions and messiness of everyday identifications and lived experiences. (...) A binary framework persists in theorising gender and sexuality: while some theorists foreground sexuality as the category through which gender is constructed (Rubin, 1989), others have positioned gender as the pivotal category through which sexual identities and subjectivities are produced (Jackson, 1999) (Taylor et al. 2010, 2).

Intersectionality has been interpreted differently by different scholars: some scholars such as Crenshaw focus specifically on the situation of women of colour, while others concentrate on the intersectional workings of social divisions more generally, insisting that intersectionality refers to all subject positions since they are all fundamentally constituted by the interplay of race, gender, sexuality, class, and other identity categories. However, citing Ferguson (2000), Nash (2008) believes that the overwhelming majority of intersectional scholarship has centred on the particular positions of multiply marginalised subjects, 'obscur[ing] the question of whether all identities are intersectional or whether only multiply marginalized subjects have an intersectional identity' (2008, 9). Apart from this distinction, intersectionality has also been interpreted by different theorists either as an additive (e.g. Crenshaw's imagery of crossroad and traffic) or as a constitutive process. Crenshaw (1993) nonetheless differentiates between 'structural' and 'political' intersectionality. The former refers to 'the ways in which the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender make our actual experience of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform quantitatively different from that of white women'. The latter pertains to the manner in which 'both feminist and antiracist politics have functioned in tandem to marginalize the issue of violence against women of colour' (1993, 3). While the additive model 'often remains on one level of analysis, the experiential, and does not differentiate between different levels,' according to Yuval-Davis (2006), the constitutive model '[has] generally been (...) more careful in separating different levels of analysis' (2006, 197-198).

Yuval-Davis (2006) differentiates between four types, or forms of social divisions: organisational, intersubjective, experiential and representational. These different forms affect how scholars theorise each of these four types per se, as well as the connections and interconnections between them. Social divisions such as class, ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, age and ability tend to be 'naturalised,' or essentialised on the basis of biology, or 'genetic pools' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 199). This, according to her, entails the homogenisation of these social categories, i.e. treating people who belong to a particular social category as sharing equally those 'natural attributes' and setting the criteria of exclusion/inclusion accordingly. Yet, Yuval-Davis opines, for some people, social divisions such as gender, age, ethnicity/race and class may be more important than others in constructing specific positionings as they tend to shape most people's lives in most social locations, while others (caste, indigenous status, being a refugee) tend to affect fewer people. However, while individual social divisions are 'constructed/intermeshed with each other, (...) they are irreducible to each other' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 200). As Chapter 5 will show, in specific cultural, socio-economic, political, and historical contexts and situations, people may be positioned in specific locations because of any one social division (i.e. gender or ethnicity/race). Thus, a particular social division/axis of inequality such as ethnicity/race and the resulting oppression may become key aspects of people's specific positioning — or intersectionalities — despite being still impacted by the interlocking effects of several social divisions and/or axes of structural inequality such as sex/gender, sexuality, gender identity, ethnicity/race, age, disability, social status etc.

Internal divisions within intersectionality scholarship with respect to the additive and constitutive approaches have resulted in differences of opinion as to how many social divisions there are, who defines them, and whether or not they should be included into intersectional analysis. The debates have also touches upon intersectionality's inability to

consider 'the spaces in-between' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 202). Butler (1990) apparently 'mocks the "etc." (...) [as she] sees it as an embarrassed admission of a "sign of exhaustion as well as of the illimitable process of signification itself"' (Yuval-Davis 2006, 202). Yet, Yuval-Davis appeals to defences of intersectionality by Fraser (1997) and Knapp (1999), concluding that critique similar to Butler's is 'valid only within the discourse of identity politics where there is a correspondence between positionings and social groupings [as] [t]his is the way additive/fragmentation models of social divisions operate' (2006, 202).

There are many critics and many defenders of intersectionality: just like there are many proponents and many opponents of queer theorising. Intersectionality has been critiqued for omitting to interrogate power relations around class (Skeggs 1997), disability and transgender (Erel et al. 2010). Another critique questioned intersectionality's emphasis on Black women's experiences of subjectivity and oppression, claiming that it remained 'unclear whether intersectionality is a theory of marginalized subjectivity or a generalized theory of identity' and that 'intersectionality scholarship must begin to broaden its reach to theorize an array of subject experience(s)' (Nash 2008, 10). Puar's (2005, 2007, 2012) critique of intersectionality for relying on the (re)production of fixed identity categories attached to the neoliberal nation-state and its apparatuses has highlighted how the centrality of white women's dominant subject positioning has been re-secured through the ways intersectionality has been applied. As a result, intersectionality paradoxically reinscribes whiteness and 'colludes with the disciplinary apparatuses of the state' (Puar 2005), always producing 'an Other, and that Other is always a Woman of Color (...) who must invariably be shown to be resistant, subversive, or articulating a grievance (2005, 128).' In her view, 'many of the cherished categories of the intersectional mantra, originally starting with race, class, gender, now including sexuality, nation, religion, age, and disability, are the product of modernist colonial agendas and regimes of epistemic violence, operative

through a western/Euro-American epistemological formation through which the whole notion of discrete identity has emerged' (2012, 54). This means that while trying to address the 'epistemological erasure/invisibility' of, or epistemic violence (Spivak 1987) against black and other non-white women, intersectionality perpetuates other kinds of violence against other non-white subjects.

Puar's fundamental point about intersectionality re-inscribing white-normativity is complemented by another essential argument: intersectionality is reliant on reifying sexual and gender difference 'as the constant from which there are variants' (Puar 2012, 52). This is a key claim highly relevant to conceptualisations of Romani identities: as Chapter 2 demonstrated, understandings of Romani identities have tended to rely on conceptualising Romani ethnic identity, thus reifying ethnic difference.

Puar (2007) believes that since intersectionality 'demands the knowing, naming, and thus stabilising of identity across space and time', it becomes 'a structural container that simply wishes the messiness of identity into a formulaic grid (...) relying on the logic of equivalence and analogy between various axes of identity (2007, 212). Having spelt out the limits of applying intersectionality to theorising identities and identifications, Puar advocates for a move from intersectionality to assemblage.

Other complementing critiques of intersectionality purport that while the concept is used to identify how hegemonic oppressions and social hierarchies mutually reinforce, constitute and configure one another, it fails to interrogate the nature and extent of white-normativity's investment in them (Erel et al. 2008, 2010). Some scholars have argued that the conceptualisation of intersectionality as 'overlapping axes of oppression' suggests that these hegemonic systems of social oppression are detached from each other (Cooper 2004,

Puar 2004); for others such as Razack (2006) and Combahee River Collective (1977) to name a few, 'interlocking systems of oppression' is a preferred conceptualisation. Notwithstanding the substantiated critiques of intersectionality referred to above, intersectionality as a concept still offers a viable and comprehensive theorising of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Section 2.9 demonstrated that in Romani Studies, intersectionality has been used predominantly by Romani feminist scholars to theorise the multi-dimensional, intersecting and/or interlocking power relations impacting on the experiences of Romani women in particular. In the case of those 'other' Roma that have been neglected in or left out of Romani Studies theorising, including Romani LGBTIQ people, intersectionality as a 'comprehensive theorising of various power relations' (Erel et al., 2008, 2010) yields similar, if not the same benefits. Before proposing to read intersectionality in conjunction with queer assemblages, I will outline a number of benefits of employing the concept of queer assemblages in the following section.

3.6 Why queer assemblages?

Puar uses the concept of assemblage, a conception first employed by Deleuze and Guattari (1988). The original term in Deleuze and Guattari's work is the French word 'agencement'. Referring to Phillips (2006), Puar (2012) explains the meaning of 'agencement' as referring to 'design, layout, organization, arrangement, and relations — the focus being not on content but on relations, relations of patterns' (Puar 2012, 56). Deleuze and Guattari define the concept as 'a multiplicity [that] has neither subject nor object, only determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions (...) there are no points or positions (...) such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines' (1988, 8). Deleuze and Guattari (1988, 88) employ the term assemblage to 'highlight the way in which material content (bodies, actions,

passions) and enunciations (statements, plans, laws) are linked rhizomatically (...), emphasis[ing] both temporality and spatiality: elements are drawn together at a particular conjuncture only to disperse or realign, and the shape shifts according to the terrain and the angle of vision (Murray Li 2007, 265). Just like an underground stem of a ginger plant, for instance, social production is not linear, but 'rhizomic' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 7), sending out roots and shoots from its nodes. Deleuze and Guattari oppose this to a hierarchic, tree-like conception of knowledge, which works with dualisms and binary oppositions. Assemblages of relations emerge and develop unpredictably around actions and events. Thanks to assemblages' constant motion, spreading, branching, reversing and bursting, one affect can produce more than one capacity. An assemblage can be seen as a 'territory' constantly in flux (Guattari 1995, 28), with some (i.e. territorialising) flows stabilising it, while others de-stabilise or de-territorialise it (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 88–89). At the same time, Deleuze and Guattari see assemblages as 'machines' (see Chapter 4) that link elements together affectively to do something, to produce something (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 4). Following this conceptualisation, a queer assemblage can be then understood as a non-normative notion

[which] resists (...) intersectional and identitarian paradigms (...) in favor of spatial, temporal, and corporeal convergences, implosions and rearrangements. Queerness as an assemblage (...) deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and non-queer subjects. (...) [T]here is no entity, no identity to queer (...). As opposed to an intersectional model of identity, which presumes that components—race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, religion—are separable analytics and can thus be disassembled, an assemblage is more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate, time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency. (...) [*A*]ssemblage, in its debt to ontology and its espousal of what cannot be known, seen, or heard, or has yet to be known, seen, or heard, *allows for becoming/s beyond being/s* (Puar 2005 121, 127, 128) [my emphasis].

Puar sees assemblage as a way of characterising links and relationships between constitutive categories of identification that does not assume either an overarching system, structure, 'groupness', or a common set of roots. Conceptualising Romani identities as a queer, non-normative assemblage makes it possible to not stabilise, fix or 'essentialise' Romani identities in time and space. Instead, it allows Romani identities to unfold discursively and to keep becoming across space and time in a 'rhizomic' way. That means that certain aspects of identities and identifications may be more or less prominent at various points in time. This largely depends on the discursive practices of the intersecting/interlocking power relations of societies, spaces and environments, with which identities are in a permanent dialogue, and as part of which and/or by means which identities are constantly (re)constructed. The following section outlines how reading intersectionality in conjunction with queer assemblages can help attend to conceptualisations of Romani identities, which are framed by the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people explored in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

3.7 'Queer intersectionalities'?

As discussed in Section 3.1, queer theorising was the subject of critique from lesbians of colour (e.g. Lorde 1984, Anzaldúa 1987, Hull, Scott and Smith 1982; 1983) and later from queer of colour theorists. They believed that queer theorising tended to gloss over, and at times neglected altogether the analysis of the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations, including ethnicity/race, transgender and class, as well as race- and class-based privilege (Cohen 2005). In this vein, questioning the legitimacy of the centrality within queer theorising of those queers located within centres of privilege, Tucker (2009) asks:

If being queer is often to be 'knowingly queer', then how do communities that are simply striving for basic survival against homophobia find the opportunity to playfully destabilise those structures that threaten their lives? (2009, 16)

This means that being 'knowingly queer' is a choice, a privilege that is not available to all queers: something that will be explored analytically in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Sections 3.5 and 3.6 presented some of the main critiques of intersectionality (Puar 2004, 2007, 2012; Cooper 2004; Erel et al. 2008), particularly in terms of reifying fixed identity categories, sexual difference and re-inscribing the centrality of white women's dominant subject positioning and women of colour as the Other. It can be argued that the relationship between intersectionality and queer theorising has remained complicated. According to some, 'focusing on sexuality as the single-axis of oppression fails to acknowledge that marginalization is not universal for those that come to call themselves lesbian, gay, bisexual, or even heterosexual' (Johnson 2014, 85); others believe that sexuality is underdeveloped in the application of intersectionality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Taylor et al. 2010). Still, others have disagreed with the claim that sexuality is underdeveloped within intersectionality as follows:

sexuality has been an integral element of work on 'intersectionality' by lesbian feminist anti-racist theorists (and their allies) since the late 1970s, as is evidenced in the publications of the Combahee River Collective (1977), Barbara Smith (1998), Audre Lorde (1988) and Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) (Erel et al. 2010, 275).

Additionally, Section 3.5 recalled the argument made by Taylor et al. (2010) that intersectionality has been underdeveloped within queer theorising. Whatever the case is, it

is clear that the relationship between queer theorising and intersectionality is one fraught with unease.

This thesis wishes to contribute to these ongoing discussions about the contested relationship between intersectionality and queer theorising. It does so by considering how intersectionality and queer theorising, and the concept of queer assemblages (Puar 2007) in particular, can be made to work together, and by proposing to employ ‘queer intersectionalities’. (Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will illustrate how exactly I am proposing to implement this task.) This is not the first time this joint reading of intersectionality and queer theorising has been suggested. Section 3.4 demonstrated that Muñoz (1999) used both queer theorising and intersectionality in his conceptualisations of disidentifications. More recently, Browne et al. (2017) argued in favour of feminist queer research and research methodologies; Erel et al. (2010) proposed an ‘intersectionality perspective’ for critical queer theorising and research practice (2010, 271); Yekani et al. (2010) argued in favour of employing the concept of ‘queer interdependencies’ (Yekani et al. 2010). Acknowledging both the pitfalls and benefits of queer theorising and intersectionality, Yekani et al. (2010) proposed to apply queer interdependencies in the hope of

highlight[ing] that we see each category as ‘dependent’ on other categories and (...) to emphasise that each category such as gender or race is always already intertwined in multiple frameworks of inequality. Quoting and modifying Spivak’s ‘strategic essentialism’ (1990), we would like to propose a ‘strategic categorialism’ that allows us to address the conflicting racialising and sexualising processes *within* a category such as gender without assuming a hierarchy of inequality or an essentialist understanding of these categories that only intersect occasionally (Yekani et al. 2010, 79-80; original emphasis).

In my use of ‘queer intersectionalities’, I am consciously changing the singular form of ‘intersectionality’ to ‘intersectionalities’ as I believe this helps to account for the non-

normative variety of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations — be they social-economic, cultural, and/or political — that exist in inequitable ways, impact on every single individual and contribute to constructing and configuring specific subject positions. Simultaneously, I maintain the term ‘queer’ and its non/counter-normative, anti-essentialist, non-identitarian and fluid meaning, challenging and problematising boundaries as discussed in relation to queer theorising in Section 3.1, and in Section 3.6. It is important to point out that the term ‘assemblage’ is implied in my use of the term ‘queer intersectionalities’; to make up for the formal absence of ‘assemblage’ when employing the actual term ‘queer intersectionalities’, I contextualise this use by referring to both assemblages and intersectionalities. Understanding Romani identities as a queer (i.e. non-normative) assemblage allows for conceptualisations that do not stabilise or fix or Romani identities and identifications in time or space. Instead, such a conceptualisation enables the fluidity of multifaceted Romani identities to flow across space and time in a ‘rhizomic’ way in a permanent dialogue with the intersecting/interlocking power relations of societies, spaces and environments, through which Romani identities are constantly (re)constructed and negotiated.

Thus, queer intersectionalities can be understood as a *middle ground* (not exactly in the middle!) between intersectionality and queer assemblages. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 demonstrated that intersectionality has been critiqued for fixing and stabilising identities, whereas queer assemblages allow for the fluidity and becoming of identities that are always in the process of coming together and/or apart. Both concepts are suited for attending to the vast diversity of Romani identities and identifications, shaped by historic, social and cultural contexts, as well as by lived experiences, in an organic manner. At the same time, reading the two concepts in conjunction does not ‘anchor’ Romani identities and identifications in the notion of fixed, essentialist ‘groupness’.

Queer intersectionalities allow us to capture the workings of social normativities and binary orthodoxies, which are the attendant manifestations of asymmetrical hegemonic power

relations that exist in inequitable ways. Queer intersectionalities enable us to examine and depict ways in which the identities, identifications and lived experiences of minoritarian subjects who are often perceived as and/or self-identified as members of non-dominant, non-normative group(ings)s such as ethnic/racial, sexual/gender and other minorities, including Romani LGBTIQ people, are affected, informed and shaped discursively by asymmetrical hegemonic power relations and the resulting social normativities: white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Queer intersectionalities make it feasible to speak to all the categories of identification participating in, and contributing to the 'process of becoming/s beyond being/s' (Puar 2005, 128). Simultaneously, queer intersectionalities do away with the 'us' and 'them' divide by not *marking* 'their' supposedly 'non-white', 'non-heterosexual/non-heteronormative', 'non-cis' 'minority status' as *difference, divergence and/or* 'deviation' from 'our' 'white', 'straight', 'heteronormative', cis 'majority' societal *norm*.

Conclusion

Chapters 2 and 3 have been a probe into post-modern, poststructuralist conceptualisations of identities and identifications. Chapter 2 took the reader on a journey starting with Hall's conceptualisations of collective social national and ethnic identities and 'new ethnicities', through conceptualisations of Romani identities in Romani Studies; to theoretical concepts also applied in Romani Studies such as hybridity, super-diversity and intersectionality that cross-cut ethnicity/race, gender, sexuality, class, age, social status etc. Having examined scholarship associated with queer of colour critique and recent intersectional approaches to critical queer theorising, particularly in relation to the applicability of non-normative, anti-identitarian and anti-essentialist queer theoretical concepts and their relevance to understandings of ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities, Chapter 3 went on to interrogate the notions of belonging, (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility, passing,

identification and disidentification, demonstrating that disidentification and passing are transgressive strategies used by minoritarian subjects to respond to and/or at times to subvert the dominant cultural scripts associated with social normativities.

Chapters 2 and 3 have established that as an assemblage, queerness, which implies no entity or identity, deprivileges a binary opposition between queer and non-queer subjects; at the same time, intersectionality as a theoretical concept makes it possible to describe asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that discursively contribute to constructing ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities. To this effect, Chapter 3 concluded by proposing to apply queer intersectionalities when conceptualising Romani identities and identifications framed by the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. Employing queer intersectionalities benefits understandings of Romani identities and identifications as rhizomic fluid 'becomings' that are not anchored in the notion of fixed 'groupness' or essentialist difference; simultaneously, queer intersectionalities also attend to the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that discursively participate in the construction of Romani identities and identifications.

The theoretical underpinnings that emanate from Chapters 2 and 3 in relation to conceptualisations of identities and identifications inform the methodology and methods used in order answer the research question '*What are the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in and beyond Europe?*', as well as to meet the research objectives outlined in Section 1.1. The following chapter looks at the methodology and methods used while conducting this qualitative ethnographic investigation.

Chapter 4: Queer intersectional ethnography as a methodology

Introduction

Drawing on Chapters 2 and 3, which have provided a theoretical and conceptual framework for this research, this chapter discusses methodology and methods. The first part considers the methodological underpinnings of conducting qualitative research informed by ethnography and theory-driven thematic analysis. I start by outlining the methodology used, particularly in relation to queer(y)(ing) the ethics of doing social science research. I then go on to discussing queer ethnography. I sketch out the advantages and pitfalls of using queer assemblages as a methodology and proceed to suggest that a looser theoretical framework such as thematic analysis informed by and sensitive to queer theoretical concepts is more preferable so as not to limit the prism through which the data are analysed and interpreted. This analytic and interpretative framework that focuses on themes and assemblages makes it possible to attend to the notion that identities and identifications are fluid and unstable; it also enables a two-way process whereby theory speaks to the data and the data speak back to theory. These methodological discussions lead me to an exploration of what it means to be an ally-identified, non-Romani researcher doing research with, for and/or on Roma, as well as a lesbian/queer researcher doing research with, for and/or on Romani LGBTIQ people. The outsider/insider binary of the researcher's position has implications for and raises important questions about researcher positionality and reflexivity in relation to social normativities and privilege, which I discuss in the last section of this part.

The second part of this chapter looks at the methods used in order to conduct this research. It outlines the recruitment process and the practical implications of doing fieldwork around Romani LGBTIQ public events. I proceed to talk about the individual methods of data collection used such as focus groups, interviews, participant observation; and the research

participants. The chapter then discusses the different stages of coding, collating and analysing the data within the theory driven thematic analytic and interpretative framework. The chapter concludes by reflecting on a number of methodological adjustments made in the course of the research and lessons learnt, including in relation to the dynamics of gender in qualitative research.

4.1 Methodology: queer(y)(ing) ethics in qualitative research

My long-term alignment with Roma-related causes and my involvement in Romani LGBTIQ activities and 'events', including the first international and second International Roma LGBT conferences in 2015 and 2016 (discussed in Chapter 1 and in Sections 4.2 and 4.4.1), resulted in a certain level of entanglement in a delicate network of friendships and social relations with many of the research participants. It was important for me as a researcher to acknowledge that during social interaction with the participants, emotions, which manifested in recurrent, socially-recognised routines and/or patterns, were an important factor (Wetherell 2012). Consequently, I came to appreciate that I exercised a 'significant influence on the development of the research and the engagement of the participants' (Curtin and Fossey, 2007, 92-93). I became aware that this could potentially influence the interpretation of data (Creswell 1998; Creswell and Miller 2000; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Simultaneously, I realised that as someone who has been involved in Romani and Romani LGBTIQ activism and activism-driven research, not only was I 'allowed to have a political project in my research (...), I [was] also allowed to "perform myself" as a social actor within the research through the reflexive implication that entangle[d] me into the lives of [the] participants' (Detamore 2010, 168; Denzin 2003). I came to recognise that it was not just my activist background and commitment to social justice and equality. It was also my emotional attachment to the 'cause' and the participants which was a driving, motivational force behind the research, as well as the events — which would have most likely happened

even if the research had not been taking place — giving meaning to the emotional experience. At the same time, I felt I had a duty to be transparent about that influence by ‘bring[ing] [my] preconceived beliefs into the dialogue’ (Harry, Sturges and Klingner 2005, 7). I did that by disclosing those aspects that I was aware of to the research participants, along with aspects of my background, including my non-Romani origin as discussed in Section 4.2, that could influence the way in which I conducted the research and analysed and interpreted the data. As a result, over the course of the fieldwork, I assumed an overt researcher position that moved between the role of ‘participant as observer’ and ‘observer as participant’. Despite some of the challenges discussed in Section 4.2, in order to make sure that all the research participants were fully aware of my ‘role’ I informed the participants of the exact nature and purpose of the research, of what exactly I intended to do and why at every stage of the research. Where the fieldwork took place at the ‘events’, I made all the participants aware of the nature and purpose of my presence. As a co-organiser of the ‘events’, I was able to introduce myself and explain my role as a researcher at the outset, ensuring that I explained the nature and purpose of the research to the participants again: that is after they had received all the information in writing prior to their participation in the research (as discussed below in Section 4.4.1). This degree of openness and transparency was of pivotal importance in terms of the research ethics of the researcher/participants relations. Detamore (2010) refers to these elements that constitute researcher/participants relations as ‘ethical formations’, ‘ethical constructions’ and ‘ethical terrains’ respectively (2010, 168-9). Being open and transparent about the nature of my role and the purpose of the research was instrumental in terms of maintaining my pre-existing friendships and relations with the research participants built on trust; and building new ones.

As a result of my ‘queer’ positionality and reflexivity as a researcher interrogating my own privilege (discussed in Section 4.2), the ethics of conducting social science research that

makes a maximum effort to not reify and/or reinforce existing normativities, social divisions and asymmetrical hegemonic power relations became 'not merely a management tool for methodology but a methodological tool for the constitution of methods itself' (Detamore 2010, 182). Consequently, queer ethics (Detamore 2010) sat at the core of the research

as method for crafting and defending alternative social worlds. (...) It is in the rational flip of the ethical and the methodological, of ethics and methods, as a means to constitute complex researcher/researched relations that the queer enters as a technique to explore such assemblages. (...) The result is something unnameable and uniquely special that has the tendency to resemble something that looks much more like kinship (Detamore 2010, 168-170,178).

Just as Detamore (2010) refers to 'ethics as a methodological tool for the constitution of methods itself' within researcher/researched relations, it was within the context of researcher/researched relations that my 'queer' researcher positionality (discussed below in Section 4.2) became constitutive of the methodology for this research. Having fleshed out the issue of ethics, I move on to a discussion about queer ethnography as part of the methodology for this research.

4.1.1 Methodology: towards queer ethnography

In my previous research with, for and/or on Roma, I tended to perceive my role as a 'messenger' although I often asked myself many questions pertaining to the social positioning and privilege associated with who gets to 'emit', 'carry' and 'receive' the 'message', as well as to the discursive context in which this 'transmission' takes place. As Jackman reminds us, 'researchers must recognise the role of the ethnographer as mediator and interpreter of cultural text' (2010, 116). Citing 'the assumed stability and coherence of the ethnographic self,' Rooke (2010) recalls the 'considerable criticism ethnography has

been subject to due to its epistemological underpinnings and its representational conventions'; and its trajectory from its earlier colonialist, imperialist, ethnocentric versions (also mentioned by Jackman in the same volume, 2010, 115) to postmodern critiques of ethnography that have led to what is referred to as an interpretative turn: recognising that ethnography is more than mere cultural reportage, relaying the truth or 'reality' of a situation, stressing its role as a cultural construction of both self and the other (Rooke 2010, 25, 27, 28). As Geertz puts it, ethnographic writing involves the 'construction of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to' (Geertz 1973, 9). Such a postmodern take on ethnography seemed relevant to the queer intersectional approach I was using while doing ethnographic fieldwork in order to understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people.

Ethnography, according to Rooke (2010), is 'methodologically untidy, (...) filled with ontological, epistemological and ethical dilemmas' (2010, 27, 28). The use of ethnography in her research was, in her view, 'a deliberate attempt to counter the tendency towards high abstraction and a reliance on theory' that she believes to have been so characteristic of queer. In view of this, she proposed

a queer sociological ethnographic perspective that brings together queer theories of sexual subjectivity and an ethnographic approach to researching identity categories and the practices which generate them (2010, 26)

Similarly to, yet independently of Rooke's (2010) proposal, when putting together the methodology for this research, it became clear that the kind of data which would be collected and assembled during the ethnographic fieldwork — that is the lived experiences shared by Romani LGBTIQ people — in interviews, focus groups and participant observation (discussed below in Section 4.5) would aim to fulfil precisely that function. To echo Rooke

(2010), they would help 'counter the tendency towards high abstraction and [over] reliance on theory' by illuminating complex theoretical issues. This concerns particularly highly complex and abstract concepts such as intersectionality, queer theorising, queer assemblages and queer intersectionalities that Chapter 2 and 3 interrogated.

From a methodological point of view, queer assemblages as a methodology have an important ethnographic dimension as demonstrated by Puar (2007) who assembled 'varied and often disjunctive primary sources' and ethnographic data, including formal interviews, participant observation, and discursive analyses in *Terrorist Assemblages* (2007). Since this investigation is ethnographic, this represents an important link between ethnography and queer assemblage. Writing about the cross-cultural use of ethnography as a theoretical and practical guide in the study of sexuality, Jackman (2010) recalls Engebretsen's (2008) claim that ethnography allows for the use of 'multifaceted "think" data that enables effective re-thinking of received analytical paradigms' (Engebretsen 2008, 112) in conceptualising 'the situated realities of everyday realities' (Jackman 2010, 116). Jackman thus points to the socially and culturally 'constructed' nature of the notion of the ethnographic 'field'. He makes a suggestion to re-orientate and re-situate researchers' perception of ethnographic 'fieldwork' by conceiving of it by means of two related concepts: 'queer publics' (Warner 2002, 14) and 'queer assemblages (Puar 2007, 221). Jackman considers queer publics to be a useful conceptual tool as it is relational, metacultural; it does not delineate clear boundaries, nor does it designate identifiable constituents or bound diffuse social forms in time and space, unlike the 'field' (2010, 126). In Jackman's view, the study of queer assemblages entails a more radical, albeit less clearly defined reorientation and repositioning of researchers in relation to conducting research: ethnographies of queer assemblages have the potential to study sexualities and experiences. Given this organic

relationship between ethnography and queer assemblages, the following section considers the possibility of using queer assemblages as a methodology.

4.1.2 Conceptualising methodology as a queer assemblage, thematic analysis, or both?

Chapters 2 and 3 considered how intersectionality as a concept has been popular with Romani Studies scholars informed by post-colonial feminism and critical race theory. Applying an intersectional approach to conceptualisations of Romani identities and identifications would have been the logical, most straightforward choice for this research. My decision to interrogate and apply queer theorising of identities and identifications meant introducing a new prism, through which Romani identities and identifications could be understood. However, with the exception of Tesăr's (2012) 'Becoming Rom (male), becoming Romni (female) among Romanian Cortorari Roma: On body and gender' (which contains some problematic interpretations of Butler (1990, 1993)), Baker's (2015) 'The Queer Gypsy' or Horvath's (2010) "'Passing": Rebeka and the gay pride', I was not aware of queer theoretical concepts such as queer assemblages having been applied in Romani Studies either theoretically or methodologically. This meant that I was introducing the queer theoretical concepts emerging from my theorising into my methodology in the course of doing this research. As a result, theory was in a constant dialogue with methodology through the data I collected; and preliminary analysis of the data collected had implications for methodology and theory.

In the initial stages of the fieldwork in autumn 2015, it struck me as a researcher that some of the Romani LGBTIQ participants in the research referred to themselves as 'intersectional'. Simultaneously, though, the way in which some of the research participants understood their own multiple identities and identifications seemed more in tune with the

notion of identities and identification always being in the process of becoming: that is the 'rhizomic', intuitive, fluid workings of queer assemblages. To echo Puar (2005), these understandings appeared to be 'more attuned to interwoven forces that merge and dissipate, time, space, and body against linearity, coherency, and permanency' (2005, 127), characterising links and relationships between constitutive categories of identification that do not assume either an overarching system, structure, groupness, or a common set of roots (Puar 2007, 212, 215) as opposed to the putatively 'analogous' relationship between the individual 'axes of inequality' as claimed by some strands of intersectionality (for theoretical considerations, see Chapters 2 and 3; for analytical insights, see Chapters 5, 6 and 7).

Assemblage has been applied as a research methodology across social sciences (Murray Li 2007; Wetherell 2014; Fox and Alldred 2013, 2015; Alldred and Fox 2015). The notion of research as an assemblage, or research-assemblage, 'comprises the bodies, things and abstractions that get caught up in social inquiry, including the events that are studied, the tools, models and precepts of research, and the researchers' (Fox and Alldred, 2013, 2015; Coleman and Ringrose 2013, 17; Masny 2013, 340). Fox and Alldred (2014, 403-404) apply the concept of a 'machinic assemblage' (Deleuze and Guattari 1988, 4) to different stages in the research process, which they claim is a complex, or even 'rhizomic' assemblage that can be treated as a 'machine'. Thus, it is possible to see a research methodology as a specific arrangement of machines, including researchers, the researched, events, research tools, recording and analysis technologies, theoretical frameworks, and research literatures. If we were to follow this analytic, the individual data collection 'events' (focus groups, interviews and participant observation) would be treated as part of a queer assemblage. When reflecting on the 'events' which I observed/researched during my fieldwork such as the individual panel sessions during the International Roma LGBT conferences in 2016 and

2016, the gay pride marches, informal gatherings such as the theatre performance or going to a gay club (discussed in Chapter 5), it struck me that they might be considered parts of the queer assemblage, too. The first Roma LGBT conference held in 2015 was the first ever international event of this kind. It brought together Romani LGBTIQ people, many of whom said they had never met a single Romani LGBTIQ person before. Consequently, the 'events' produced very unique and specific dynamics and relations. Additionally, the participants knew from the outset that the research was taking place during/after the conference, which impacted on the nature of our interactions as the research participants were willingly contributing to and participating in the production of knowledge about the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. These dynamics, interactions and relations assembled during the 'events', and eventually they disassembled after the 'events', including the fieldwork, ended.

The properties and traits of queer assemblages as a theoretical concept discussed in Chapter 3 inherently benefit queerness (i.e. non-normativity) thanks to the challenges they pose to ways in which dualisms, binaries and orthodoxies are deployed. Despite these benefits, approximately halfway through my research, I started to feel that if I were to use queer assemblage as a methodology on its own, the conceptual framework would end up being too narrow. When organising and analysing the data, employing solely the prism of assemblage became too technical in its use of 'machines' and 'events'. I recognised in time (before the beginning of Phase Two of fieldwork in summer 2016, approximately 20 months into the research) that in order to enable the data to communicate with theory and vice versa, I needed a less limiting analytic that would not hamper my engagement with the data on its own terms. What I felt was needed was a looser conceptual framework that would offer more opportunity for the data to 'speak' to theory without pinning them down by a single concept too early on in the research: a framework informed by and sensitive to

theoretical insights and concepts emanating from both Romani Studies and queer theorising discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Theory-driven thematic analysis offered an opportunity to do just that.

According to Braun and Clark (2006), at a latent level, thematic analysis examines the 'underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations', and subsequently develops themes and patterns. Such processes involve 'interpretative work, and the analysis that is produced is not just description, but is already theorised' (Braun and Clark 2006, 13). Being able to analyse the data obtained during the process of data collection by means of developing and organising them into themes and patterns seemed highly relevant to the main research question (see Section 4.3) and the research objectives (see Section 1.1) in terms of interrogating the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people.

There are three fundamental aspects of using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis can be used within an essentialist paradigm to reflect and report (on) the participants' experiences, meanings and reality. At the same time, it can also be used in a constructionist approach to unpack and uncover the surface of 'reality,' examining the ways in which events, realities, meanings, and experiences are the effects of a range of discourses operating within society, where meaning and experience are socially produced and reproduced, rather than inhering within individuals (Burr 1995, 20). Additionally, thematic analysis also has a 'contextualist' aspect:

sitting between the two poles of essentialism and constructionism, (...) acknowledg[ing] the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality' (Braun and Clark 2006, 9).

The contextualist aspect of using thematic analysis makes it possible to unpack the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people emanating from interviews and focus groups within the essentialist paradigm since the research participants' personal testimonials and/or reflections of/on the realities that surround them, particularly in relation to experiences of being 'read' by others as Romani and LGBTIQ that lead to exclusion, rejection, discrimination and/or inclusion and acceptance based on ethnicity/race, sexuality and/or gender identity, may have an essentialist/essentialising dimension, thus fixing, stabilising and reifying the identity categories at issue. Simultaneously, the constructionist approach offers a lens through which it is possible to identify strategies deployed in order to negotiated multiple identities and identifications. Consequently, such a contextualist deployment of thematic analysis enables identifying, analysing, describing and interpreting patterns and themes across and within data sets in detail. At the same time, this allows the researcher to operate both as a cultural *member* and a cultural *commentator* (Braun and Clark 2006, 24), which also echoes the outsider/insider dichotomy discussed below in Section 4.2 in relation to researcher positionality. I believe it is this third, contextualist function of thematic analysis that lends itself to the application of queer theoretical concepts. Thus, it is possible to regards the contextualist approach as 'queer(y)ing' thematic analysis in line with the following challenge Kosofsky Sedgwick (1993) poses to the essentialist/constructionist binary:

one of the things 'queer' can refer to: the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent element of anyone's gender, of anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically (1993, 8)

Operationalising this proposition on a methodological level means being able to attend to the *un-monolithic*, multifaceted, fluid nature of Romani identities and identifications. This

can be achieved by employing thematic analysis driven by the theoretical insights from the application of queer assemblages to theorising Romani identities and identifications, and by making meaning of the lived experience of Romani LGBTIQ people. The individual stages of coding, analysing and interpreting the data are outlined below in Section 4.7.

Importantly, the choice of methodology for this research was informed by the nature of data that I needed to elicit in order to understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, and to inform the theoretical considerations in Chapters 2 and 3. Ultimately, my ability to collect the data was contingent on my position as a researcher, and that is why I move on to a discussion about my positionality and reflexivity.

4.2 Researcher positionality and reflexivity: queer(y)(ing) one's own privilege

Chapter 1 discussed my professional background as a researcher, a lesbian/queer person, who has worked with and for Roma and on Roma-related issues for almost two decades; and my personal background as an individual with long-term emotional attachments to many self-ascribed Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, who have been either acquaintances, close and/or good friends of mine, and/or both. When starting to conduct this research, my personal and professional background meant that as a researcher, I was aware of beginning to walk a very thin line separating the notion of being an outsider as a non-Roma and an insider as a lesbian/queer person; at the same time, I was also neither of the two. I had to critically examine how my own privilege is operationalised and how it plays out in different contexts. For instance, when I am in the UK, I am ('read' as) a university educated, middle-class, migrant, lesbian, white, Eastern European female foreigner whose white/non-Romani privilege is perhaps not so obvious because of my migrant status of an EU citizen (recently made uncertain by the implications of Brexit), and due to not being a native speaker of English. Nevertheless, my position in relation to privilege — hence my researcher positionality — changes when I am in my home country, the Czech Republic

where a substantial part of the fieldwork for this research took place as discussed below in Section 4.4.1. There, I am ('read' as) a university educated, middle class, white/non-Romani, Czech, lesbian, female researcher studying and working in the UK, who can pass and passes as straight and whose white/non-Romani privilege is perhaps much more obvious because I am an ethnic Czech and a native speaker of Czech who is also fluent in English and French. Additionally, I am an openly lesbian/queer person who (*still*) exercises a lot of privilege in relation to my social status and my white heritage (I add and emphasise the word 'still' because as an openly lesbian/queer person and a female in the Czech Republic, I exercise much less privilege as opposed to straight women and/or men). As a white/non-Romani person, I exercise even more privilege.

Ultimately, my being lesbian/queer in my everyday personal life does not automatically 'qualify' me to speak on *all* matters related to LGBTIQ issues. By extension, this means that in the academic world, my lesbian/queer identity and identifications *cannot* be regarded as 'qualifying' me as a researcher to be an 'epistemological insider' (Brubaker 2017) who, by default, can write with legitimacy and authority about *all* LGBTIQ-related topics. While conducting this research, I had to acknowledge that for me as a lesbian/queer person, a non-Roma and simultaneously a researcher, involvement in the research was not the same as for the Romani LGBTIQ research participants: therefore, by definition, I *was* an outsider and could not and did not pretend otherwise. Not only that: I was also a non-Romani researcher who was asking Romani LGBTIQ people to share their lived experiences in order to be able to write a doctoral thesis. As I shall discuss in this section, this presented a key challenge in a situation where a large portion of academic research *on* Roma — as opposed to *with/for* Roma — has been done by non-Roma; consequently, there may have been a perception that non-Romani researchers were advancing their careers on the back of Roma. Additionally, the impact of some research on Roma has been at times detrimental

to Romani communities (for example, research by Jakoubek and Poduška; see Chapter 2). These considerations became critical aspects of my positionality and reflexivity as a non-Romani researcher, who was also heavily involved in the organisation of the first and second International Roma LGBT conferences in 2015 and 2016 discussed above in Section 4.4.1. Still, the notion that I am openly lesbian/queer identified, as well as overtly ally-identified, acknowledging openly that Romani identity is an identity that I do not/cannot claim and a heritage that I do not have, came to represent a fundamental link between me as a researcher and the Romani LGBTIQ participants in the research. This thin line separating the notion of epistemological out/insiderism also enabled me to work towards becoming closer to some of the Romani LGBTIQ research participants; nonetheless, there were a small number of research participants who also participated in the international Roma LGBT conferences and found my position as a non-Roma problematic. This was mainly due to perceptions and assumptions about my heritage made by some of the Romani LGBTIQ participants as a result of my alignment with Roma-related causes and my involvement in Romani LGBTIQ activities and events, particularly the International Roma LGBT conferences. Interestingly, this was not the case with those research participants who did not participate in the International Roma LGBT conferences.

Since I have been openly acknowledging my non-Romani heritage for almost two decades and have never been elusive about my non-Romani heritage, pretended to be Roma and/or been taken for Roma, neither the invitation to participate in the research, the additional information with details of the study or the PIS form (see Appendix 4, 5, 6) contained an explicit reference to my heritage. Also, because of the nature of these forms, it did not occur to me to include a reference to my non-Romani heritage. Consequently, unless the research participants had known (of) me before, they had no way of knowing whether I was non-Romani or Romani. When those research participants who also participated in the

conferences and I eventually met for the first time, a few were unpleasantly surprised when I said I was non-Romani. This realisation led me to appreciate that indeed, my non-Romani positionality as a researcher was an issue.

While conducting the fieldwork, one of the research participants who also participated in the second International Roma LGBT conference helped clarify some of the ways in which assumptions about my ethnicity and the eventual realisation I was not Romani related to experiences of Antigypsyism (discussed in Chapter 5); and how these considerations were key to the subsequent interaction. I planned to hold a focus group with four self-identified Romani LGBTIQ people during the second International Roma LGBT conferences whom I had identified and contacted several weeks before the conference. When I approached the potential participants on the day the focus group was supposed to take place, I reiterated that participation was voluntary, that everything was anonymous and all references to places would be removed. One of them started asking me about the guiding questions and why I was asking specifically about Roma. I explained that I was asking only those people who self-identified as Romani and LGBTIQ. The person replied they felt that the questions were formulated in a way that suggested that Roma were somehow different from non-Roma, as if Roma's sexuality was different. I said that although their response was legitimate, it was not my intention; and that it would be okay to have a discussion about exactly that. Then I stepped away for a bit and when I came back, it was clear that the Romani LGBTIQ people did not want to take part despite still discussing the guiding questions. I said that I respected their decision and I left it at that. About two months later, I received the following message from one of the Romani LGBTIQ people, along with permission to use it:

I just wanted to tell you that I was thinking a lot when I wasn't sure to do the interview or not.
I am sorry. It's not very easy to trust 'white' people. Too often, we get abused from them or I

wasn't sure what happens exactly with the information you get. It was not personal. And I still thinking of that. I don't understand, I felt very bad. It's not easy for us. This paranoia is very deep with white people (anonymous)

In the above communication, the Romani LGBTIQ person was referring to the reasons for their initial decision not to do the focus group. My non-Romani ethnicity was the element linking their experiences of anti-Romani racist abuse from white people with their reluctance and suspicion. In the subsequent exchange of messages, at no point did I ask the person whether they would be willing to participate in the research. It was them who ended up suggesting they wanted to participate in the research by sharing their story.

Looking back, I can appreciate that the responses by some of the conference participants were understandable, especially when taking into account lived experiences of Antigypsyism (discussed in Chapter 5). In addition to these considerations, as a lesbian/queer person, I can also conceive of a situation where someone might be co-organising an LGBTIQ/queer-themed conference and because of that, others, myself included, may make the assumption that the person is LGBTIQ and my interaction with them may be impacted upon finding out that they are straight: an 'outsider', 'representative' of the very normativity that the event is challenging. Similarly, some of the conference participants made the assumption that I was Roma and were taken aback, disappointed and/or unpleasantly surprised upon finding out this was not the case.

Whatever the solution to this dilemma could have and/or should have been, such as including a reference to my non-Romani heritage in the written communication with the research participants — something that I will consider for my future research activities —, all of the above considerations raise some important questions about the 'epistemological out/insider' binary. In this connection, I would like to recall Vajda's (2015) concept of 'critical whiteness'. Vajda opines as follows:

[T]he project of Romani emancipation will have difficulty moving forward until the concept of critical whiteness is incorporated into it, both theoretically and practically. I contend that until such time that non-Romani people are willing and able to examine their own racialised identity, even those non-Roma who are committed to dismantling the discrimination experienced by Romani communities will be unable to play a powerful role in this process; whereas those non-Roma who are indifferent, resentful of or actively hostile to Roma could be persuaded to budge from their positions through a deeper understanding of the history of their own identities and how these are formed and performed in the present (2015, 48).

What Vajda is proposing is very 'queer' by nature of being counter/non/anti-normative in relation to whiteness as a social norm (white-normativity). In practical terms, it means that a 'critical-whiteness' researcher does not necessarily have to be Romani; however, they need to be able to critically examine their own white/non-Romani privilege and challenge it accordingly not only academically, but also politically and socially. By the same token, a 'queer' researcher does not necessarily have to be LGBTIQ; however, if they are straight, they need to be able to critically examine their own straight/heteronormative/cis-normative privilege and challenge it accordingly at all levels: academically, politically and socially.

Having discussed the methodology used for this research, I now move on to a discussion about the methods used to operationalise this research.

4.3 Research design

The methods for this research were designed with a view to accessing, unpacking and understanding the lived experiences, insights and views of those who self-identify as Romani LGBTIQ. Guided by the question '*What are the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in and beyond Europe?*', this qualitative investigation that draws on ethnographic

principles (see Section 4.1.1) is concerned with the experiences — or more precisely the lived experiences — of Romani LGBTIQ people. According to Boylorn (2008),

[L]ived experience is (...) a representation and understanding of a (...) research subject's human experiences, choices, and options and how those factors influence one's perception of knowledge. Lived experience speaks to the personal and unique perspective [of a research subject] and how their experiences are shaped by subjective factors of their identity such as race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, political associations, and other (...) characteristics that determine how people live their daily lives. Lived experience (...) acknowledges (...) how separate life experiences can resemble and respond to larger public and social themes, creating a space for story-telling, interpretation and meaning-making. (...) [L]ived experience (...) privileg[es] experience as a way of knowing and interpreting the world (Boylorn 2008, 489-490).

Boylorn's (2008) description of the significance of lived experiences for qualitative social science research is illustrative of the centrality of the lived experience of Romani LGBTIQ people to this qualitative research as representations of Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of queer intersectionalities (discussed in Chapter 5); and of ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people's multifaceted, fluid, unstable identities and identifications are shaped by social normativities such as white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity, and patriarchy.

The fieldwork for this research was undertaken between summer 2015 and autumn 2016. In order to gain access to the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, data collection (discussed below in Section 4.5) worked mainly in relation to the only events attended by larger numbers of Romani LGBTIQ people: the first International Roma LGBT conference

in 2015 and the second International Roma LGBT conference in 2016. For this reason, I divided the process of data collection into two phases: Phase One and Phase Two.

The qualitative interpretative tradition within an ethnographic frame of reference was applied to help generate knowledge about and investigate the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2003), qualitative research is

a situated activity that locates the observer in the world, (...) consist[ing] of a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible [and] turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations (...), memos to the self (...) that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 4-5).

Espousing a qualitative approach to conducting research enabled me as a researcher to become an observer who seeks to make meaning based on the observations made in the social world in relation to Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities and of how social normativities impact on and shape Romani LGBTIQ people's identities and identifications. Fox and Alldred (2015) believe that qualitative research methods may be attractive to researchers because of

their capacity to contextualise events, thereby revealing the range of relations that comprise assemblages and affective economies. Observation and interviews can be used to identify assembled relations, and the affects and the capacities produced in bodies that together make an assemblage work (2015, 407).

Collecting data from a variety of sources, and using a variety of data collection methods such as focus groups, interviews and participant observation (discussed below in Section 4.5) allowed me to assemble very rich data on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ

people. Simultaneously, this manner of data collection ‘also encourag[ed] reflexivity about how research is assembled’ (Fox and Alldred 2015, 408). Whilst still doing the fieldwork during Phase Two, the theoretical insights generated from the data collected during Phase One enabled me to reflect on efficient ways of collecting data and purposeful sampling in the remaining stages of fieldwork. I contextualised and theorised the collected data on the back of the theoretical insights in relation to identities, identifications, intersectionality, queer assemblages and queer intersectionalities explored in Chapters 2 and 3. Consequently, this became a two-way process whereby I was constantly moving between theory and data, and data and theory.

4.4 Research methods

The research methods were selected with a view to being able to interrogate and understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in order to answer the main research question (see Section 4.3) and to meet Objectives 1 and 2 outlined in Section 1.1. The research method went hand in hand with the epistemological and methodological focus on themes and assemblages, discussed above in Section 4.1.2. This meant that I was going between theory and data, data and method, method and theory while refining both theory and method as the data was ‘coming in’. As a result, theory, methodology and data were in a constant dialogue.

4.4.1 Recruitment

Before I outline the recruitment process, I note that there was a clear distinction between the process of contacting the potential participants in the first and second International Roma LGBT conferences held in 2015 and 2016, which I was initially in charge of, and the recruitment process for this research. As an overt Romani ally who is openly non-Romani (see Chapter 1), I have been working with and for Roma and on Roma-related and Romani

LGBTIQ issues for almost two decades, including running a closed Romani LGBTIQ group on Facebook from 2010; and cooperating since 2013 with the Czech-based, LGBTIQ organisation ARA ART, which is predominantly Romani. Following the first national Czech and Slovak Romani LGBTIQ workshop organised by ARA ART in 2014, the organisation, who had been working largely with Czech and Slovak Romani LGBTIQ people and had very few contacts for Romani LGBTIQ people based internationally, decided they wanted to organise an international Roma LGBT conference in 2015. In the autumn of 2014, ARA ART approached me for contacts and help with fundraising. The timing coincided with me starting my PhD at the University of Brighton, of which I made ARA ART aware. ARA ART and I agreed that if I were to do the fieldwork for this research during the conference, the two activities would be strictly separate. During the very initial stages of beginning the fieldwork in August 2015, there was a risk that the conference, which was to take place in the second week of August, might not go ahead. Yet, since I was expected to have made arrangements for my fieldwork as part of the process of obtaining ethics approval in May/June 2015 (see Appendix 13), it meant that I had contingencies in place: I was prepared to collect the data elsewhere.

Despite the above uncertainties related to the first International Roma LGBT conference, in June 2015, ARA ART asked me to go ahead and approach as potential conference participants a number of Romani LGBTIQ people based across Europe for whom I had contacts. This was in order for the organisation to establish contact with them; in the process of doing so, I did not mention the doctoral research to any of the potential conference participants. Once I established contact with the potential conference participants and they confirmed their participation in the conference, a member of ARA ART's staff took over the subsequent communication regarding the conference. This meant that the initial process, during which I contacted the potential participants in the conference, preceded the actual

recruitment process which did not start until the beginning of August 2015. It also meant that there was no pressure on the conference participants to be involved in the research because they could attend the conference without participating in the research: of the 24 Romani LGBTIQ people who participated in this research in 2015 and 2016, 19 participated in the two conferences.

After my ethics application was approved at the end of July 2015, I started to recruit potential participants in the research. I had previously identified the potential participants through my existing networks of contacts with Romani LGBTIQ people, with whom I have cooperated as an activist and a researcher over the past 9 years. These include the following events I took part in either as a researcher or a participant: the 2012-2014 Council of Europe study on Roma and multiple discrimination, the first LGBT Roma workshop (May 2014, Prague), the World Roma Festival Khamoro (May 2014, Prague), Romani LGBTIQ related events as part of Prague gay pride 2014 (August 2014) and/or the Council of Europe Gender mainstreaming conference (November 2014).

I began the recruitment process in the first week of August 2015 in anticipation of being able to start data collection in a focus group and participant observation as part of the first International Roma LGBT conference held between 13 and 15 August 2015 and related events such as the gay pride march. I sent 24 potential research participants a generic introductory email (see Appendix 7), establishing contact with them, and inviting them to participate in the research study. Since they were Romani LGBTIQ people, some of whom I had cooperated with before, I had email addresses for 13 of them. I contacted the remaining 11 potential participants by sending them a message over Facebook, through which we had been connected for a period of time ranging from 1 to 9 years. Of the 24 potential participants that I contacted, 22 confirmed that they were willing to participate in

the study; two did not respond. Where the potential participants replied and the response was positive, I sent them additional information with details of the study in the form of Participant Information Sheet (hereinafter PIS; see Appendix 4, 5, 6). Where a potential participant did not reply at all, the generic email/Facebook message was resent once more.

Those potential participants who indicated they wished to participate were contacted again prior to the date of our interview and/or ahead of the first and second international Roma LGBT conferences, confirming the date, time and venue. In 2015, the first international Roma LGBT conference was attended by a total of 28 Romani LGBTIQ participants but only 6 chose to participate in the focus group as part of the research (the focus group took place after the end of the second day of the conference). Of the 6 participants, there was one participant with whom I had not had prior contact. On the first day of the conference, I explained to him verbally what would be involved and he chose to participate in the focus group. In order to check that the potential research participants who had confirmed their participation in the research were still okay with the idea of participating in the research, I approached them in person one last time on the first day of the conference, i.e. a day before the focus group.

There were five new Romani LGBTIQ participants present at the second international Roma LGBT conference in 2016 which was attended by a total of 25 participants. Since, as discussed above, I was a key member of the conference organisational team, I had already established contact with them in relation to their participation at the conference (the benefits and pitfalls of my positionality are discussed above in Section 4.2). I also approached the potential research participants separately, asking if they would be interested in participating in the research. Four of them agreed and chose to participate in the research. In the course of 2016, apart from the conference participants, I also had contact with seven Romani

LGBTIQ people who did not participate in either of the two conferences. I had known them and/or known of them through my previous work and ongoing activism (as discussed in Chapter 1 and in Section 4.4.1). I sent the same generic introductory email to all of them (see Appendix 7). Five of them expressed an interest in participating in the research and agreed to participate. I followed up by sending them details of the study in the form of PIS (see Appendix 4, 5, 6). Between September and November 2016, each of these five research participants who chose to participate in the research took part in an interview.

At the end of Phase One, most participants were Romani gay men; therefore, I recognised that in order to improve and increase the representation of Romani lesbian, bi, non-binary, trans and intersex voices, it was critical to recruit participants who self-identified as such. Consequently, Romani lesbian, bisexual, trans, non-binary and intersex were identified and approached in the course of Phase Two of the data collection via email and Facebook. This was driven by the need for more purposeful sampling discussed below in Section 4.5.

4.5 Data collection

In order to interrogate the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, data was collected in focus groups, through participant observation and in interviews. Data was collected in a total of two focus groups with 9 people, 14 interviews with 15 people, and through participant observation at the two international Roma LGBT conferences and a number of related events, including two gay pride marches as part of Prague pride 2015 and 2016 (see Table 1 below).

During Phase One of data collection that took place from August 2015, I collected data during the first international Roma LGBT conference held in 2015 in a focus group and by participant observation. I had used focus groups in my previous research to gauge key

themes, topics and patterns that would be later developed in interviews. I also felt it was important to observe the conference and the related events as I felt that it would me as a researcher to see whether any additional themes, topics or patters emerge. Since the two-day conference had a very packed agenda, I anticipated there would be very little or no time for individual interviews. Indeed, this was the case. Three interviews, which were held within a period of time ranging from 2 weeks to 2 months after the conference, not only helped to develop key themes but also enabled other voices, which may have otherwise remained silent, to speak to other issues on a one-to-one basis.

During Phase Two of data collection that took place from July to November 2016, I held one focus group to specifically recruit Romani lesbian women (three women participated), four more face-to-face interviews (including an interview with a couple) and seven more Skype interviews, to ensure wider representation of lesbian, bi, non-binary, trans and intersex Romani voices. The Skype interviews were held with key informants who were either unable to attend the conference and/or attended the conference but there was not enough time for an interview.

Table 1: Data collection				
	Data collections methods	Timeframe	Number of participants	Notes
Phase One	Focus group as part of the first International Roma LGBT conference	14 August 2015	6	The focus group was held in English.
	Participant observation as part of the first International Roma LGBT conference, a public event about the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people (including 4 presentations), and the Romani section of the Prague Pride March	13-15 August 2015	4	The public event was attended by at least 50 people but I only observed the four presenters all of whom had participated in the focus group.
	Two face-to-face interviews	September 2015 October 2015	2	Interviews enabled voices, which remained silent during the focus group, to speak to other issues on a one-to-one basis
	Skype interview	November 2015	1	
Phase Two	Focus group as part of the second International Roma LGBT conference	10 August 2016	3	Purposeful sampling for the focus group and interviews was used to improve representation of lesbian, bi, non-binary, trans and intersex Romani voices. The focus group was held in Czech.
	Participant observation as part of the second International Roma LGBT conference, a public theatre performance, and the Romani section of the Pride March on 15 August 2016	10-15 August 2016	1	
	Four face-to-face interviews, including one interview with a couple	August 2016 September 2016	5	
	Seven Skype Interviews	July 2016 - November 2016	7	

The criteria used for selecting the venues included, first and foremost, safety, accessibility, and comfort. Wherever possible, I sought to hold the interviews/focus groups in spaces where the participants were likely to feel comfortable. This also took into account the issue of the spatial proximity of participants' communities/families unless specific people wished to be interviewed in their home. For this reason, I made sure to ask participants where they wanted to meet/be interviewed. Being able to conduct a large part of my fieldwork at the two International Roma LGBT conferences in 2015 and 2016 was a major advantage because the vast majority of the participants live either abroad and/or outside Prague. Additionally, because the participants were already familiar with the venue, it was evident that the quality of the research setting had a positive impact not only on the participants' interaction levels but also their well-being (Robson 1993; Davies 1994; Fern 2001). Even more importantly, the conference venues also provided spaces which were safe in terms of possible pressure from the family and/or community.

Having outlined the process of data collection, I now move on to discuss individual methods of data collection in the order in which they were used in this research: focus groups were used first to gauge key themes, topics and patterns that would be later developed in interviews; participant observation was used to check whether there were any additional themes, topics and patterns that could be explored further in interviews; interviews were used to develop key themes, topics and patterns emanating from focus groups and participant observation.

4.5.1 Focus groups

The primary purpose of focus groups is to describe and understand meanings and interpretations of a select group of people to gain an understanding of a specific issue from the perspective of the participants of the group (Liamputtong 2009). They can serve as

'magnifying glasses', inducing 'social interactions akin to those that occur in everyday life but with greater force' (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005, 903-4); or as 'multivocal conversations,' enabling the building of new paradigms and promoting social change, particularly in relation to marginalised groups (Madriz 2000, 842). As a type of social gathering, they generate a variety of emotional responses, redefine the topic under study and introduce the researcher to alternative conceptualisations (Willig 2008). In focus groups, participants are not subjects but individuals whose interpretation of events guides the research process and whose contribution may overlap with that of the researcher to a certain degree (Markova et al. 2007, 46) also help the researcher gain (more) clarity on why a particular issue is important, and what exactly is important about it (Morgan and Krueger 1993; Morgan 1988; Kitzinger 1994, 1995). For these reasons, focus groups were utilised in both Phase One and Phase Two, but particularly at the outset of the fieldwork in 2015 to gauge key issues related (but not limited) to experiences and perceptions of ethnicity, sexuality and gender/gender identities, acceptance, recognition, ex/inclusion and belonging (or lack thereof), oppression, and empowerment of Romani LGBTIQ people in mainstream society, Romani and LGBTIQ communities.

In this research, focus groups were of crucial importance in terms of gauging main topics, themes and patterns; they were used to draw upon participants' lived experiences, attitudes, feelings, beliefs, and reactions, in a group discussion setting. Interaction amongst the participants in focus groups made it possible to generate the material for analysis. Focus groups also enabled me to explore the language the participants used in order to describe their multiple identities and identifications, as well as to gain more insight into the process of meaning-making and understanding reality. Meaning was constructed while participants talked about themselves in relation to the topics discussed. Despite the lack of 'argumentative interaction,' it was still possible to elicit a variety of responses (Kitzinger

1994). During these exchanges of information, interaction was 'complementary' for the most part (Kitzinger 1994) since many of the participants either had had some prior knowledge of another and/or shared common views and experiences across similar cultures.

I led the two focus groups, which I audio-recorded, in a conversational style, with 7 key guiding questions (for the focus group guide, see Appendix 10). These questions were key to gauging topics relating to Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of acceptance, recognition, ex/inclusion and belonging (or lack thereof) inside and outside Romani communities and what being Romani LGBTIQ means to the participants. Bearing in mind the high levels of intra-group diversity including linguistic diversity, and due to confidentiality issues that would inevitably result from the presence of an interpreter who would interpret for non-English speakers, I resorted to holding focus groups in one language only (the first focus group was in English; the second one was in Czech). The first focus group in 2015 was held with English-speaking participants only. The participants were aged between 27 to 46, identified as gay men and lesbian women and came from North America, Western Europe, Eastern European, Southern Europe and the Balkans. It was a dynamic, lively and intense session. It involved 6 participants and took 1 hour and 40 minutes. Since the participants already knew one other from the previous days and/or some of the participants had known each other prior to the conference, the discussion flowed easily, with individual participants taking turns when responding to my and/or other participants' questions and/or prompts. When a question was exhausted, we naturally moved to the next one. It was very rich in reactions and responses, highly emotionally charged yet pleasant and familiar as there were a lot of positive laughter and giggles involved, particularly when the participants were touching upon what were sometimes sensitive and personal issues in a joking, yet sensitive way. Due to the higher number of gay male participants (five out of six), the men

tended to be more vocal and took more initiative (for details of how this was addressed in the subsequent focus group, see Section 4.8).

The second focus group as part of the second International Roma LGBT conference in August 2016 involved research participants who came from Central Europe, identified as lesbian and were in their early twenties and early thirties. It was held in Czech and took just over 54 minutes. Two of the participants had known each other prior to the conference. The third participant was new to the others but because I have known her in a personal capacity for nine years, the discussion flowed easily, with the women taking turns when responding to my and/or the other participants' questions and/or prompts. Compared with the first focus group where gay men had prevailed, this focus group ran differently as the women felt at ease discussing lesbian-only issues. What also helped was the fact that I myself am a native speaker of Czech and I had known two of them well, which meant that the conversation flowed even when discussing challenging issues such as experiences of violence, rejection from family members, as well as internalised homophobia and Antigypsyism.

4.5.2 Participant observation

Observation has been characterised as 'the fundamental base of all research methods' in the social and behavioural sciences (Adler and Adler 1994, 389) and as 'the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise' (Werber and Schoepfle 1987, 257). DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) argue that 'the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method is to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study that is as objective and accurate as possible given the limitations of the method' (2002, 92). I employed participant observation in order to gain a better understanding not only of the relationships among and between the participants, contexts, ideas, and norms, but also of the people's behaviours and activities. Following Schensul et al.'s (1999) claim that participant observation in

research is used to identify and guide relationships with informants; to help the researcher get the feel for how people interrelate, and what are the cultural parameters; to show the researcher what the cultural members deem to be important in manners, leadership, politics, social interaction, and taboos; to help the researcher become known to the cultural members, thereby easing facilitation of the research process; and to provide the researcher with a source of questions to be addressed with participants (1999, 91), participant observation was also used in this research to further develop a familiarity with the cultural milieu in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the context that can only be obtained from personal experience. Even though I have known most of the participants individually for 8-10 years, the first international Roma LGBT conference in 2015, parts of which I observed, was the first time the participants were brought and interacted together for three days. It was a multicultural and multilingual encounter at which at least 8 different languages were spoken. There were 28 Romani LGBTIQ people most of whom had never met so many other Romani LGBTIQ people before. This included the arrival day (12 August 2015), the two conference days (13 and 14 August 2015), a public event on the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people (13 August 2015) and the day of the Prague gay pride March (15 August 2015). In 2016, I observed parts of the second international Roma LGBT conference held on 10-12 August 2016, a public theatre performance shown as part of the Prague Pride Festival, and the day of the Prague gay pride march (13 August 2016). As a participant-observer of whose presence all the conference participants were aware, I was taking notes to capture the gist of what was being talked about and how; at events such as the two gay pride marches and/or public performances, I was unable to take notes; as a result, after the events, I recorded my reflections in a research diary.

During Phase One of data collection, participants in the first International Roma LGBT conference whom I observed were between 20 to 50 years of age, identified as gay men

and lesbian women and came from Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Europe, Southern Europe, and the Balkans. During Phase Two of data collection, participants in the second International Roma LGBT conference whom I observed came from Central Europe, identified as gay men and were in their twenties and early thirties.

4.5.3 Interviews

Semi-structured face-to-face interviews and Skype interviews were used in this research as ‘active interactions (...) leading to negotiated, contextually based results, focusing on encompass[ing] the *hows* of people’s lives (...) as well as the traditional *whats*’ (Denzin and Lincoln 2003, 62). In-depth interviews can be viewed as personal and intimate encounters in which ‘open, direct, verbal questions are used to elicit detailed narratives and stories’ (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006). Semi-structured interviews have the potential of ensuring flexibility in how questions are asked, and in whether and how particular areas get followed up and developed with different interviewees (Mason 2004). At the same time, it is good to bear in mind Fox and Alldred’s argument (2015): drawing on Juelskjaer (2013), they claim that

human accounts can no longer be accorded validity on the basis of their ‘authenticity’, and methods such as interviews must be treated not as means to obtain subjective representations of the world but as evidence of how respondents are situated within assemblages (2015, 409).

In this research, the interviews were used to further explore key issues emerging from the focus groups. Of the 14 interviews, 10 were held in English and 4 in Czech. They tended to be approximately 60-70 minutes long — in exceptional cases, they took 120 minutes — and related (but were not limited) to the interviewee’s experiences of identifying and/or being identified as Romani LGBTIQ. The 13 guiding questions were pivotal in terms of developing

and exploring in greater depth the topics and/or new aspects of the topics that had been already explored in focus groups and/or gauging completely new topics relating to the participants' lived experiences of coming out; acceptance, rejection; belonging; in/exclusion, oppression by mainstream society, family, Romani communities, and/or LGBTIQ communities (for the Interview guide, see Appendix 9). The interviews also touched upon ways in which the participants negotiated and navigated their identities and identifications. The lived experiences elicited from interviews were key to informing Chapter 5 in relation to the lived experiences of queer intersectionalities; Chapter 6 in relation to navigating (in)visibilities and the spaces between sameness and difference such as 'the closet' and passing; and Chapter 7 in relation to queer non belonging.

Research participants whom I interviewed during Phase One between September and November 2015 came from Central Europe and the Balkans and were aged between 25 and 40. Two identified as lesbian and one as a trans male. None of the research participants identified as intersex and/or non-binary. During Phase Two of data collection, research participants whom I interviewed in person during and/or the second International Roma LGBT conference identified as gay men, gay trans men, or straight queer, were in their mid-twenties and thirties and came from Western Europe, Central Europe and Eastern Europe. Research participants who were interviewed over Skype towards the end of Phase Two came from North America, Russia, Scandinavia, Eastern Europe and Western Europe, identified as bi, intersex/non-binary, trans, lesbian, queer/gender fluid and the age groups ranged from early twenties to early fifties.

Very importantly, the interviews gave me an opportunity to interview key informants whom I had not been able to involve in focus groups and/or participant observation. The interviews also allowed me to involve some of those conference participants who had previously

participated in the focus groups and participant observation and were less active and/or shy in terms of their engagement and speaking (I discuss my methodological reflections in Section 4.8).

4.6 Participants

The participants in the research were 24 people aged 18 and over who identify as Romani LGBTIQ. In my selection of participants, I attempted to be as inclusive as possible by including different national groups and sub-groups of Romani LGBTIQ people (i.e. Rumungro, Sinti, Romani Gypsies, Travellers, Gitanos, Kale etc.), age groups, social status, male, female, cis, trans and intersex, non-binary and straight queer. As for the education levels attained by the 24 research participants, 16 had higher education, 7 had secondary education and one had primary education. The 23 participants either with a university degree or secondary school diploma were successful professionals across different sectors, including banking/insurance, academia, local and/or national government, public administration, the third sector, the music/entertainment industry, law, medicine; 2 of them had just finished university.

Although care was taken to include similar numbers of males and females, there were more gay male participants (10 out of a total of 12) than lesbian female (7 out of a total of 9 women). Of the 9 women and 12 men, 3 identified as bisexual (1 woman and 2 men), 3 as queer (one man, one straight woman and one lesbian woman who also identified as queer). Only 2 of the participants identified as trans men and 1 as intersex and non-binary. To improve and increase the representation of Romani lesbian, bi, non-binary, trans and intersex voices, additional participants who self-identified as lesbian, bisexual, trans and intersex were identified and approached in the course of Phase Two of the data collection

via email and Facebook (as discussed above in Section 4.4.1). This was driven by the need for more purposeful sampling discussed above in Section 4.5.

4.7 Data analysis

Following the completion of the process of data collection in November 2016, I coded and analysed all the data, including my field notes and my research diary notes from participant observation. All the focus groups and interviews had been previously recorded either on a digital voice recorder, exported into a sound file and subsequently burnt onto a CD.

Transcription has been hailed by some as 'a key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology' (Bird 2005, 227). I transcribed verbatim the recordings of all the focus groups, interviews in a chronological order, in a manner that encourages readability and accessibility by including participants' reactions such as pauses, laughter and/or other emotional responses. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym that would make the individual testimonies livelier, more personal and relatable. This was done for the purpose of maintaining the participants' anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. Wherever possible, each of the focus groups and/or interviews were transcribed within a reasonable period of time. I translated the Czech transcripts into English. Due to the different accents spoken in the first focus group and in some of the interviews, as well as the fact that some participants were using literal translations from their mother tongues, the process of transcribing the recording was even longer.

As a result of employing latent, theory-driven thematic analysis (Braun and Clark 2006, 13) as discussed in Section 4.1.2, certain aspects of coding were partially based on the research question, as well as a number of pre-set concepts as expressed in the research objectives (see Section 1.1) and captured in the focus group and interview guides. At the

stage of transcribing the focus groups and interviews, I generated a list of initial observations about the data, or codes, as part of the process of organising data into meaningful groups (Tuckett 2005). During the process of listening to the recordings, transcribing and (re)reading the data, a number of themes came up more often or with greater force than others, and thus seemed more prominent.

Having initially interacted with the data during Phase One of data collection, I commenced the interpretative stage which involved thorough readings and re-readings of the selected texts/data units and data sets. However, at this stage, I still refrained from completely extracting (parts of) the texts generated from the focus groups, interviews and participant observation, including my field notes and notes from my research diary. During coding, I started organising these recurring themes, topics and patterns, or units, into themes clustered around the central intersection of Romani (and) LGBTIQ identities and identifications. These initially included the following themes: isolation/connection; oppression; resilience; sexuality and sexual norms; identity construction; queer self-empowerment by non belonging (see Appendix 12). A number of related topics, or sub-themes, came under each of the themes, which I depicted in an initial thematic map (see Appendix 12). However, this was prior to Phase Two of data collection, during which a large portion of data was still due to come in. Following the end of Phase Two, I ended up keeping the main theme of oppression, whilst isolation/connection, sexuality and sexual norms and identity construction came to form sub-themes, and the theme of resilience was discarded altogether since it no longer featured as a recurring and/or prominent theme within and across the data sets.

During the final stages of analysis, I coded all of the data sets line by line, allocating individual codes to individual themes. I generated a list of over 1400 codes, which were

subsequently divided into three thematic areas. The number of codes in each thematic area was gradually reduced. Examples that related to and exemplified the themes were extracted and embedded within an analytic narrative; the themes were further refined within and across the data sets. The data were organised into coherent and consistent accounts accompanied by a detailed analysis to identify both shared and unique themes saturated with insights from the participants' lived experiences. The process entailed not only identifying the story told across the themes and by each of them, but also considering how they fitted into the broader picture in relation to the research question (see Section 4.1) and objectives 1 and 2 outlined in Section 1.1.

The first theme and/or thematic area related to the participants' experiences of oppression. I identified the theme within and across the datasets very early on in the process of initially analysing the data, including at the stage of member checking. These references to experiences of Antigypsyism, homophobia, transphobia, sexism kept recurring in the transcripts of the interviews, focus groups, my notes from participant observation, and my field notes. They also related to the sources of these oppressions: white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy not only as separate normativities but as normativities that intersect. The more I kept engaging with the data, the more it became obvious that the participants' intersectional experiences of these oppressions impacted on and shaped their fluid, unstable identities and identifications in a non/counter-normative manner: consequently, the concept of queer intersectionalities became the main theme of Chapter 5. Within and across the datasets, there were also very frequent references to how the participants' experiences of oppression played out in different environments and different social settings, including in families and communities: hence the notion of queer intersectionalities being contextual and relational.

The second thematic area which appeared at the stage of coding related to a notion that some of the participants frequently referred to: the notion of being 'in-between', 'mediators', 'bridges'. As I engaged with the code initially, a possible theme of sameness kept 'jumping at me'; however, when I refined the theme by synthesising the data within and across the datasets, it became clear that the thematic area was much larger. It encompassed the notions of both sameness, difference and being somewhere in between, as well as 'nowhere'. The notion of being somewhere in between led to the development of Chapter 5 in relation to the spaces in between difference and sameness. The data within and across the datasets also kept pointing to the notion of there being various degrees of being visible, which led to the development of (in)visibilities that as a horizontal theme running through the chapters. Another horizontal theme was gender.

The third thematic area that appeared within and across the datasets very early on in the data analysis, including at the stage of member checking was the theme of queer non belonging. As I engaged with all the data during coding, the theme became even more prominent; at the same time, it was starting to take on a new shape as I was able to identify other aspects of queer non belonging in relation to identification, disidentification and belonging. Also, I was able to see that the notion of queer non belonging in what would go on to become Chapter 7 communicated with the notion of strategic sameness in what would go on to become Chapter 6.

The process of writing up the thesis enabled me to flesh out the individual themes further as I was able to see not only how the themes communicated with each other within and across the individual analysis chapters but also with theory and methodology. This allowed me to refine the concept of queer intersectionalities as a middle ground between queer assemblages and intersectionality.

4.8 Methodological reflections

In the course of conducting the research, I made a series of methodological observations relating to both methodology and method. Firstly, as discussed in Section 4.1.2, I came to recognise that in order to be able to fully engage with the data, I needed a conceptual framework informed by and sensitive to theoretical insights and concepts emanating from both Romani Studies and queer theorising discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. The epistemological and methodological focus on themes and queer assemblages led me to generating queer intersectional ethnography as a methodology, combining of queer ethnography and thematic analysis driven by queer intersectionalities as the middle ground between queer assemblages and intersectionality.

Secondly, my observations related mainly to the underlying gender dynamics in focus groups where certain voices may dominate over others. In the course of the first focus group (discussed in Section 4.5.1), I realised some of the challenges associated with holding a focus group in which there are more men than women. In the focus group, the Romani men engaged in the conversation with ease; however, the Romani woman spoke very little even when I specifically addressed a question and/or prompt to her. I respected her decision and did not push her. In line with my ethics application (see Appendix 12), I was aware that discussing in front of the others what could be perceived as private issues such as sexual/gender identity which are still often regarded as taboo subjects in some Romani communities, may cause some participants a certain level of discomfort. Despite her quietness and shyness, the woman chose to stay for the whole duration. This told me that she was interested in the focus group but perhaps needed a different, lesbian women-only forum, which would raise issues of intra-group dynamics with respect to sex and gender, as well as ethnicity specifically in relation to Romani lesbian women's existence and experiences. As Chapters 5, 6 and 7 will show, Romani lesbians and their experiences are

still less visible than those of Romani gay men. The need for a lesbian women-only forum was confirmed afterwards in a Skype interview with the female participant. As a result, I made an adjustment following Phase One and in Phase Two, I decided to hold the second focus group with Romani lesbian women only.

Thirdly, I learnt much about the importance of the language used in the focus groups, especially as a non-native speaker of English engaging with some participants who did not speak English as their first language. In an attempt to find out more about why the Romani lesbian woman did not talk much during the focus group, I learnt in a subsequent Skype interview held with her two months after the conference that there were two main reasons. One was the dominance of men; the other one was my occasional use of the word 'gay' when referring to lesbians. Even though these two words may be used interchangeably in English at times, this is not the case in Slavonic languages. I was using vocabulary which to the person at issue signalled what can be termed a 'linguistic erasure' of lesbian existence. Even though as a native speaker of another Slavonic language, Czech, and a lesbian, I use the word 'lesbian' in Czech on a regular basis, following that experience, I corrected and adjusted my use of the word 'lesbian' in English.

Reflecting on the above examples of what had not gone according to plan, I realised that these were a series of deeper methodological issues relating to who gets to speak in a focus group, the diversity of voices, and the need for more purposeful sampling. From a methodological viewpoint, it became much clearer that the need for my methodology to have both focus groups and interviews was driven by the workings of gender in a collective, as well as by the gender dynamics between men, women and/or a trans/intersex/non-binary people. As a researcher, I felt the need to be attentive to the notion that certain voices tend to dominate while others remain silent. Had I only employed focus groups, I may not have

got the voices of Romani women. This was a reflection that was relevant to and part of not only my methodology, but also analysis in relation to the sex/gender binary and the attendant invisibility of Romani lesbian women discussed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

Lastly, from the initial stages of designing the research, I was keen to use member checking as a link between data collection and data analysis, and to give the participants an opportunity to check how I interpreted the data (Doyle, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Member checking is a 'way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants' experiences' (Curtin & Fossey 2007, 92); it can be done at a few key points throughout the research process; or it may be a single event that takes place only with the verification of transcripts or early interpretations (Doyle 2007, cited in Carlson 2010, 1105). Conversely, Creswell (2009, 191) argues that member checking is best done with interpreted, 'polished' pieces such as themes and patterns emerging from the data. Towards the end of Phase One, in June 2016, I shared the initial thematic map (see Appendix 12) with the participants by email; I also presented the initial findings at the second international Roma LGBT conference in 2016. The participants provided me with some minor comments which did not result in new concepts being introduced to the research; this was most likely due to the shared data being very early, unpolished interpretations. Methodological assumptions such as those made by Creswell (2009) are based around particular types of research that involves temporalities that doctoral students may not necessarily benefit from due to the limited time they have for the fieldwork, data analysis and the final write up of the doctoral thesis. This means that depending on the timeframe for the research, it is not always possible to deploy member checking as originally planned at the early stages of designing the research.

Conclusion

In discussing queer intersectional ethnography, this chapter teased out the main issues in relation to the methodology underpinning this qualitative ethnographic investigation. Having reflected on queer ethics, the chapter established a link between queer ethnography and queer assemblages as a methodology. The ensuing discussion paved the way to additional reflections on the benefits of as employing thematic analysis sensitive to queer assemblages that helps attend to the fluid, unstable, ever changing nature of identities and identifications, including those of Romani LGBTIQ people analysed in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. The chapter went on to flesh out in detail the epistemological and ontological implications of researcher positionality and reflexivity in relation to challenging the researcher's own privilege derived from social normativities that this thesis critically interrogates.

The second part of this chapter explored the individual methods used in order to conduct this research. The chapter provided an outline of the recruitment process, the individual methods of data collection used in order to access and understand the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, and of the participants in the research. It went on to describe the process of coding and analysing the data. The three thematic areas that emerged from the thematic data analysis form the basis of the following three analysis chapters. Finally, the chapter concluded with a number of methodological reflections regarding the lessons learnt and adjustments made in the course of the research.

Chapter 5: Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities

Introduction

In this first analysis chapter, I explore Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities. The analysis in this chapter is underpinned by theoretical discussions in Chapters 2 and 3, in which I investigated intersectionality, queer theoretical concepts — particularly Puar's concept of queer assemblages — and the possibility of employing a queer intersectional approach: queer intersectionalities. In Section 3.7, I proposed to employ queer intersectionalities as a middle ground or a way of moving between intersectionality and queer assemblages in order to help facilitate understandings and conceptualisations of identities and identifications that attend to the multifaceted, non-normative, fluid nature of Romani identities and identifications which are in a constant dialogical relationship with asymmetrical hegemonic power relations, and thus always in the process of becoming.

This chapter will attempt to show what it may look like to operationalise the proposition to employ queer intersectionalities when theorising Romani identities and identifications framed by the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. The chapter will demonstrate that in order to understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, it is essential to look at Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities. Before doing so, though, it is important to acknowledge that certain types of social oppression — in this case Antigypsyism as a specific form of racism aimed at Roma (see Chapters 1, 2 and 3) — may eclipse other forms of oppression and impact on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in ways that may feel to some as more pronounced. Antigypsyism

is a key aspect of the lived experiences of some Romani LGBTIQ people but it is not the only one.

This chapter first begins by exploring the critical role of Antigypsyism in the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. Secondly, it goes on to examine Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences at the intersection of Antigypsyism, homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia (referred to hereinafter as homophobia), transphobia and other forms of oppression. In doing so, the chapter considers the specific queer intersectionalities this confluence of oppressions engenders for Romani LGBTIQ people. Thirdly, the chapter looks at how Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectionalities through what is to many the most immediate social group: the family. Finally, this chapter considers how the fact that families are located within the broader social fabric of Romani communities impacts on Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities. Two crosscutting themes are woven through this chapter: gender and (in)visibilities. Gender is explored in relation to the societal position of women and men, particularly in terms of the inequitable asymmetrical power relations governing these positions and impacting on the position of individuals self-identified and/or perceived as female/feminine whether they are Romani lesbian, bisexual or trans women or some gay men (passive); gender identity is considered with respect to ways in which Romani trans people may be ethnicised/racialised and gendered as opposed to cis people. Underpinned by theoretical discussions in Section 3.3.2, ethnic and queer visibilities are considered in relation to ethnic/racial and queer hyper-visibility and/or invisibilities. Developing the crosscutting theme of (in)visibilities in this chapter will then serve as a springboard to exploring (in)visibilities as one of the guiding themes in Chapter 6.

5.1 Navigating Antigypsyism: anti-Romani racism in the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people

Section 2.5.4 illustrated how nation-states have deliberately maintained the negative ascription of Romani ethnic identity, ‘actively construct[ing] Roma as a deviant “other” that threatens the fabric of the nation’ (McGarry 2017, 245). This has resulted in Antigypsyism being endemic to most European societies: a phenomenon that has been widely investigated by political scientists within the discipline of Romani Studies (McGarry 2010, 2013, 2017; Van Baar 2010; Vermeersch 2006; see Section 2.5.4). As this thesis will argue, queer intersectionalities of Antigypsyism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of social oppression planted within the fabric of dominant normativities — white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy — play a pivotal role in shaping the lives of Romani LGBTIQ people within both non-Romani and Romani communities. Indeed, they are essential to understanding the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people.

During the process of data collection in 2015 and 2016, the participants repeatedly mentioned their lifelong experiences of anti-Romani prejudice and attitudes expressed by non-Roma: LGBTIQ and non-LGBTIQ alike. Antigypsyism emerged as a key part of the data, and thus the first section of the analysis looks at how some Romani LGBTIQ people experience Antigypsyism. Notwithstanding the importance of queer intersectionalities, Antigypsyism appeared to occupy a *pre-eminent* place in the lived experiences of the Romani LGBTIQ people who participated in this research. This augments our understanding of queer intersectionalities: when interrogating Romani LGBTIQ people’s lived experiences of queer intersectionalities, Antigypsyism comes out as prominent, often overshadowing other forms of oppression and impacting on the lives of some Romani LGBTIQ people in ways that may feel more pronounced.

Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of anti-Romani sentiments and expressions of Antigypsyism within mainstream non-Romani LGBTIQ communities came up frequently during the process of data collection. In 2016, I observed one panel session during the second annual Roma LGBT conference. This panel brought together eleven Romani LGBTIQ people. During one part of the panel session, the participants talked about their experiences of being discriminated against as Romani LGBTIQ people by non-Romani LGBTIQ individuals. Most of the participants agreed that in their experience, it was easier to hide their sexuality than their ethnicity. A number of participants discussed their experience of not having been let into a gay club in 2014. I was at the scene of the actual incident at that time. The Romani LGBTIQ people were asked by the club manager to produce club cards — which none of us had because they did not exist — in order to be let in. However, the club did not ask non-Romani guests — including myself — to produce a club card. Subsequently, another Romani gay man and I intervened, informing the club manager that he was engaging in illegal behaviour amounting to ethnic discrimination in provision of services by not allowing a group of people in on the grounds of ethnicity. During the session which I observed in 2016, one of the Romani LGBTIQ people who had experienced the incident in 2014 expressed his opinion as follows:

I found the club manager's behaviour discriminatory and unacceptable. However, as a Roma person, I have become used to not being let into gay clubs, as well as other expressions of Antigypsyism by non-Romani gays (Lada).

This racist incident, specifically aimed at Romani LGBTIQ people, was then used creatively as the basis for a play, for which several of the Romani LGBTIQ people who had not been let into the club wrote the screenplay. Following the session in 2016, the play was performed by the Romani LGBTIQ protagonists. The performance was open to the public. After the performance ended, members of the audience were asked to step in and change the main

protagonist's actions which could have hypothetically changed the gay club management's conduct. A number of spectators gave it a try: the first person was a non-Romani woman who believed that providing a list of guests would have altered the club manager's behaviour. The second person, a non-Romani man, opined that because all the Romani LGBTIQ people who had not been let into the club had a dark complexion, they should have pretended to be Spanish. In his opinion, the Romani LGBTIQ people could have 'passed' as/for Spanish, thus avoiding the anti-Romani behaviour by the club manager (passing is explored more in detail in Section 6.2; the theoretical underpinnings of passing are discussed in Section 3.3.3). The third person was a Romani man who suggested that the Romani LGBTIQ people should have called the Commercial Inspectorate and/or the police because private entrepreneurs have a duty to display the conditions under which they let guests into the club. According to him, failure to do so cannot justify not letting a group of Roma in. In the discussion that followed between members of the audience and the actors, some of the Romani people, including LGBTIQ, expressed discomfort at the idea of having to pretend they were Spanish. One non-Romani woman who participated in the discussion introduced her intervention by saying that she lived in the area and had a good experience of interacting with African Americans but not Roma. Therefore, she was of the opinion that not letting the Romani LGBTIQ people inside the gay club was not an act of racism since the club may have had a bad experience of having Romani guests in the past and that is why they decided not to let Roma in. She was challenged by other members of the audience — Roma and non-Roma alike — who believed that the fact that she said she was not racist towards African Americans did not mean that she did not have racist prejudice towards Roma. They went on to claim that both the club manager's actions and her condoning such practices were examples of prejudicial conduct by non-Roma towards people whom they perceive to be Roma whereby a whole group of people perceived as such is assigned a

negative group identity on the grounds of allegedly displaying similar physiognomic, behavioural or other traits: Antigypsyism.

According to Crenshaw, 'women of color experience racism in ways not always the same as those experienced by men of color' (Crenshaw 1991, 1252), resulting in 'dominant conceptions of antiracism and feminism [being] limited' (Crenshaw, *ibid*). Some scholars argue that ethnicity/race, raciality (Kuntsman and Mikaye 2008) — and by extension racism and Antigypsyism — have been submerged and silenced within queerness when in fact they should always be interrogated together (Kuntsman and Mikaye 2008). Others have taken this claim further, arguing that certain gay white men may benefit from oppressive mechanisms in societies that depend upon white-normativity, heteronormativity and patriarchy (Nast 2002). The incident from 2014, as well as the responses by some of the non-Romani members of the audience at the re-enactment of the incident in 2016 were clear indications and reminders that Romani LGBTIQ people experience and have to deal with Antigypsyism frequently and in a variety of settings and environments, LGBTIQ and heteronormative alike, and in very specific ways that are not always accounted for by dominant LGBTIQ discourses. As this chapter will proceed to demonstrate shortly, experiences of Antigypsyism as a result of wholesale negative Romani identity valuation and the attendant social stigmatisation play a pivotal role in some Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities.

Other Romani LGBTIQ respondents who participated in interviews and focus groups in the course of the fieldwork for this research undertaken in 2015 and 2016 also reported having experienced anti-Romani prejudice from non-Romani LGBTIQ people. These repeated references to experiences of Antigypsyism from non-Romani LGBTIQ communities demonstrate that Romani LGBTIQ people experience anti-Romani racism even in spaces

and environments that Romani LGBTIQ people may have initially expected to be inclusive and accepting as illustrated by the two following quotes from an interview and a focus group, respectively:

For example, the website, Grindr, you go on the site and there, French people say 'ah, it's a Gypsy and he's gay, disgusting' you know (Constantin).

My LGBT friends say: 'we like you, you're not shy, you're not ashamed that you are Roma'. And I ask: 'Should I be ashamed because I'm Roma?' But they thought that Roma must be ashamed of this ethnic origin (Ana).

In the first narrative by Constantin, gay users of the dating application are said to have associated Romani ethnic identity with feelings of disgust, effectively indicating that they were excluding Romani gays as potential dates and/or sex partners due to their ethnic identity. In the second quote, Ana, points to the notion that Romani identity is understood as a stigmatising negative group identity by some non-Romani LGBTIQ people. In the eyes of a non-Romani person who values Romani ethnic identity negatively, a Romani person should to be ashamed of being Roma and it was perhaps surprising to the LGBTIQ acquaintances of Ana's that she was not ashamed. Both quotes convey negative attitudes by the non-Romani LGBTIQ people at issue towards Romani ethnic identity and towards Roma as a whole ethnic group. The notion of there being a variety of non-Romani settings and environments, including LGBTIQ ones, in which Romani LGBTIQ people have to navigate different manifestations and expressions of racism towards Roma means that the contextual dimension of social — and geographical settings, as Chapters 6 and 7 will show in relation to 'the closet', passing and queer non-belonging, respectively — is crucial to Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences.

The above experiences also indicate that while Romani LGBTIQ people experience Antigypsyism in mainstream LGBTIQ settings, they may also experience this specific form of racism aimed at Romani people irrespective of non-heteronormative sexuality, gender and gender identity. Antigypsyism may therefore impact on the lives of Romani LGBTIQ people independently of homophobia, transphobia, and other systems of social oppression. The above narratives have shown that some Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of Antigypsyism are such that they may eclipse their experiences of other oppressions. This means that Romani LGBTIQ people may experience Antigypsyism in ways which are very similar to the experiences of Antigypsyism by Romani non-LGBTIQ people, as evidenced through research on Antigypsyism (Van Baar 2010, 2011, 2014; Ljubic et al. 2012; Vrabiescu 2014, Agarin 2014, McGarry 2010, 2013, 2017). Because of its widespread, deep-rooted nature, many respondents said they experienced Antigypsyism as *the* main form of social oppression. For them, Antigypsyism defined their lives in a manner that was more acute, immediate, tangible than other forms of social oppression, as illustrated by the following quote from an interview:

We now live in A and I grew up in B, where I experienced all of this [transitioning], so as a couple we don't really meet with people whom I used to know before transitioning. But I certainly meet with people on my own, whom I used to know as a child, and paradoxically, they are more shocked by me living with a Romani woman than by the fact that I've undergone transition or how I look. They are more in shock because of her than because of me. I see that [being Roma] is still something new for me. Suddenly I'm not having to fight for myself or the relationship but purely for [my girlfriend] and in a way, for my dad, too. [People] regard homosexuality as something better and with a more positive outlook, or they don't see it as such a big issue as opposed to Romani identity. And the kind of questions [I get] because she's Romani, whether I have to support her financially, whether she works at all. [E]ven though I carry what I believe to be a typical Romani surname, or perhaps it's not

visible that I am Roma, or I don't present myself that way, or maybe I don't have a thick accent. I don't know... [Until I met my girlfriend,] I'd simply never been discriminated against based on my Romani identity, I'd never experienced being told by someone that something isn't possible because I'm Roma but because I'm trans (Dominik).

One of the things that is worth noticing about Dominik's narrative is the juxtaposition of non-heteronormative gender and sexual identity (i.e. transgender and gay/lesbian) and Romani ethnic identity. Dominik juxtaposes his experience of being accepted as a trans man by his non-Romani friends and acquaintances to his experience of being condemned by the very same people for going out with a Romani woman. Additionally, he dwells on the comparison between what he considers to be a more favourable public perception of non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities on the one hand, and, on the other, the widespread 'hatred of Roma'. According to Dominik, in the central European country in which he lives, societal attitudes to non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities have improved; as a result, being LGBTIQ is seen with a more positive outlook than Romani identity. Dominik's narrative indicates the presence of some problems around his being trans which have not gone away; however, in his mind, these problems have been overtaken by issues relating to Romani ethnic identity. This means that although both Romani and gay/lesbian identities have been historically stigmatised and stigmatising, Dominik believes that in this day and age, it has become less stigmatising and often socially more acceptable to be an LGBTIQ person. However, being a Roma is still much more stigmatising and often not accepted.

Another important aspect of the quote related to Romani ethnicity is Dominik's reference to the notion of evolving identity and of his recently acquired, heightened sense of his own Romani identity. Prior to starting the relationship with his Romani girlfriend, he had not self-identified or, indeed, had not been identified by others as Roma. Dominik now experiences

his Romani ethnic identity in a more immediate way through his Romani girlfriend and through the relationship with her. His sense of what being Romani means is informed by his new experiences, including by those of Antigypsyism that he and his girlfriend have experienced together. This change in Dominik's perception of his Romani identity is also demonstrated in the following observation made by his girlfriend in an interview:

As a Romani woman, I experienced my classmates at primary school wanting to pour bleach over me and all manner of other things. And today, [gestures inverted commas with her index fingers] 'thanks' to me, my boyfriend is undergoing exactly the same. For instance, the last time something happened, a driver almost hit us with his car at the crossroads. That was our last experience. All of a sudden, he is starting to see it. He also said that he simply either didn't want to admit it or he wasn't aware of it but now, with me, he's experiencing all of these things with me (Jolana).

This narrative captures the essence of how Jolana experiences the primary manifestations of Antigypsyism as a Romani person: through being ethnically highly visibilised, that is through her ethnic *hyper-visibility*, with specific reference made by non-Roma to the colour of her skin. In Jolana's experience, her non-Romani classmates at primary school deemed her skin to be black and/or too dark; consequently, they wanted to whiten it with bleach. Now that Dominik has been associated with Jolana and is perceived as a Roma, he is exposed to similar expressions of Antigypsyism. As a result, he experiences Antigypsyism in a similar way. According to Dominik, the notion that he transitioned from female to male seems to be less of an issue for Dominik's friends and acquaintances. Nonetheless, according to Dominik, his ethnic identity, now associated with his Romani girlfriend's ethnicity, has become a problem for his non-Romani friends and acquaintances. Thus, Antigypsyism has become a more immediate priority for him: at this point in time, Dominik's experiences of Antigypsyism have come to eclipse his experiences of transphobia. Even

though both of them have to navigate very specific queer intersectionalities as a Romani trans man and a Romani woman who are in a non-heteronormative queer, albeit straight relationship, it is still important to take into account the overarching experiences of Antigypsyism that define their lives.

Experiences of Antigypsyism also define the lives of other Romani LGBTIQ people. This seems to be the case especially for those who experience ethnic hyper-visibility as Roma due to non-Romani people's centuries-long association of certain physiognomic features with being Roma, and who are simultaneously stigmatised because of non-Roma's stereotypical association of Romani ethnic identity with particular lifestyles, due to which non-Roma have either romanticised or vilified Roma (as discussed in Section 1.2). Given the widespread blanket negative social valuation of Romani ethnicity by non-Roma, in practical terms this means that Roma who are ethnically hyper visible cannot hide their Romani identity: they cannot pass. The following quote conveys a similar sentiment in terms of how the Romani person at issue has experienced Antigypsyism and the role that his ethnic hyper-visibility linked to the pronounced negative social valuation of Romani ethnic identity has played in anti-Romani prejudice held and displayed by non-Roma towards him:

In school, the colleagues or the people never say my name. They say Tzigan. They call me Tzigan, Gypsy. And there was 'crow', it's a bad word. Crow, it's black. It's insulting. Or they also called me Negrut, black. That was the good way. Because they were friends close to me, because I was only a little bit darker than them, that's why. [B]ut it was not discrimination because it was like something good but the others they were racist, calling me crow, or Tzigan (Constantin).

The above excerpt from an interview with Constantin depicts two different situations. In each of them, Antigypsyism experienced by him in the school setting gets normalised

whereby the hyper-visibility of his 'blackness' would be regularly called upon as 'abnormal' (i.e. against whiteness as a norm: white-normativity). This is done both in a friendly and hostile manner by others referring to him as 'negrut/black' in the former case, and as 'crow' in the latter. Having experienced such scales of Antigypsyism, Constantin can tell the difference between 'good' and 'bad' Antigypsyism. In Constantin's case, too, it is the non-white colour of his skin that marks him out and defines him as a black *other*, a 'Gypsy without a name'. This behaviour and linguistic verbalisation consolidate the normalisation of Antigypsyism as an acceptable form of conduct in society, reaffirming the dominance of white-normativity and calling into being — interpellating (Althusser 1971; Butler 1997) — the 'subordinated' Romani subject who has been thus racialised/ethnicised.

The issue of the hyper-visibility of specific physiognomic features associated with Romani ethnic identity as the basis for identifying who is or is not Roma also comes up in the following quote from an interview. Kerrtu talks about her experience of being easily identifiable as a Romani woman due to the dark colour of her hair.

[W]hen we went to the [gay] bars I was always hiding, so we ran in and out from there. At that time in [name of city], there was not so much black hair people and I had long hair also, people were always asking where I come from. I couldn't be invisible. Nowadays it's not the same as it was in that time: now we do have more different kind of colours in population, ethnic groups. I never ever talked with my sisters and brothers that I go there. Even today, it's not so easy to talk with my sisters. Basically, it was and still is a kind of taboo (Kerrtu).

Kerrtu refers to her experience of going to gay bars as 'always hiding'; she 'ran in and out of there' because she 'couldn't be invisible' due to her ethnic hyper-visibility. Here, her hyper-visibility may refer to the dynamics of ethnic hyper-visibility in relation to anti-Romani attitudes. Due to her 'black hair', as Kerrtu puts it, which stood out in a predominantly white

north European country, Kerrtu was anxious that within such a small group, she could be easily identified as Roma by non-Roma (who could potentially associate Kerrtu with a negative group identity) and Roma. Her ethnic hyper-visibility precluded her from blending in as *ordinary* at the gay bar (for a discussion on theoretical underpinnings of ordinariness, see Chapter 3). Additionally, Kerrtu's queer visibility in relation to her sexuality, which, according to her, is still seen as a taboo in her Romani family and in the Romani community, was exacerbated by her association with the gay setting. Kerrtu refers to her hyper-visibility in connection with her anxiety about being identified by other Roma, hence her fear of being outed as a Romani lesbian due to her association with the gay setting. Here, Kerrtu's fear of a possible expression of Antigypsyism in response to her ethnicity intersects with her fear of a homophobic response to her sexuality.

This section has argued that in order to understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, it is important to look first at the lived experiences of Antigypsyism, which is a key aspect of the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, but it is not the only one. Romani ethnic identity is perceived by non-Roma as a negative group identity: as a result, it has become stigmatised/stigmatising. Often, Romani LGBTIQ people are associated with Romani ethnicity through their ethnic hyper-visibility. Some Romani LGBTIQ people experience Antigypsyism as such a key hegemonic oppression that it eclipses their experiences of other oppressions and their intersections; other Romani LGBTIQ people who experience Antigypsyism intersectionally. As proposed in Section 3.7, in order to understand the full gamut of the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, it is critical to employ queer intersectionalities when theorising Romani identities and identifications framed by the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. That is why the following section will examine how Antigypsyism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of oppression — or manifestations of normative asymmetrical hegemonic power relations

– impact on the lived experiences of LGBTIQ Romani people by interacting, intersecting with and transforming each other.

5.2 Living intersectionally: how Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities create specificity

The previous section has demonstrated how Antigypsyism may impact on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people in a pre-eminent way. Underpinned by theoretical discussions on intersectionality in Sections 2.9, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7, this section considers the intersectional specificity Romani LGBTIQ people experience as both Romani and LGBTIQ facing hegemonic oppressions such as Antigypsyism, homophobia, and/or transphobia at the intersection of ethnicity/race, sexuality, sex/gender and gender identity. It attempts to describe Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences, which arises as a direct result of these specific queer intersectionalities.

As Arpad illustrates in the following quote from a focus group:

I feel the fact that I'm Gypsy, or Roma and gay has negative impact mostly in my private life. [T]he biggest part was for me in the two things together, to put all the information that I got in my 28 years in the right place, like prejudices from both sides. First, for my Roma identity at school, from my classmates, for example, what I got, how to handle it; and then about my gayness. When I came out, my Gadzo friend told me 'it's ok but you aren't being fucked at least? What would your father say?' He freaked me out with this. Now, after I put all the information to the right place, all the comments from the kids at school, and when my father who's Roma called gay people 'faggot' regularly, you reach the level of pride and you start to feel inner peace (Arpad).

Arpad's narrative details the anti-Romani and homophobic abuse that he was subjected to because of his Romani ethnic identity intersecting with his sexuality, thus creating a queer intersectional specificity. Arpad also elaborates on the negative impact this intersectional abuse has had on his sense of his own identity. As a result of both his ethnic and sexual — or queer — identities being stigmatised, Arpad has been grappling with the attendant intersectional stigmatisation. This echoes the theoretical discussions in Section 3.2 in relation to ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities being distinct identities that cannot be equated. At the same time, Arpad's narrative about the struggle to overcome intersectional stigmatisation linked to his ethnic and sexual identities helps to develop queer intersectionalities as it demonstrates that indeed, the distinct processes of oppression, exclusion and stigmatisation associated with ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities have some important parallels that come to intersect with each other.

The intersection of ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities also impacts on the specificity of queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani lesbian women as discussed by Ana in the following quote from an interview.

I had to come out as Roma because I'm light skinned and I lived outside of the [Romani] settlement. Then I had to come out as a lesbian. Roma lesbian and LGBT people have a big issue with how to identify themselves from early childhood until their older age. All the time, we question our identity. There is a clear gender difference between the position of women and men in the Roma community. [I]t is easier to be Roma gay than Roma lesbian because there's specific roles for women. If she's lesbian, she also must behave as a Roma woman: stay at home. Freedom [to move] is not something that she got, she's not educated, she'll be stuck in her house in the Roma community. It is so much harder to find partner if you're Roma lesbian in the settlement. The testimonies of those women show life of solitude, loneliness. They don't want to have a partner in the Roma community. [Not wanting a Romani

partner] applies also to Roma gays because everyone will know. [But] men can do whatever they want, they can go outside, they can go somewhere, even in the park and they will find another [non-Romani] guy. But it is so hard to be Roma lesbian woman. Some Romani lesbian women are forced to marry. They didn't have right to react; they had to be married. Violence against women is present; it's not a 'Roma thing' but it exists in Roma communities as well. [I]f they're lesbians, they were beaten up because of sexual identity. Because of invisibility of lesbian Romani women, it's obvious that they live their lives [as] hidden lives. They don't want to show themselves as lesbians and therefore gay men are more visible. [T]his is a male world and it is like in the majority [and] in the Roma community, it's no different. It is easier to be a gay man because of power. (...) We [lesbians and gays] are not the same, we don't have the same experiences. I can't define myself as a gay woman: I'm not gay. That is why I don't use 'gay woman'. I'm first of all radical feminist. We have such a different life actually because gay men have privilege. (...) [B]eing lesbian or gay doesn't mean that gender roles in your community don't apply any more. They apply, plus you have something more: a [label] that you're different because of sexual orientation (Ana).

Here, Ana talks about the specific queer intersectionalities she experienced as a Romani lesbian woman. She also refers to the experiences of other Romani lesbian women that she interviewed. Ana is very sensitive to the gender disadvantage that lesbian women, including Romani ones, are subjected to under patriarchy, in this 'male world'. In order not to perpetuate these asymmetrical hegemonic power relations also within language, she is most careful not to use the expression 'gay women' when referring to lesbian women who, unlike gay men, are underprivileged by nature of being sexed and gendered as women. Ana discusses the specificity of Romani women's gender role within particular Southeastern European Romani communities, which may restrict some Romani women with respect to education and/or professional career. In Ana's opinion, irrespective of whether or not the Romani woman fulfils the heteronormative societal norm in terms of her sexuality, her sex/gender determines society's expectation of her. She is expected to be confined to the

household, to be 'invisible' and to exercise her freedom to an extent decided by men. If she is perceived to trespass the patriarchal social norm and the heteronormative sexual convention, confinement to the household or other means of social control such as forced/arranged marriage may be used. Echoing the theoretical discussion on (in)visibilities in Section 3.3, this means that the importance of (in)visibilities is key to the queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani lesbian women. Romani lesbian women's existence becomes invisible, coded, or implicit rather than explicit, hidden and/or not quite visible. The invisibilising effect of these specific queer intersectionalities on Romani lesbian women is a complete lack of opportunity to find a female partner, lack of freedom to act upon lesbian sexuality, and increased social isolation. In this account of Romani lesbian women's queer intersectionalities, it is sex/gender (i.e. womanhood/being female), as well as invisibility, which determine the different treatment Romani (lesbian) women are afforded, resulting in Romani lesbian women's lived experiences being distinct from those of Romani (gay) men.

Ana's reference to instances of forced/arranged marriage, which is employed to limit the lesbian woman's visibility and to avoid potential social or physical contact with another woman, echoes a similar narrative by a Romani gay man. In the following quote from participant observation, Antonio talks about his experience of having been married by his parents:

I'm [in my late thirties], I have two children, my son is 21 and my daughter is 20. I have two grandchildren. I was very young when I was married because my family was traditional. They know from their parents and then it goes to the next level in the next generation. That was normally for my family. But the problem was the time, I was going to school and I was with other non-Roma. It was very difficult for me to live this life that my parents wanted to give me. I know it's very important to know who you are. Because in my situation, my family gives me a different identity, the identity from a husband, from a father, traditional Roma man.

That's good, ok, but that is not my identity. My identity, I'm a gay man, I want to live a gay life with my husband and normal life but only in the relationship with my husband and with my child. That was my way (Antonio).

Forced/arranged marriage is a global phenomenon that affects (trans) women and (trans) men from both non-Romani and Romani communities (Oprea 2004, Kóczé 2009, Bošnjak and Acton 2013). Antonio's account adds to the previous testimony by Ana in that it further complicates the role that gender plays under heteronormativity and patriarchy. Not only does Antonio's narrative show that gay men, too, can be underprivileged by nature of being exposed to forced/arranged marriage. It also demonstrates that conservatism in close-knit, insular families and communities often serves to preserve heteronormativity and patriarchy most often associated with opposite-sex marriage. It has an adverse impact particularly on women and non-heteronormative family and community members, thus resulting in specific queer intersectionalities experienced not only by women, including non-heteronormative ones, but by some gay men, too. What Ana's, as well as the other testimonies have helped to demonstrate thus far is that Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities may be understood as effects of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations. Romani LGBTIQ people are in a constant dialogue with these external discursive practices of the social world; in turn, these discursive practices come to impact on the identifications and/or disidentifications Romani LGBTIQ people may make.

Sex/gender and gender identity may also intersect with ethnicity/race in additional ways, creating very specific, racialised dynamics. In the following quote from an interview, Markus talks about his experiences as a Romani trans man.

I had to pick up a paper from my old school, I needed it for my next final test because I needed a signed copy, so I went there and said: 'Hey, I need this' and the woman behind

the desk looked at me from the foot to the head and said: 'What do you want?' I said: 'I called several times. I need this paper otherwise I can't do my exam.' 'Out of here, I'm not doing anything for you.' I didn't understand at all, she totally freaked out, she said she will call the cops if I'm not leaving the building. It was super racist. I didn't understand it and then I met [a] friend of mine. They said to me 'yeah, well, it's easy honey, you are a trans guy but you are not a white trans guy. So, you are from the eroticised, fetishised southlandic person to the bad guy with a lot of hair and dark huge eyebrows and maybe a terrorist, so they are afraid of you'. It's so obvious that I didn't come up with the idea, I was like 'what was it?' and then 'oh yeah, that it is' (Markus).

In the above narrative, the specific intersection of Markus's ethnicity/race and sex/gender identity in conjunction with his non-white ethnic hyper-visibility (i.e. physiognomic features) and gendered masculine demeanour were said to have been perceived by the female admin officer as potentially threatening or aggressive. Here, Markus's experience develops queer intersectionalities by showing that as a person who is perceived as a non-white cis man, his sex/gender has been ethnicised/racialised differently to his previous experiences as a person who used to be perceived as a non-white cis woman. The end result of this different racialisation was unfavourable, discriminatory treatment that put him as a non-white man at a bigger disadvantage than a non-white woman. In the white-normative environment described by Markus, his ethnicity, sex/gender and gender identity intersected in a very specific, ethnicised/racialised way, thus creating a queer intersectional specificity.

Based on the above evidence, it can be argued that Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations and the attendant specific queer intersectionalities are crucial to Romani queer (non-normative) identities. They significantly impact on the identifications and disidentifications Romani LGBTIQ people make. This echoes the theoretical discussion in Sections 3.6 and 3.7 about the contested relationship

between intersectionality and queer assemblages, which concerns Puar's (2007, 2012) critique of intersectionality in particular. Having taken into account Crenshaw's (1991) original caution against understanding intersectionality as a new theory of identity (contrary to Puar's claim that intersectionality represents *a model of identity!*), I proposed to queer intersectionalities. The data in this chapter shows that operationalising the proposition to employ queer intersectionalities as a middle ground between intersectionality and queer assemblages (Section 3.7) contextualises the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, thus making it possible to account for the fluidity of Romani identities and identifications while also being able to investigate factors relating to asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that play a key part in forming the specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people within social normativities.

This section has explored Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences at the intersection of ethnicity/race, sex/gender, sexuality, and gender identity. Intersectional abuse results in intersectional stigmatisation, making the ethnic and sexual/gender identities of Romani LGBTIQ people both stigmatised and stigmatising. Romani women's existence, including lesbian existence, is governed by the hegemonic forces of patriarchy and heteronormativity, making Romani lesbian existence invisible, and putting Romani women, including non-heteronormative ones, at a disadvantage as opposed to Romani men, including gay ones. However, some Romani gay men's queer intersectionalities are impacted by the dominant script of heteronormativity and patriarchy in intersectional but diverse ways, particularly when it comes to forms of social control such as forced/arranged marriage. Therefore, gender plays a key role, including in the experiences of cis-passing Romani trans men whose masculinity may get racialised/ethnicised and gendered in white-normative environments very differently compared to their pre-transition experiences. Combined with experiences of Antigypsyism discussed in Section 5.1, these queer intersectionalities

produce a unique specificity for Romani LGBTIQ people, and thus fundamentally inform and shape Romani LGBTIQ people's queer (non-normative) identities and identifications.

The following two sections will consider two key aspects of how Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectionalities: through family, and through community. They will examine the importance of family and community to the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, especially as some of the principal ways that queer intersectionalities are often understood are around and through relationships with families and communities.

5.3 Relational queer intersectionalities: family

The previous two sections of this chapter examined Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of Antigypsyism, as well as the specific queer intersectionalities Romani LGBTIQ people face both as Romani and LGBTIQ. They also started to consider ways in which gender and (in)visibilities interweave through Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences. This section will attempt to depict ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences are shaped through the family and how family relationships play out in relation to the specific queer intersectionalities that Romani LGBTIQ people navigate.

During the data collection process, those participants who had families repeatedly mentioned family as a key social safety net that they depended upon, at times entirely. Yet, within the dominant heteronormative social fabric, families reproduce and impose the workings of heteronormativity and patriarchy on Romani LGBTIQ people. The following quote by Antonio from participant observation and the quote from an interview with Ana expand on the idea of Romani LGBTIQ people's dependency on their families, including for livelihood, economic resources, safety, and protection from Antigypsyism:

And the problem is when you live in this Roma system, you don't have much more possibility to go out of this life because when you go out of your family, you don't have nothing anywhere to rescue you. That's very important that young people know that and we must everyday try to live this life that we have because when you live in so difficult system, in the Roma system, it's very hard to find the right way in the other system from the Gadge, the non-Romas (Antonio).

[O]ne of the main problems is that those people are really poor economically and they need economic empowerment. They need — I don't know — small businesses but in the way that they need some kind of independency because they depend on other people a lot and because of that they live their lives in fear because they depend on their parents or if they're in marriages or from social welfare and they cannot be what they are because of it. And [they need] security, they don't feel secure in this world. Even in the settlement or out of the settlement. [T]hey don't have money, they need money; they don't have clothes, they don't have information or even passports. Roma community is really in a bad situation but Roma LGBT are in deep shit. It's something being LGBT Roma community makes you totally vulnerable to everything (Ana).

Antonio discusses the vulnerability of Romani LGBTIQ people in relation to and within both the Romani and non-Romani social 'systems'. They may have to leave the heteronormative Romani family structure, which may not be compatible with what Romani LGBTIQ people may need, including a neutral environment in which Romani LGBTIQ people can realise their sexuality and gender identity. Romani may also be made to leave as a punishment for being LGBTIQ. Leaving and/or having to leave the Romani family may come at the expense of being left to their own devices, being alone in a society that may be unknown to them and/or having no-one and nothing to help or rescue them, especially if things go wrong (for instance in a situation of material deprivation such as unemployment, homelessness, dire straits). Ana makes a very important point about the economic and material precariousness

and extreme social and personal vulnerability of many Romani LGBTIQ people's lives in some of the Romani families and/or communities in the Southeastern European country where she lives. All of these factors — but acceptance/rejection, inclusion/exclusion, and the attendant vulnerability in particular — result in Romani LGBTIQ people's feelings of safety and security — or lack thereof — in their respective environments (see Chapter 3). In this case, according to Ana, it is lack of safety and security that many Romani LGBTIQ people feel. In the previous section, Ana elaborated on the reasons why Romani LGBTIQ people — and Romani lesbians in particular — feel a lack of safety and security. Experiences of abuse and/or violence, and/or likely threats of both physical and verbal intersectional abuse (i.e. anti-Romani, sexist and homophobic/transphobic) impact, in turn, on Romani LGBTIQ people's (in)visibilities. This confluence of factors accounts for the specific queer intersectionalities facing Romani LGBTIQ people, which have not only a relational, but also a material dimension.

Family relationships and dynamics therefore play a crucial role in shaping Romani LGBTIQ people's ability — or lack thereof — to negotiate queer intersectionalities, and in informing Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences. It is through Romani LGBTIQ people's relational experiences with nuclear and extended families that Romani LGBTIQ people made sense of ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities, as Veronika discusses in the following quote from an interview:

Mum is Czech and dad is Romani. This actually made me see [my ethnicity] as a taboo and I didn't know how to handle it. [W]ith our dad, we didn't know that back then, but there was domestic violence, so I kind of understood that it wasn't entirely kosher, but when you're growing up in it, it really becomes normal. Now I'm grateful that they got divorced. I tried to reconnect with him. Mum took it really badly, as a betrayal. Initially I lied to her when I went to see him, my aunt or cousin. For the past three years or so, this has changed, so regarding

the issue of identity, I speak with her about these issues and she simply started to respect that my opinion is different. When I was born, mum was 18 and all of her family left her. She was stigmatised in that town, so everything they had predicted happened, as it were: that it wouldn't work out, that there would be alcoholism and that he wouldn't look after us, that he wouldn't be working. Since mum doesn't come from an intellectual family, she took it very [hard]: she fell in love, she got hurt by that love plus she wasn't happy in that relationship because he was cheating on her, didn't look after us, beat her terribly and she was terrified at the thought of her or us not surviving it. So it is understandable that afterwards, she simply didn't want to hear about any 'Gypsies' ever again. Mum didn't see us [as Roma], we were hers only, which is bizarre, isn't it? So my coming out at 17 was a bit of a surprise for my mum, she turned it against herself: [n]o man was around, meaning that she didn't give us a happy childhood and teenage years. [S]he also entertained the thought that it has to be related to 'bad blood, the Romani blood,' that it is some sort of a 'stray, degenerative gene'. Mum knows about my relationship with [my girlfriend], that it's not serious. About a month ago, I asked if Ingrid could come and visit, and she said: 'Of course, and she's Romani, right?'. Mum was quiet but I felt she agreed, that it was a kind of unproblematic silence (Veronika).

In the above narrative, Veronika's mother associated the 'bad Romani gene' with Veronika's non-heteronormative sexuality. Veronika's account of the intersectional stigmatisation of her ethnic and queer identities is reminiscent of Arpad's account of queer intersectional stigmatisation from the previous section. As Veronika's account has shown, the processes of oppression, exclusion and stigmatisation have some parallels: that is the queer intersectional stigmatisation of her ethnicity and sexuality based on Veronika's mother believing there is a link between 'bad Romani blood' and lesbianism. This helps to develop our understanding of queer intersectionalities as it shows that the queer intersectional stigmatisation that some Romani LGBTIQ people experience due to negative social valuation of non-normative ethnic and sexual identities and identifications plays a key role.

Another perspective on the stigmatisation of non-heteronormative sexuality, which is underpinned by the theoretical discussion with respect to sexual and ethnic difference in Chapter 3, is offered by Dominik. In the following quote from an interview, he discusses his Romani family's positive response to his transition:

My dad is Roma and that's why my mum was terrified because she didn't know how his side of the family would take it. They see being gay as something bad. Not everyone has it easy at home or ends up having no home after they out themselves. But they took it really well because they wanted me to be ok, healthy and happy irrespective of who I would become. This helped me tremendously, in terms of deciding to transition, this kind of family support. The Romani part of my family takes it as if I've been cured. For them, this alternative is better than me being a homosexual. At least for my grandparents and his side of the family. And actually, all over the world, the man means more than a woman, so I've been improved, or upgraded in their eyes, as it were (laughter). I don't try to talk them out of it if it's better for them this way or if they justify it to themselves like this. They treat me normally, so I accept it. My father has reached this phase where he has become so tolerant that he told me that he would not be surprised if I brought a man home and would be OK with it (Dominik).

In the above narrative, Dominik expands on the notion of lesbianism being perceived by part of his family as a stigmatised identity. However, Dominik's transition from female to male was accepted by the Romani family members; in this patriarchal world, they understood his transition to male as an 'upgrade', an 'improvement'. In some of the relatives' eyes, according to Dominik, his becoming a man who is attracted to women also meant that he was cured from lesbianism. Having his family's full acceptance and support was a *key* factor that facilitated his transition. Dominik also dwells upon his father's acceptance of his gender identity and potentially his sexuality (i.e. his father's acceptance of the possibility of Dominik being in a gay relationship). In Dominik's narrative, his gender identity, sexuality and ethnicity have intersected in a specific way. Dominik's narrative develops our

understanding of how identities and identifications come together in queer intersectionalities by demonstrating that Dominik's queer intersectional specificity has resulted in him being able to pass and being accepted as a cis-passing trans man despite the frequent assumption that intersectionalities — or queer intersectionalities for that matter — involve negative, challenging experiences of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations. Additionally, comparing Dominik's experience of transitioning with that of Markus (see Section 5.2) augments our understanding of queer intersectionalities even further: the two Romani trans men have been gendered and ethnicised/racialised differently depending on the social settings they have navigated. In Dominik's case, the Romani family saw his manhood as a privileging 'upgrade'. Nonetheless, in Markus's experience, his ethnicity/race and sex/gender intersected in a disadvantaging way: his ethnicised/racialised masculinity as a non-white man in a white-normative environment was seen as a threat.

Dominik's non-heteronormative gender identity and his transition are important also for another reason: one of his coming-outs as a trans man was made by his girlfriend. In the following quote from an interview, Jolana describes her experience of 'outing' her trans boyfriend:

Dad is a bit macho and doesn't like the idea of two men being together. When mum was still alive, she had gay friends but dad was glad because they weren't a threat. And when I started having gay friends, dad said mum had brought it into the family. But he knows he can't hold a grudge against my gay friends because they really helped me. Initially, when I told dad about Dominik being born as a girl, he was shocked. And naturally, I told him immediately: 'Now he's a man and he's been a man since childhood, it's just that he was born into the wrong body and there are so many of us'. And I say 'look, dad, I haven't chosen [my chronic illness] either, so knowing that you can really understand that it is not the person's fault, is it, that they are born this way. I apologised to him for placing an even bigger

burden on his shoulders after everything we have been through as a family. It took him about two days to digest the information. But he accepted it. And I even said to Dominik after I had told dad: 'I actually came out!' (laughter) So now I belong with the Q [queer] group (Jolana).

From Jolana's account above, it is evident that in her father's case, Dominik's gender identity as a trans man was more acceptable than being gay. Jolana's experience of being ill and the resulting embodied limitations were instrumental to her father's acceptance of Dominik's gender identity since they led to the presumption that Dominik's 'embodied limitations' were okay through the 'wrong body' discourse (Stryker 1994, Halberstam 1998) that cannot be followed through here. When considering queer intersectionalities, what Jolana's narrative says — echoing the previous narrative from Dominik — is that queer identities and identifications can often intersect in ways that enable positive experiences such as acceptance and inclusion despite the negative, problematic connotations often associated with intersectionalities. Additionally, by outing Dominik as a trans man, Jolana effectively revealed her sexuality to her father. Thus, Jolana's sexuality, which had been heteronormative until then, *became* queer, non-normative in a relational manner: through her relationship with Dominik. In a sense, both Dominik and Jolana have been in a constant, fluid process of transition (both ethnic, sexual/gender), indeed of multiple *becomings* through each other. Dominik has become Roma through Jolana; and Jolana has become queer through Dominik. Such fluid becomings of both Dominik and Jolana's ethnic, sexual and gender identities are very much attuned to Puar's (2007) notion of queer assemblages coming together and apart against the backdrop of the specific relational, material and contextual queer intersectionalities unfolding within asymmetrical hegemonic power relations of white-normativity, heteronormativity (and homonormativity, as Chapter 7 will show), cis-normativity and patriarchy.

Both Dominik and Jolana touched upon the issue of Dominik's Romani grandparents' and Jolana's father's very conservative attitudes to same-sex relationships. The same topic is explored by Kerrtu in the following quote from an interview in which she talks about her experience of her family's response to her sexuality.

[Mum] was very happy when I was together with my Roma girlfriend visiting her. She was calling me often and always asking 'how is she? She never ever turned against me. So that was kind of really funny because she was really traditional. Somehow I think my biological mum was happy that I had a Romani girlfriend and she got to know her well during years. [T]he only person who I have been able to talk about my lifestyle, my identity, is actually my sister. But the first time I really wanted to talk about that, I was already 40 something and she had problems with her husband and so on. Suddenly my way of living came into the picture and she turned it against me. The atmosphere what we have now is ok, we are friends, we are sisters, we see each other but basically I don't talk about the feeling which I have for my partner at all. She has grown up with our parents and at some point religion came to the picture, and you know what Lutheran church and other churches say about homosexuality: it's against our religion to have this kind of relationship. She was talking about those things and somehow I don't know because at the same time she's saying 'you're my sister, whatever you do, it's fine.' Somehow I can't trust her anymore (Kerrtu).

Kerrtu describes the difference between her conservative mother's acceptance of her sexuality and her religious sister's negative attitude towards 'homosexuality', as she puts it, shaped by the church. Kerrtu's mother's cultural conservatism was not an impediment to her acceptance of Kerrtu's lesbianism. However, her sister's religious conservatism seems to have echoed some of the way in which conservatism works to preserve heteronormativity and patriarchy, including through opposite-sex marriage discussed in the previous section in relation to Antonio's experiences of being married by his parents. Thus, within her Romani family, Kerrtu has experienced lack of acceptance from her sister and acceptance from her

mother. Kerrtu's experiences add to our understanding of queer intersectionalities as they show that certain types of conservatism within Romani culture can be accepting of non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities.

The issue of acceptance is also explored by Zoltan in relation to his queer hyper-visibility. In the following quote from an interview, he dwells on his experience of being hyper visible as a very effeminate gay man from a very young age.

I was born as a transsexual person. Sometimes I'm also noticed as a female, from people on the street. [F]or me being gay was a very obvious thing from the age of 5. One Christmas I asked [my parents] for a barbie doll and they bought [it for] me. They also bought me a train in the hope that maybe I will play with that. One and a half years ago I went to my family, I asked everybody to sit down in the living room and they simply knew what I wanted to tell them. My mother told me 'why didn't you tell me before?' And I told her 'because I didn't want to hurt you.' My mother replied 'I also was so scared that I will hurt you if I will tell about it because I know you are a very sensitive boy.' From my [deceased] father's side, everybody's dead unfortunately. On my mother's side, we have a very big Gypsy family. For years, they've [been] asking 'do you have a girlfriend?' and I always said 'no'. From a point they just finished the questioning, and that was obvious for everybody, what is going on. It was just like 'you're fine'. They're not very well educated and what I really think is it's easier for them to accepting someone. They are simple people in a good way. Whilst we were in the garden, my godfather asked me 'do you have a girlfriend ever?' and I just told him 'no, I won't'. And he just blinked to my eye and said in silence 'son it's ok'. So that was it. I think it's not necessary to talk about it more until I found a love I can introduce to them. Probably they will be surprised about my [masculine] type of boys but they would accept it very easily I think (Zoltan).

In the above account, Zoltan describes how, from a very young age, his parents were accepting of his non-heteronormative sexual and gender (queer) hyper-visibility. When he eventually came out as gay to his mother and sister in his mid-twenties, they accepted him. Zoltan goes on to discuss the positive, accepting response by his extended Romani family, to whom he never directly acknowledged his sexuality or gender identity. While education tends to be often cited as a key factor enabling liberal thinking with respect to non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities, Zoltan makes an interesting point about the extended family's lack of education impacting positively on their acceptance of his hyper visible queer sexuality and gender identity. The notion that lack of education is not necessarily a hindrance to acceptance of non-heteronormative queer identities — and particularly of those that are hyper visible — augments our understanding queer intersectionalities.

The issue of the hyper-visibility of some queer, non-heteronormative gender identities and sexualities is also addressed by Teresa, a Romani queer, fluidly gendered woman. In the following quote from an interview, she talks about how her family responded to her non-heteronormative hyper-visibility first when she was a child and then as a teenager:

I went to my parents and grandfather and said: 'hey, when we're going to hospital? You have to change my gender'. [chuckles] I was only five. They didn't really take it seriously because I was so small. [M]any of us we're getting a second name, like a Roma name. This is a very old tradition because we had to survive, so we had an official name for the whites. My grandmother gave me this name and the name is male. They never said e [name], 'e' is for female, they said: 'o [name]'. So all my family, I'm used to be like in a male article from the beginning. They also said: '[name] is muskaraca'. Muskaraca is like male-ish. These typical things that I hated of girls, I was really like a typical boy. But really, they took it — what was interesting — quite normal. But I think they were not so worried because they don't have any

idea of being trans, they just took me like I was. [M]y parents, they were really good with it. I want a [toy] gun and they bought me a gun. And I wanted sport shoes or boxers and high heels when we were older. It was like 'ok, [male name] is like that'. But I think they never took it really seriously before my puberty. [A]t 15 or 16, I was really really afraid that my parents find it out. This was a big fucking deal. They wanted me to get married and this was like 'wow, no way' and I was really behaving like one catastrophe. [T]hen my mother suddenly said that she wanted to speak with me. A neighbour saw me and my girlfriend kissing on the street and told my mother. She was asking me if this is true and I said: 'yes, and what if it would be true?' And she said: 'Then you're not my daughter anymore because it's nothing to do in our community and this is big shame.' And then I said: 'Ok, then I'm not your daughter any more' and I took my stuff and left. It took many years that I started to talk to them again (Teresa).

Both accounts from Zoltan and Teresa touch upon two issues: how parents may conceptualise their children's queer visibility as hyper-visibility; and how queer hyper-visibility plays out through the life course. In the above narrative, Teresa discusses her experience of being hyper visible as queer from a young age. Despite being accepted and encouraged by her family to be her boyish self as a child — something that was also reflected by her Romani nickname — Teresa believes that she was too young for her family to understand what her being queer was. Both narratives from Zoltan and Teresa signal that their parents were aware of the sexual and gender difference: Zoltan wanted to be a girl and Teresa wanted to be a boy. Within the heteronormative matrix, Zoltan and Teresa's queer visibility as children made them hyper visible. Zoltan and Teresa's queer hyper-visibility has played out differently for each of them: Zoltan's family remained accepting of his hyper visible queer identity through his teenage and adult years. In Teresa's case, her family's conservative views on lesbianism being 'un-Romani' and 'shameful' played a crucial role in Teresa's mother disowning her for a period of time. Supported by Jolana,

Constantin and Kerrtu's narratives about ethnic hyper-visibility in Section 5.1, Zoltan and Teresa's experiences of queer hyper-visibility help build our understanding of queer intersectionalities and the role hyper-visibility — whether ethnic or queer — plays in accentuating the non-white ethnic and non-heteronormative sexual/gender 'difference' of Romani LGBTIQ people vis-à-vis the white-normative and heteronormative social norms.

This section has established that queer intersectionalities are relational: they happen through and around families. As complex as family relationships can be, they add another layer of complexity to Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities: this includes acceptance, as well as rejection. The data in this section has helped to illustrate that queer intersectionalities encompass families as accepting of Romani LGBTIQ people and Romani LGBTIQ people's specific queer intersectionalities. The dimensions of sexuality and gender/gender identity may mean that some families accept their trans children's non-heteronormative sexuality and gender, but may at times reject those who are gay or lesbian. It is thanks to family inclusion and acceptance (or lack thereof) that some Romani LGBTIQ people, including those who experience queer hyper-visibility, are able to negotiate queer intersectionalities while others are not. Acceptance plays a key role in terms of whether or not Romani LGBTIQ people feel safe and secure, which, in turn, impacts on whether Romani LGBTIQ people's ability (or lack thereof) to publicly and visibly enact non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities. Having presented a variety of data from a number of different geographical regions and socio-economic environments, this section has also demonstrated that the specific queer intersectionalities facing Romani LGBTIQ people can be understood as relational, material and contextual. Romani LGBTIQ people's identities and identifications, which are fluidly formed in a permanent process of becoming, are shaped within and by the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy in a constant dialogical and discursive

way, assembling and disassembling within a variety of setting and environments, including families and communities, which are explored in the following section.

5.4 Relational queer intersectionalities: communities

This final section of this chapter looks at another relational aspect of queer intersectionalities: communities. It takes as a starting point the notion that Romani LGBTIQ people and their families are located within the broader fabric of communities, which impacts on their specific queer intersectionalities and consequently complicates their lived experiences even further. Just like in the case with families discussed in the previous section, communities are key for livelihood, survival, socio-economic and material security, as well as safety from harm, including from Antigypsyism. Yet, the function of communities is distinct in that they often tend to operate as super-structures in relations to families and individuals, exercising authority and control over the social system referred to by Antonio in Section 5.3, particularly in terms of power relations, moral and social norms. They tend to provide a safety net for individuals, groups and/or families. However, planted within the dominant heteronormative social fabric, communities often reproduce and impose the workings of patriarchy, heteronormativity and cis-normativity. As such, they can be bastions of conservatism policing identity as in the case of Romani ethnicity having been historically associated with heteronormativity (Fremlova and McGarry, forthcoming) and preserving hegemonic power relations, for instance the workings of patriarchy critiqued by Romani intersectional feminists (see Chapter 2) in relation to virginity test, forced/arranged marriages, Romani women's rights and Romani women's social and political participation (Oprea 2004; Kóczé 2009, 2011; Brooks 2012, Gelbart 2012, Schultz 2012, Jovanovic and Daróczi 2015 and others). Communities can also be a source of social control and punishment, especially in situations where individuals, families and/or groups are deemed to be in breach of social conventions and norms. In such cases, individuals, families and/or

groups of people can be ostracised and/or excommunicated as in the case of Romani LGBTIQ people (Fremlova et al. 2014, Baker 2015, Jovanovic and Daróczy 2015).

Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 2, historically, Roma have been essentialised as poor and uneducated, and this has been the case especially in relation to Romani communities that have been conflated with the 'Romani problem' (Vermeersch 2006, 182). Having been associated with being a bearer of problems as a community (Tremlett and McGarry 2013, 8,10), for some Roma, association with Romani communities can be stigmatising.

All of these relational, as well as material and contextual aspects of community dynamics therefore contribute to defining Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences. They play a crucial role in shaping Romani LGBTIQ people's ability to navigate and negotiate their specific queer intersectionalities. It is through relational experiences within communities such as acceptance and inclusion of Romani LGBTIQ people (Fremlova et al. 2014), as well as rejection and exclusion that Romani LGBTIQ people make sense of ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities, as discussed by Michael in the following quote from an interview:

[A]t the time my mum and dad separated, my mum, [who identified as pansexual], went into a relationship with a woman that involved her going back to live in a caravan. So that raised a lot of questions and a lot of conversations within the family. What was interesting of course was watching people's reactions to that, particularly men within the community because there was a kind of failure to understand almost what was going on 'cos it's like if my mum had left my dad for another man, then the men just would have gone round and beat the guy up. But because she left my dad and moved out and went to live with another woman — that as a response to that situation wasn't deemed to be an appropriate way to act. So it then raised some quite interesting discussions. [L]eaving my dad, that's quite a big statement to make and that was [almost thirty years ago], so that's a long time ago. But as I say it has

kind of affected the future course of the relationships and I'm in touch and communicate with my mum's family (Michael).

In the above narrative, Michael discusses how his family failed to understand and accept his Traveller mother's non-heteronormative identity. This 'big statement' — her breach of the heteronormative norm — was also rejected by the Traveller community, resulting in Michael's mother permanent exclusion from her family and community. At the same time, the community's rejection and subsequent exclusion saved her partner from a violent masculine retaliation.

Rejection can be temporary, as described by Ana in the following quote from an interview:

In the beginning it was hard, some of my friends who are Roma said to me that I'm crazy because I am in a relationship with a woman and what Roma community will think and say about it. But I was at that time outside the Roma community because I grew up surrounded by the majority and I don't care about it. But now, politically when I explain myself, and I speak about my identities, I say I'm lesbian. Publicly, in front of Roma communities. First, they said that there is nothing like gay or lesbian [she laughs] in the Romani community but now they act like they respect it but still I hear behind my back that they are gossiping about it (Ana).

In Ana's narrative, the context of her breaching the heteronormative norm was different to the situation of Michael's mother: there was no community for Ana to be excluded from as she had not grown up or lived within the Romani community. Ana explains that in spite of being accused of insanity and reproached for being lesbian — something that the interlocutors thought the community would deem improper, 'un-Romani', just like in Teresa's case in Section 5.3 — she did not care. According to Ana, the Romani community gradually came to accept it; or at least seemingly, or partially, because she is aware of

rumours about her. In the following narrative, Aleko expresses a similar idea in relation to his Romani community knowing he is gay. At the same time, he acknowledges that people may have an issue with him being gay.

[A] few weeks after [I came out to my parents], they went back to [a south-eastern European country] but they asked me not to say it in the community in the village. They said: 'for us, it's okay, we're gonna live with it. But we don't think the community will accept it'. In the community, many people know I'm gay. No one talk about it. It's interesting because as I told the story with the guy who [committed] suicide, when the community knew that he's gay, often you can hear people joking about him, saying: 'look, the guy who sleeps with guys'. Maybe there are rumours [about me] but I never heard, neither my parents. I think that's something to do with my social status. 'Cos more or less I'm a key person in my community, a person with knowledge. It's a small community [which] relies on its key people. [T]here's a Roma guy who's passive gay and he's well known that he's gay. [H]is daughter is a social worker and he's recognised as one of the leaders in the community. I mean now I make the link that actually the position you get in the majority society helps a lot for the perception in your own community. I had a boyfriend who comes also from a Muslim community and his sisters realised that he's gay and the question they put to him was 'are you receiver or giver?' And he said: 'I'm a giver' and that was well accepted. But if you're a receiver, it's really a problem (Aleko).

Aleko also dwells on the role of social status as a major factor impacting on community acceptance — or lack thereof — of a person who does not conform to heteronormative sexual and gender norms. In his account, this relates particularly to gay men who are perceived as 'passive receivers'; hence their gender is deemed 'female/feminine'. As discussed in Chapter 3, within patriarchy, 'female/feminine' represent a marked — hence 'lesser' — category as opposed to the unmarked — neutral — category 'male/masculine'. To explain the workings of social status, Aleko gives examples of two passive gay men their

communities considered indispensable. Their communities accepted them because of their social status as key community leaders within the Romani communities which was enhanced by their social status within non-Romani communities (that is acceptance that is contingent upon local power relations, hence hegemonic reasons). Aleko gives the example of another passive gay man who did not have a high social status: in this case, he was not accepted; instead, he was ridiculed and shamed as ‘the guy who sleeps with guys’. Aleko’s narrative augments our understanding of queer intersectionalities as it ultimately means that the nexus of local power relations, social status, ethnicity, sexuality and gender plays a key role and can be considered a *mitigating factor* in terms of whether or not Romani LGBTIQ people get accepted or rejected, at times shamed by their respective communities. A similar idea regarding some passive gay men (‘receivers’) who do not occupy a position of power being shamed, or indeed slut-shamed was expressed by Bruno in the following narrative from a focus group:

When somebody in the community is visible gay and is very effeminate, then, he’s the bitch of the community. You have a lot of married guys that go and fuck this guy. Is she discrete? [he chuckles] but all the people know. I think this one example is very clear what’s the position of the community in this thing (Bruno).

Bruno’s narrative expands on the notion that slut-shaming as a form of social control and public ridicule is in fact a form of social stigmatisation imposed on the person by the guardians of conservatism for being in breach of the heteronormative convention. This applies to any group(ing), society and/or community that insists on maintaining clear identity boundaries. As Zoltan explains in the following quote from an interview, gay shaming does not occur due to breaches of heteronormative norms only:

I think I can tell about the [name of an Eastern European country] gay community [and] the global situation. The gay feminine shaming is a living thing in the gay community. What I experienced many many times in the clubs: that the stereotypical muscle gay guys are just throwing themselves away in the club and don't give a shit about me, skinnier guys than me are coming to me and calling me like 'bitch, princess, diva' and ta-da-da. And I just told them 'ok, honey, you have no idea how big diva I can be if I wanted to'. The feminine shaming is not only in the heterosexual community, also in the gay culture and yes, I experienced it many times (Zoltan).

According to Zoltan, in the gay community that he navigates, it is his feminine gender that is the reason for the feminine gay shaming that he has experienced. Zoltan's narrative shows that in some gay circles, feminine gay men are at times perceived by the 'good', masculine and/or neutral gay men as 'bitches', sluts, i.e. those that give gay men a bad name. This echoes some of the fundamental premises of the notion of homonormativity (Duggan 2002, O'Brian 2007, Richardson 2004, 2005) discussed in Chapter 3. As a result, in the gay community, too, femininity in gay men is frowned upon and shamed, placing feminine gay men at the bottom of the gay social ladder. To escape the stigma associated with femininity in men in both heteronormative and homonormative environments, some gay men, including Romani ones, feel they have to butch up their masculinity, as expressed by Balint in the following narrative from a focus group:

I have many gay Roma friends and usually they are higher educated. When they're going home to their own community, I mean the Gypsy camp or settlement. They are kind of role models in their own community and they always say that it's better to look as a real man than like kind of feminine man because if they look as a feminine male, then they cannot be a role model of the children and a role model to the Roma settlement any more. So this is also interesting, you know, because even the community, they guess or they now that they're gay but the male has to look as a male. He has to have beard, has to have muscles and nice

clothes, stuff like this, so dressing up like queer, let's say, then you can lose your role model and your position in the Roma community (Balint).

According to Balint, some Romani communities accept gay men but this can be hindered by being considered effeminate and/or associated with femininity. The risk consists in the gay man's potential loss of his social status, which further complicates not only the workings of the local power relations/social status/ethnicity/sexuality/gender nexus as per Aleko's previous claim, but also our understanding of queer intersectionalities. Nonetheless, a person's good social status is still a source of privilege that may either engender acceptance or alleviate some of the psychological pressure associated with lack of acceptance, or persecution, as expressed by Kerrtu's in the following quote from an interview:

I had three things why some of those started to discriminate me. The one was that I [grew] up my first 7 years in children home. Second thing was that I didn't fit in the traditional Roma community because I have my active sport things, and I was also wearing trousers. And the third thing was of course the worst thing, I didn't have a husband and children. I was not acting the way they think lesbians are. And they were confused. They think if I have had a really bad childhood and bad things happened with men, that's why I turned to be a lesbian. But there's no reason in my case. Actually my childhood was not so bad and I've had very nice boyfriends also. [W]hen I was working on Romani issues, there were a couple of Roma who were so much against me that they made my life with my partner living hell. We left our home country twice to be able to live how we wanted. So it was really bad. I have not been working [on] Romani issues since I came back from abroad so I cut all [professional ties]. After that I have been accepted. My saving point in that hell was that my biological Roma family was so-called good family in this country, known and respected in Romani community. The second saving point was and still is that I have a bit darker colour on my skin, curly long black hair in that time and brown eyes. I knew my relatives and traditions. And thank God I am Roma from both sides. Small things but so important. Surely saved my life during that

decade of discrimination! I have decided only 10 years back that I am what I am and I do what I have to do and I want to do it but I don't need to care what they think about me and it took almost 20 years to come this long (Kerrtu).

In the above quote, Kerrtu details the extent of discrimination and persecution she experienced from within the Romani community as a result of her sexuality. It was her family's social status that afforded her a level of acceptance. Both Kerrtu and Aleko's cases help develop queer intersectionalities by demonstrating that it is the privilege they have enjoyed as a result of their social status that impacts positively on acceptance, also enabling their non-heteronormative queer visibility. In turn, the increased visibility has helped to validate Kerrtu's identity as a Romani lesbian woman. Identity validation as a form of acceptance was also important to Andrea. In the following quote from an interview, she explains how she initially felt her bisexual identity did not go together with her Romani identity:

[M]y Romani identity was deepening at that point and I couldn't really imagine how that would go together with a bisexual identity. I was attracted to women before I was attracted to men, so it's all still a part of my sexual being ever since I can remember. I can't tell you now what are the factors that led to me not being in a same-sex relationship but I think it was a bunch of factors. I remember just like being on my campus and thinking like I really did want to be with another woman but because I wasn't that kind of social? I wasn't gonna go to a club and so it was sort of like a complete lack of opportunity, so there was that. It just didn't come up for me for whatever reason in the same way it would have if I had actually been actively dating somebody. But I did have this strong feeling that it just wouldn't fly. Not from my mother but just from everybody else. [I]t just would not be something that I would bring up with my family members, with just anybody. I certainly didn't know really any other Roma who were in same-sex relationships. [F]ast forwarding from that to what's going on now, I mean not just [Romani LGBTIQ] pride but all the [visibility] on Facebook, I really think I have

a whole bunch of acquaintances and some friends who are Romani and definitely gay, lesbian, bisexual. It is this affirmation of just all those things: being publicly Romani, and sort of not really publicly bisexual because [of being] in a monogamous heterosexual relationship for the past seventeen years. I think this advance and having my own set of identities validated this way makes it more likely that I can be more vocal in situations that I previously would have been silent, like if I'm with a bunch of male Romani delegates and something homophobic comes up. And just riding the wave of this movement right now and also being older and more mature, I wouldn't be silent any more, I'd call them out and be like 'don't be homophobic around me, just stop' (Andrea).

In the above narrative, Andrea explains how her conflicting sense of her ethnic and sexual identities were alleviated by the recently emerged Romani LGBTIQ visibilities. The point that she makes about visibility is similar to the one made by Kerrtu. For her, too, Romani LGBTIQ visibility has been a principal factor enabling the validation of her intersecting identities as a Romani bisexual woman. This validation has enabled her to speak up and challenge homophobic language and conduct, hence undermining homophobia within the hegemonic dominance of heteronormativity and patriarchy (explored in Chapter 6).

This last section has considered how the broader fabric of communities impacts on Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities. It has demonstrated that breaching the heteronormative norm may result in permanent exclusion from the community. Conversely, while non-heteronormative sexualities may be seen as un-Romani, communities may come to accept them. The local power relations/social status/ethnicity/sexuality/gender nexus plays a major role in this respect. This relates particularly to lesbian women, who are perceived as disrupting conservative conceptions of 'womanhood' and 'femininity'; and to 'passive' gay men whose gender is seen as 'feminine'. Good social status is a privilege that

may validate Romani non-heteronormative identities by alleviating some of the strain associated with rejection and/or engendering acceptance and enhancing visibility.

Conclusion

Drawing on the Romani Studies, queer theorising and intersectionality literatures investigated in Chapters 2 and 3, the data presented in this chapter has provided evidence that there is a fundamental need for queer intersectionalities as a middle ground between intersectionality and queer assemblages to account for the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people, as well as all of those who have been left out of intersectionality and queer theoretical discourses. Having interrogated queer intersectionalities, this chapter has demonstrated ways in which applying the concept to theorising Romani identities and identifications helps attend to the non-normative, unstable, fluid nature of identities and identifications. Romani LGBTIQ people's queer, non-normative ethnic, sexual and gender identities and identifications assemble and disassemble around and through the regulatory normative effects of the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations — white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy — that form and shape them in a dialogical and discursive way and in a permanent process of becoming.

Negative social valuation of Romani ethnic identity by non-Roma lies at the centre of Antigypsyism; consequently, non-Roma, including non-Romani LGBTIQ people, often stereotypically associate Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, with stigmatising conceptions of Romani ethnic identity thought Romani ethnic hyper-visibility that marks out and precludes Roma from belonging and/or blending in as ordinary (see Sections 2.5.4 and 3.2). This chapter has demonstrated that indeed, Romani LGBTIQ people experience Antigypsyism in a variety of non-Romani settings and environments, including LGBTIQ ones; thus, Antigypsyism comes out as pre-eminent. Although Antigypsyism is a key aspect

of the lived experiences of some Romani LGBTIQ people, often overshadowing experiences of other forms of oppression, it is not the only one. Queer intersectionalities are also further developed by Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of intersectional stigmatisation of non-normative ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities due to society, community and/or family negative valuation of non-normative ethnic/racial and sexual/gender identities and identifications. Queer intersectionalities are relational: they happen through and around families and communities, and include acceptance, inclusion, rejection and exclusion. Acceptance plays a key role in terms of safety and Romani LGBTIQ people's resulting ability to enact non-heteronormative sexual and gender identities across different social settings and geographical environments. Acceptance by families and communities shows that conservatism within Romani culture can be accepting of non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities; by the same token, lack of education is not necessarily a hindrance to acceptance of non-heteronormative queer identities. In some Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of queer intersectionalities, gender/sexual and ethnic identities and identifications intersect and come together and apart in ways that can enable positive lived experiences despite the often-presumed notion that intersectionalities entail challenging experiences of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

The inequitable workings of sex/gender result in Romani (lesbian) women's lived experiences being distinct from those of Romani (gay) men. The attendant effect of these structural inequalities on Romani non-heteronormative women's queer intersectionalities is multiple invisibility under heteronormativity, cis-normativity, patriarchy, and white-normativity. However, some Romani gay men's queer intersectionalities are also impacted by the heteronormativity and patriarchy of cultural and/or religious conservatism in some insular families and communities, particularly with respect to mechanisms of social control enforcing heteronormative social paradigms. Femininity is often seen as disadvantaging in

heteronormative settings, as well as in some homonormative environments. Femininity associated with some 'passive' gay men (receivers) may sometimes result in shaming and the attendant loss of social status. Narratives of gender transitioning further our understanding of the concept of queer intersectionalities by showing how some Romani trans men who are 'read' as non-white and cis may be ethnicised/racialised and gendered differently to their pre-transition experiences, thus pointing to an important ethnic/racial dimension of gender. Queer intersectionalities are further complicated by the nexus of local power relations, ethnicity, sexuality, gender and social status; social status is a key privilege and a *mitigating factor* enabling the validation, acceptance and queer visibilities of some Romani non-heteronormative identities.

Chapter 6: (In)Visibilities in spaces between difference and sameness

Introduction

This second analysis chapter explores Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences in relation to (in)visibilities in spaces between difference and sameness. It will build on some of the theoretical considerations from Chapters 2 and 3, particularly those pertaining to marked essentialist ethnic difference at the root of the negative social valuation of Romani ethnicity and the notion of stigmatised, closeted, 'pathologised' Romani ethnic identities, and further expand on the link between 'the closet' of ethnic and queer identities. This chapter will draw upon the analytical insights from Chapter 5 in relation to Romani LGBTIQ people's specific queer intersectionalities vis-à-vis the attendant ethnic and queer (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility, within mainstream society, LGBTIQ communities, and Romani families and communities.

The chapter will first consider Romani LGBTIQ people's (in)visibilities, and the resulting ethnic and queer 'closets' as strategies responding to and protecting their 'users' from Antigypsyism, homophobia, transphobia and intersectional oppression. The chapter will then go on to explore another aspect of 'the closet', which may also be considered a separate strategy rendering its users (in)visible: ethnic and queer passing. And finally, the chapter will introduce the notion of 'strategic sameness' not only as an extension of passing, but also as a subversive queer positionality that counters and defies normativity, complicity, and assimilation.

6.1 Closet

Chapter 3 established that some caution is required when theorising ‘the closet’. As a theoretical concept, ‘the closet’ can be still regarded as a powerful tool enabling theoretical conceptualisations relating to the concealment and/or denial of homosexuality/non-heteronormative sexualities and its workings in relation to power, knowledge and maintaining and reinforcing heterosexuality/heteronormativity’s hegemony. Notwithstanding its importance, there are some problematic aspects to ‘the closet’: for instance, the expectation, or almost a requirement for people to ‘come out of the closet’ in order to be authentic and honest about who they are. This ethnocentrism seems to suggest there is/should be only one true way of liberating oneself while failing to acknowledge the geographical specificity of various different Western and non-Western queer individuals and communities (Tucker 2009, 8-13). As this chapter and Chapter 7 will show, this is relevant particularly to the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people coming from across and outside of Europe.

The previous chapter established that in the case of Romani LGBTIQ people, ethnic and queer (in)visibilities may be understood as closely associated with the ethnic and queer ‘closets’; both are directly linked to Romani LGBTIQ people’s experiences of intersectional oppression and stigmatisation of ethnic/racial and queer identities. ‘The ethnic closet’ and ‘the queer closet’ can be seen as shields, or notional spaces between difference and sameness protecting Romani LGBTIQ people from the negative effects of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations, as well as from the negative social valuation and group identity ascription that may be — and often is — associated with Romani ethnic identity and queer sexual and gender identities. Depending on the context, one decides to ‘step in’ or to ‘step out of the closet’. In the following quote from a focus group, John elaborates on his experience of ‘the Romani closet’ and ‘the gay closet’.

My mother taught me that being Roma is something that you hide. Being Roma and being able to hide it because my family come from what used to be [a communist state], I grew up in North America and I moved to [a central European country] in the 1990s. And nobody knew that I was Roma at work. And my mother told me never to tell anybody. And for me this is very strange in [North America], in a multicultural society, everybody is happy to be Irish [north American], Italian [north American]. It's a multiple identity; I could be in the closet as a Roma, I could be in the closet as a gay person. Gradually I got to know people but it was only a few years ago that I attended a conference: Roma intellectuals who were very open-minded and LGBTIQ friendly — they weren't themselves — and this kind of made me at ease in my own skin, that I can be who I am, doesn't matter where, whether it's in another Roma setting. It took me a long time to come to this point, and for me it's a fundamental part of my identity but it took a long time for me to reconcile these two issues (John).

John's testimony echoes what Hancock (1998) described as follows: 'I know of very few [Roma] who weren't warned as children to keep their ethnicity to themselves outside of the community' (1998, 3). The generational experience of 'the ethnic closet' that John talks about makes it possible for some Roma to hide Romani identity and thus render it (in)visible. This can be understood as a survival strategy so as to avoid Antigypsyism. The protective 'closet' of John's mother not disclosing the reasons for hiding the family's ethnicity, hence making it invisible, can be seen as a strategic response to Romani ethnic identity being perceived as both stigmatised and stigmatising. It can also be understood in the sense of John's 'ability' to hide his Romani identity, and the attendant quality of being *unidentifiable* as Roma by others — or passing as non-Roma that the following section will discuss more in detail. John's account above suggests that he used 'the ethnic closet' in particular settings and environments to protect himself from being socially stigmatised by Romani ethnicity. Similarly, his experiences of navigating the area of ethnic/racial oppression seem to have informed his use of 'the queer closet' as a survival strategy, as well as a notional space protecting him from homophobia in a variety of settings, including Romani ones.

Consequently, for a duration, John's specific queer intersectionalities gave rise to 'the intersectional closet', rendering John's ethnic and sexual identities invisible until the moment the contextual settings changed. This helps to illuminate our understanding of 'the closet' in relation to the contextual and relational dimension of queer intersectionalities: identities and identifications are (re)constructed, (re)negotiated and (re)affirmed in relation to the social settings and/or physical environments one navigates. Echoing the theoretical discussions relating to 'the closet' in Chapter 3 (Tucker 2009, Baker 2015), John's narrative shows that 'the closet' is often used as a protective notional space particularly in those social settings which the user 'reads' as hostile to particular ethnic and/or queer identities that those very same social settings perceive as 'different', 'deviating' from the norm.

In the following quote from an interview, Aleko describes a similar experience of using the protection of 'the ethnic closet' and 'the queer closet'.

In school there were predominantly ethnic Bulgarians, a few Turkish people. I was the first Roma in the secondary school. I was hiding my identity until the moment one of my teachers discovered that I'm Roma: she asked me openly a question about my identity in front of the class. My classmates started to take actions against me like moving my chair all the time, making jokes about my identity, asking why I am not black and I'm white. After a month, the school decided to move my place among the girls. For the following 3.5 years, I was sitting with the girls; the only boy who sits with girls. The experience was quite OK because firstly I was more free there and I think in a sense I was less apparent for my sexuality. It was easier accepted, for example if we go for a coffee break, I would go with a group of four girls and not with the boys. After this moment there was no real reaction. I became very visible. I didn't expect that is gonna be good but it was a good thing. With the girls I was more open, in the beginning they were starting to ask 'B, do you like also boys?' I never said openly I liked boys but all of them guessed that I'm gay, I never had a girlfriend; it was like 'ok, we have the sissy boy here', like the best friend. At university, the problem with identity came back. It

was clear that I'm not ethnic Bulgarian, I had to pretend I'm not Roma either. I was saying 'I'm a Turk as well' because the Turkish minority was better accepted than the Roma minority. But in my group we were like 60 people and within a few months I realised that there are another three Roma. We succeeded to become a small informal group within the bigger one. And among us, we were ok with our identity, ethnicity. In the second year, there were ethnic Bulgarian girls from the 3rd year. And then they brought me to a gay club. They were lesbians and I realised afterwards. It was nice and I started to be part of this group also. I had a non-Roma boyfriend at university. My friends at university never talked openly about it. But they knew that I had a relation with the boy because they were seeing us always together, no one questioned it (Aleko).

Aleko's reference to the all-female social setting as enabling him to be 'less apparent for [his] sexuality' re-emphasises the importance of the contextual and relational dimension of queer intersectionalities in relation to 'the closet'. In different settings and environments, the context of employing 'the closet' is constituted and reconstituted through social relationships, thus requiring the Romani LGBTIQ person at issue to be able to 'read' these settings and environments by being able to pick up on 'cues' or 'hints', and to make important choices relating to whether or not it is safe to 'come out of the closet'. Aleko's narrative of 'the closet' adds another layer of complexity to the concept of queer intersectionalities by demonstrating that there is a direct relationship between hyper-visibility (see Chapter 5) and the invisibility of 'the closet'. Aleko recounts his multifaceted experiences of being hyper visible as both Roma and gay while also being invisible as Roma and as gay thanks to 'the ethnic closet' and 'the queer closet'. In so doing, Aleko demonstrates that it is possible to be hyper visible and simultaneously 'in the closet', thus suggesting that one can 'hide in plain sight', as it were. Thus, the idea of 'the closet' being an opposite to hyper-visibility is contested by Aleko who challenges the binary of 'being hyper visible/out of the closet' and 'being invisible/in the closet'. Within queer

intersectionalities, 'the closet' can be understood as a notional relational and contextual space in which one constantly negotiates and renegotiates the (in)visible boundary separating difference and sameness. The Romani LGBTIQ person at issue thus 'walks a very thin line' delineating the notional spaces that are 'read' as 'different from' and/or 'the same as' the ethnic and/or sexual/gender norm.

Aleko and John's narratives indicate — albeit to different degrees — that at different points in time, in different environments and different social settings, they were able to avail themselves of the protection of 'the ethnic closet' thanks to ethnic (in)visibility and/or despite hyper-visibility. The ability to be able to do so can be understood as a privilege. However, this was not the case in a number of examples of ethnic hyper-visibility referred to in Chapter 5. For example, Jolana, Kerrtu and Constantin described how, due to the hyper-visibility of Romani ethnic identity, they were not able to avail themselves of the *often wished-for* protection afforded by 'the ethnic closet'. This has additional implications for the contextual and relational dimension of queer intersectionalities: as stated above, the ability to use 'the closet' does depend on the settings; however, it is not available to everyone.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) reminds the reader that the 'distinctive gay version' of 'secrecy,' 'closet,' or, for that matter, (in)visibility, differs from 'the ethnic closet'. Paraphrasing Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1990) analogy with racism, Antigypsyism can be seen as based on the Romani 'ethnic stigma' that is visible — at times hyper visible — 'in all but exceptional cases' (1990, 75). In light of Zoltan and Teresa's experiences of queer hyper-visibility (see Chapter 5), it is possible to argue that homophobia and transphobia, too, are based on the 'queer stigma' that is also visible; or at least sometimes. According to Kosofsky Sedgwick, 'the queer closet' does not entail 'a clear ancestral linearity' or 'originary culture of the family' (Kosofsky Sedgwick 1990, 75).

Therefore, what Kosofsky Sedgwick seems to suggest is that ‘the queer closet’ is somehow *less obvious* due to being *unancestral*, thus potentially involving a distinct set of factors relating to how difference and sameness are ‘read’. Even though coming out of the notional space of ‘the queer closet’ may entail a distinct set of factors, including a certain amount of personal strength to ‘come out’, as well as determination in defying and challenging society’s heteronormative and cis-normative dualisms, orthodoxies and conventions, the assumed binary opposition of ‘the queer closet’ and ‘the ethnic closet’ referred to by Kosofsky Sedgwick is challenged by Romani LGBTIQ people’s narratives of the notion of ‘the intersectional closet’. Echoing John and Aleko’s experiences, queer intersectionalities entail two or more identities and identifications, intersecting with each other simultaneously and/or on separate occasions, whereby the construction of ‘the queer closet’ intersects with and is informed by the construction of ‘the ethnic closet’ and vice versa, as expressed by Constantin in the following quote from an interview:

[M]aybe my mind wanted to [deal with my sexuality] but my brain refused because I was afraid. I was dealing with being an orphan so I was very discriminated being an orphan and to be Rom, too. And this issue was very very difficult, to accept another discrimination for being gay, too, I think too much. Exact the same thing how I suspect for the Roma discrimination. So imagine if you're worried, discriminated as Rom and then many issues and you're too discriminated all the time, you hear bad things and you become very depressed and very very tired, you don't feel to hear these things so it's better to hide [being gay], protect yourself from that discrimination. I already accepted being Roma. I mean I never had problem, that's the problem of the people but to come out as gay it's harder (Constantin).

In Constantin’s experience, maintaining a semblance of ‘the intersectional closet’ as an orphaned gay Roma may also mean prioritising and strategising in terms of his ability (or lack thereof) to cope. As a result of his experiences of intersectional oppression, he felt

taking on the additional pressure associated with his coming out as gay would be too much. Even though — or perhaps because — he cannot be protected by his ‘ethnic closet’ due to his ethnic hyper-visibility, he makes his sexuality invisible by maintaining ‘the queer closet’. Constantin’s narrative adds to our understanding of queer intersectionalities by showing that based upon the context, a person with multifaceted identities may negotiate the spaces between ‘difference’ and ‘sameness’ in relation to ethnicity and in relation to sexuality in very specific ways. As a result, some Romani LGBTIQ people are ethnically hyper visible as Roma while being able to stay invisible as LGBTIQ.

In this section, John discussed his use of ‘the ethnic closet’ and ‘the queer closet’ at a time when he felt he could not be visible as Roma and/or as gay. In the following quote from a focus group, John talks about the process of arriving at the point where he no longer needed the protection of ‘the closet’.

Now, it’s just simply part of my identity, I feel comfortable with it, I am who I am and no one can take that away from me. But: it took me a long time to get to this point. And it was a lot of effort to come to this point because you have to deal with being gay. Period. Come out to yourself, come out to your friends, come out to your family. This is a self-discovery process, it is an engagement process. And I *missed* knowing that there are other LGBT people, I missed knowing that there are LGBT Roma. The fact that we have a group like this or if it only existed on the internet before, I feel like I’m a complete person and I can deal better in society knowing that there are other people like me. And I think it’s important to see there are other people like me and I think it’s important for children if they’re in Macedonia or in Spain and if they’re gay and they’re in a Gypsy community they need to know that there are other gay Gypsies in the world, that it’s not just them. This isolation is what kills people and I’m interested in being visible for those people. That’s what most important because that’s what was missing for me (John).

Here, talking about 'the queer closet', John touches upon the practical impacts of Romani LGBTIQ (in)visibilities in relation to experiences of social isolation. He draws parallels between what was missing for him in terms of contact and interaction with other Romani LGBTIQ people and what may be missing for other Romani LGBTIQ people. While Romani LGBTIQ individuals who are and/or feel vulnerable to oppression often feel the need to be protected by 'the closet', its (in)visibilising effect makes it seem as if Romani LGBTIQ people do not exist. John has experienced 'this isolation [that] kills people': consequently, he sees his own Romani gay visibility and the visible existence of the Romani LGBTIQ movement as a process, a vehicle to validating Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectional identities and identifications. In a similar spirit, Bruno makes a number of observations in relation to Romani queer (in)visibilities in the following quote from a focus group.

It's your self process for accepting you and to be in the community. It doesn't apply to Roma only, it's a general thing in the gay community. Can you imagine what it is like in Southern Europe? There, you don't have any information, any reference, you don't know what it's to be gay. To be gay, is it to be crazy or to wear flowers in your hair? You don't know what your position is. It's something that Roma gays need to think about more. It's true that on TV, you start to see some roles gay people play; they are married, they need to be out of the closet. And you think: Hmmm, really, can I make this? Or what is my position as a gay Roma? How can I have self-esteem and be self-confident and proud of who I am and my position and not to regret it after making this step? It's for this that visibility is important. It is important to have safe space to speak because first you need to be [hidden, secretive] in the community, you want to speak about what you do. You are in the middle of a party and the first thing you do when you go to the bar is [he gestures looking around in a cautious way] you look if you see another Roma. If you see another Roma in the bar [he makes a frightened noise] directly you put in the position of macho but you don't like that the other people know (Bruno).

According to Bruno, in the process of coming to accept themselves, gay people, including Romani, often do not have a bond, or a connection with other Romani LGBTIQ people who would reassure them that it is okay (not wrong) to be a gay person in a Romani setting and that they are not the only Romani LGBTIQ person. As a result, they may feel isolated; they may not know what it means to be a Romani gay person, what it looks like. In these circumstances, according to Bruno, such a stigmatised and closeted sense of one's own sexual, gender and ethnic identity may result in Romani LGBTIQ people's resorting to the 'queer closet' so as to protect themselves from homophobia. Bruno's narrative echoes John's discussion about isolation and the discussion on (in)visibilities, acceptance and/or appreciation of difference and the attendant feeling of safety or lack thereof (see Chapter 3), as well as the discussion about the (in)visibilities and acceptance (or lack thereof) of Romani LGBTIQ people in some Romani families and communities in Chapter 5. This lack of visibility, including 'informational' visibility of Romani LGBTIQ people, may be more pronounced in some countries — and indeed in some rural parts of the individual countries — than in others. This re-emphasises the relational, as well as contextual dimension of queer intersectionalities in relation to Romani LGBTIQ people's ethnic and queer (in)visibilities.

As examined in Chapter 3 in relation to the white-normative ethnocentrism of 'the closet' (Tucker 2009), queer sexualities are constructed differently in societies and/or communities, including in some Romani communities (see Chapter 5), which may relate to the dominant heterosexual/heteronormative canon in the context of specific local, spatial, temporal and material realities. As a result, according to Tucker (2009), the heterosexual/homosexual binary may be constructed in a very specific way and 'the closet' is not always a viable theoretical concept. This is echoed by Teresa in the following quote from an interview:

I don't say that [I'm lesbian/queer]. I mean a part of my family is really 'from yesterday', they're still like 'but when are you going to get married?'. I would of course prefer to be like 'I'm out, I'm proud' and talk to them about it. I prefer out of the closet, definitely. But with the family, it's really different. On one hand, I'm pretty like lucky that now they kind of know it but we don't talk about it and that my girlfriend was always welcome and my parents were really like warm, welcoming and also my brother knows it and is fine. The only thing that really bothers me is for example because my mother is always very curious to know how my [siblings] are with their partners, especially if it doesn't work. They break up or worse...and my mother is 'oh my god, what happened? Why?' And I remember for me this was like the biggest love of my life and the longest relationship with this girl, we were like four years together officially but unofficially six years. But when she broke up with me and it was for sure the most intense relationship, I was really broken and my mother didn't even ask how I am. And that really hurts. Suddenly she disappeared and my parents never asked me where she is or what happened (Teresa).

The above narrative develops our understanding of the contextual and relational dimension of queer intersectionalities by pointing out that 'coming out of the closet' is not always the only strategy, by means of which Romani LGBTIQ people enact non-heteronormative sexual/gender identities. Some Romani LGBTIQ people may choose to 'stay in the closet' fully or partially in order not to sever certain social, community and familial ties, bonds and relationships. As Chapter 5 demonstrated, these social ties are complex and occupy an important place as many Romani LGBTIQ people depend on them for survival.

Chapter 5 established that gender and gender identity play a critical role in Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities. As discussed in Chapter 3, this is the case especially in relation to the marked category of 'woman,' 'female' and 'feminine' — as opposed to the unmarked, neutral category of 'man,' 'male' and 'masculine' — and the resulting (in)visibilities experienced by Romani women, including Romani queer women. Chapter 5 demonstrated that in some Romani communities, Romani lesbian women's restricted

visibility contributes to rendering their non-heteronormative (queer) existence invisible, coded, and implicit. Yet, as suggested by Gabriela in the following quote from a focus group, in others, some Romani lesbian women may experience a greater degree of freedom to be 'out of the closet'.

Back then, everyone was hiding it, weren't they? They didn't come out so I think it's amazing now. Finally, Romani women are lesbians! And bi! At last, the news is out! The fact that they found out that they can speak up! People take it differently now, parents as well, it depends though. (...) But I think it's superb, Romani lesbian. I'm proud of it. My parents accepted it, and so did my sisters. It was a year ago, I had kept it a secret for a long time. I left home at 17 but I had to tell them, didn't I? Because it is clear, when you don't have children, you are almost 33. So I kept thinking on it and decided I could no longer lie to them. So I told them and all was ok. One feels relieved when you say it, when you come out as opposed to bottling it up, right? I know a Vlax Romani lesbian who moved away: she had come out and her parents shaved her head, and then she went into hiding and stuff. I have a cousin and he feels he's a woman and dresses as a woman. Her parents didn't know that she's trans. She found a boyfriend. I bumped into her at a disco and she was so unhappy. So I told her to come out to her parents; whenever she needed, I would support her by messaging her and meeting her for a chat. Recently, they had a wedding. She wore a beautiful dress. There were lots of Roma, it was amazing (Gabriela).

In the above narrative, Gabriela talks about what she perceives as a positive change with respect to acceptance of Roma who are openly LGBTIQ in some Romani communities. As discussed in Chapter 3, belonging and identification are contingent upon acceptance. Gabriela touches upon her own experiences of coming out as a Romani lesbian woman and being accepted by her family. According to her, this openness in some Romani communities to Romani queer sexualities contributes to making Romani queer women more

likely to come out of 'the ethnicity closet' and 'the queer closet', thus enabling a greater visibility of non-heteronormative Romani people.

At the outset of this section, I proposed that ethnic and queer (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility, are closely linked with 'the ethnic closet' and 'the queer closet'. Based on the above personal accounts of Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences, this section has helped to demonstrate that it is possible to regard (in)visibilities, hyper-visibility and 'the closet' as notional spaces between difference and sameness, as well as relational and contextual strategic responses to normative effects of the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that shape queer intersectionalities in a dialogical and discursive way. Passing, which will be explored in the following section, is another aspect of (in)visibilities that can also be understood as a distinct strategy in its own right.

6.2 Passing

Underpinned by theoretical discussions on passing in Chapter 3, passing can be understood as a transgressive strategy that is inextricably linked to (in)visibilities and 'the closet'. The notion of passing/being 'read' has been touched upon in Section 6.1 in relation to 'the closet' that enables some Romani LGBTIQ people to hide their ethnic and/or queer identities. Writing on passing among gay Romani Gypsies, Baker (2015) observes that

both Gays and Gypsies have historically been well placed to employ strategic 'passing', with self-protection or ease of passage determining when and where to pass as straight or non-Gypsy. Here ethnicity and sexuality mirror each other within cycles of concealment and revelation. (...) The same facility appears to be employed in relation to the sexual identities of the interviewees, suggesting that the experience of managing their Gypsy identity in early life has informed the eventual management of their Gay identity. (...) The ambiguity involved in ethnic passing is mirrored in that of sexuality. The patterns of management employed for

sexual and ethnic representation combine to facilitate the Gay Gypsy's ability to remain invisible in multiple sites. These mechanisms make for a free-floating approach to identity — a facility that allows adaptation at will, but at the cost of constructive community building within this doubly alienated group (Baker 2015, 88).

In Section 6.1, the narratives of John and Aleko who passed as non-Roma by concealing their Romani ethnicity from an early age, and their capacity for this 'ambiguity' Baker (2015) — that can be also considered a privilege — have helped to demonstrate that John and Aleko's experiences of queer passing followed, or 'mirrored' their ethnic passing. Or to put it differently: their experiences of ethnic passing chronologically preceded, and contextually and strategically informed their queer passing. Baker (2015) refers to passing as a strategy used in order not to get seen as Gypsy and gay; or to pass as non-Gypsy (white-normative) and straight (heteronormative). This *(in)visibilising effect* afforded by passing enables the 'gay Gypsy' person at issue to deliberately choose to conceal — or, as the case may be, reveal — aspects of their ethnicity and sexuality depending on the type of spaces they navigate — both physical settings/environments and notional spaces between difference and sameness. John's narrative in this section and in Sections 6.1 and 6.3 shows that passing can also be understood as a combination of deliberate strategising and a relational and contextual 'reading' by others. Sometimes he passed as straight, sometimes he passed as non-Roma; other times, he passed as a non-Romani straight man. Thus, depending on the social settings and environments John has navigated, he believed that he was 'read' differently. In non-Romani settings such as the workplace, he was 'read' as non-Romani; he was 'read' as straight in Romani settings where the assumption was that since he is Roma, he also had to be straight; or that because he was gay, he could not be Roma. This enhances our understanding of queer intersectionalities with respect to how queer intersectional identities and identifications get separated and come back together, and are thus defined and affirmed by others in the process of relational and contextual 'reading'.

Even though passing can be seen as a key function and/or an extension of 'the closet', as demonstrated by Aleko and Andrea, passing may also occur irrespective of whether the person is actually 'in' or 'out of the closet'. In Chapter 5, Andrea touched upon the issue of her sexual passing. At different points in her past, she felt that her Romani identity was not compatible with her bisexuality: in those situations, adhering, as it were, to the sexual norm in terms of being read by others as heterosexual helped her and protected her. Passing was a protective strategy shielding her from homophobia since she felt being in a lesbian relationship would not be accepted. In the following quote from an interview, Andrea elaborates on her ethnic passing:

I read as white. It's not that I didn't experience anything before. I have family members and friends who don't read as white, so depending on the situation... but obviously just going out alone by myself with my husband, with my white friends, or whatever, and there's no issue. The only situations were, like, there's a rabid drugged skinhead right in my face threatening to kill some Gypsy. I know that he doesn't know that I'm Romani but it's still like a really unpleasant experience. A non-Romani friend of mine was taking a Spanish class and we went out for dinner with his classmates. It was him and a bunch of non-Roma learning Spanish and we're like at a dinner and of course they start talking shit about Roma so it's like the same stuff that is uncomfortable for you cos you're an ally, right. [B]ut it changed drastically having two kids who actually read as Roma 'cos I'm with them all the time, it's definitely better when we're with my non-Romani friends or whatever: they're speaking English or whatever but just having that constant onslaught of just everything. You can't get away from it: the stares and the comments and the nasty shit. Even though we're here in North America, normally I just feel like ok, whatever, just deal with it. We live in a totally brown community, all three of the schools they started here are very multicultural. But because I know we're gonna be spending six to eight weeks in Central Europe, it's like I have to I feel like I have to make sure they are on their best behaviour. And so for years it was like I would do things that I wouldn't have otherwise done as a parent, like on the

playground just make sure that you don't get in trouble, you don't give people a reason to yell at you. And also you have to look really proper and nice because the minute [my son] didn't and he got away from me on the bus last summer, and suddenly he's down on the ground 'cos somebody's pushed him down 'cos he just looked like a ragged Gypsy kid 'cos he was wearing sweatpants. We were constantly on the lookout and after many years of this, I'm realising that it doesn't necessarily make a difference. I had my daughter dressed in an Indian outfit because I felt like, you know like she totally passes for Indian, it'll be a lot better. And one of the nastiest things that's ever happened to her was when she was dressed this way cos like the woman didn't even look at her clothing, she just saw the dark face and so she treated her like a Gypsy. My daughter was three. [S]o after a while I'm like you know what? Fuck it, I'm a lot less willing now to make them be like totally... This is a strain on them either way if somebody is staring or making comments or whatever but it's also a strain on them when I'm constantly having to be policing them. I'm getting to the point where I'm just like 'you know what, you motherfuckers, you're gonna treat us like shit no matter what we do'. And I'm also slowly understanding — even though I've always rationally understood — why so many Roma are just like 'fuck it, I'm gonna stop trying' (Andrea).

In the above narrative, Andrea talks about unintentionally passing — or being 'read' — as non-Romani despite openly identifying as Romani. Discussing her Romani ethnic passing, she provides an account of her experiences of Antigypsyism (see Chapter 5). As someone who 'reads' as white and/or ethnically ambiguous, Andrea encounters situations of normalised Antigypsyism, including everyday anti-Romani racist banter. As Andrea suggests, her initial willingness to conform to white-normativity may have been influenced by her own past experiences of passing as white. In light of her negative experiences of Antigypsyism, it ends up being overridden by a sense of frustration and resignation. This seems to have been the case particularly in relation to her two children who are ethnically hyper-visible, hence unambiguous: they are Roma and they read as Roma. Her perception of Romani ethnic identity has an important relational dimension: through her children, it has

changed due to the experiences of Antigypsyism and fear for her children's personal safety. There is also a contextual dimension to Andrea's perceptions of Romani ethnic identity in terms of settings and environments and the attendant need to pass as white for the sake of her family's personal safety. Based on her experiences from North America, she feels relatively safer compared to her experiences from the ethnically homogeneous and white-normative Central Europe where her children are hyper-visible as Roma. As a result of her children's inability to pass as white, other protective measures are needed such as the company of their non-Romani, North American, English speaking father; and/or the parents 'policing' the children's behaviour and appearance.

The issues of (in)visibilities associated with passing, and of hyper-visibility enter the arena once again. The above quote from Andrea's narrative helps to illustrate how she has had to manage her children's Romani ethnic hyper-visibility in the face of different degrees of anti-Romani attitudes that make the children vulnerable to verbal and physical expressions of anti-Romani racist abuse. At the same time, she has been managing her own ethnic (Romani), as well as queer (bisexual) (in)visibilities, allowing her to pass in the white-normative and heteronormative social settings as both non-Romani and heterosexual in line with the theoretical underpinnings of passing as white and straight discussed in Section 3.3.3. This depends on the environments that she navigates: she may pass as white and straight either simultaneously or separately; or she may pass as straight only but be knowingly perceived as Romani and still feel safe — as she says she does — in North American as opposed to Central Europe. This reiterates the argument that passing, as well as 'the closet' in relation to (in)visibilities have an important contextual dimension. Additionally, the Romani LGBTIQ person at issue may have the ability — and privilege — to pass thanks to their ethnic and/or sexual ambiguity. This allows the person at issue to be protected by the unmarked ethnic and sexual categories, or norms — white and

heterosexual — by virtue of being 'read' as part/member of white-normativity and heteronormativity. A Romani/Traveller LGBTIQ person passing as white and straight may choose to conceal or reveal their ethnicity and sexuality depending on the nature of the settings and environments they navigate in terms of the people they interact with and the circumstances under which these interactions occur, as illustrated in the following quote from an interview with Michael:

In the sort of family I come from and the families that I know, it's quite normal still for cousins and especially second cousins to marry. So [there is] a very strong sort of familial base. So that was the sort of — unwritten I guess — kind of expectation within the family. This went for anyone who didn't or chose not to, they stood out. And essentially that was around children and the connection of children to the kind of family and the extended family. Education just changed everything. Once you go down that pathway, you meet lots of new people. And it certainly enriched both my personal life and my professional life. I wouldn't be doing now what I do, if it hadn't been for that move and meeting people who have been incredibly helpful to me. But the cost is that you lose a certain connection with those that are left behind, so those that don't go to college, that live in the same area, that have the same relationships. Since I moved away to college and to university, I've always been fairly open about the fact that I'm bisexual. That's how I self-identify and see myself in that way. I became a father [in my early twenties] and that obviously then set a kind of course in terms of a path for life and obviously within the context of that relationship that I was in. I didn't hide who I was and that was known but I obviously decided that I wanted to be loyal and committed to that relationship so therefore I sort of turned ... I suppose the way I think about it is that you kind of, it's a bit like in June at night when you're sleeping restlessly and you move from one side to the next, I kind of saw it in that sort of way if that's a proper metaphor. So I moved to one side of the pillow rather than the other for a duration and then when that relationship broke up [in my late thirties] then I was able to make other choices. I've had relationships with men and women in my adult life. I've been fairly fortunate in that within the

Gadge world, I kind of pass. Sometimes my kind of Travellerness is quite easy to do that for me, but equally I think within the Traveller world I can pass in terms of my sexuality because I've been in heterosexual relationships and I've also produced children. I'm aware that isn't the case for everyone, far from it; and so in some senses I consider myself quite fortunate but I've not ignored when situations have emerged and I'm not 'not proud' of who I am and so therefore I will stand up to sort of for example where there's maybe a homophobic kind of talk and language. I have never not kind of stood up to that. And likewise, when I have been party to conversations where people will talk badly of Travellers and Gypsies, again I will stand up and I will say 'well actually do you realise those people you're speaking about, that's actually me and this is who I am. What do you think about that?' So you choose your battles, I think it's your positionality and how you find yourself (Michael).

In the narrative above, Michael discusses his ability to be fairly open about being bisexual, enabled by leaving his family and community to study in higher education. Education can be seen both as a privileging factor when it comes to social norms, and, simultaneously a distancing factor when it comes to family and community. Despite his openness about his bisexuality, Michael refers to his non-Romani and straight passing as being 'fairly fortunate'. This echoes the notion of passing as white and straight — of 'choosing your battles', as Michael puts it — as a privileging process. The ability and the power to choose whether to conceal and/or reveal one's ethnicity and/or sexuality enables the person at issue to escape Antigypsyism and homophobia under the guise of white-normativity and heteronormativity, also discussed by Andrea in this chapter and in Chapter 5. Passing enables the person at issue to look/appear the same as the norm; at the same time, it allows them not to be/become the same as the norm (this aspect of sameness is discussed in Section 6.3). Michael touches upon another aspect of passing raised by Andrea in Chapter 5: how he uses his non-Traveller and straight passing to challenge hegemonic oppression. In this sense, both Andrea and Michael's privileged positionality in relation to 'sameness' epitomised by a very close resemblance to the 'norm' are key as it informs the way both

Michael and Andrea strategically employ their *invisible* ethnic and queer identities to make a personal stand against Antigypsyism and homophobia. Even though Michael and Andrea come from different cultural traditions and, indeed, different countries, they share their positionality as Traveller/Romani bisexual people independently of one another. Andrea and Michael's narratives of ethnic and queer (in)visibilities and passing thus develop the idea of notional spaces between difference and sameness. The narratives also add to our understanding of queer intersectionalities by showing identities and identifications as fluid, drawn together and apart across time and space in a constant process of becoming; at the same time, these identities and identifications can be deployed strategically and politically in order to challenge asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Another aspect of the (in)visibilising effect associated with passing is discussed by Markus. In the following quote from an interview, he discusses his experience of being a gay trans Romani man who passes as a cis straight man.

I think my passing is pretty good, I see it in reactions when I tell people who I actually am. I see how the Roma community is, what different positions, gender roles there are and that my voice is having another counting and more weight suddenly. But what I realise more and more in queer spaces is that I'm suddenly invisible. A few years ago, at the parties a lot of people came because I was this butchy type, people were like catching me and 'hey'. Or like a trans guy without such a good passing that I'm now. Suddenly the same people are ignoring me. There are some moments where it's really annoying to have the feeling that actually it's not your space anymore. I have a very good cis woman friend. We were dancing pretty close and kind of with sexual tension at a queer club. We were dancing in the middle of the crowd and suddenly I had a feeling people are looking really evil at us because they think we are a straight couple and taking their space. Because we didn't look queer enough for them. And that was an awkward feeling (Markus).

Markus's narrative suggests that his visibility as a Romani cis man has been a privileging factor in Romani spaces. In terms of his experiences of passing as cis and straight in queer spaces, his seemingly heteronormative and cis-normative visibility may have been perceived as a transgression — what Browne et al. refer to as 'a straight invasion or heterosexualisation of queer spaces' (2013, 68). The attendant limited visibility and/or invisibility that Markus now experiences as trans and gay in queer spaces suggests that Markus's passing has caused him to be perceived as being the same as what tends to be associated with normative sexuality and gender identity; to the extent of almost excluding Markus from queerness. This highlights the contextual aspect of queer intersectionalities: while Markus's visibility as a non-white cis straight guy may be a positive thing in certain heteronormative spaces, including Romani ones, it may be a disadvantaging factor in queer spaces. Additionally, as discussed in Chapter 5, Markus' intersectional visibility as a non-white, ethnicised/racialised cis male may also put him at a substantial disadvantage in white-normative environments.

This section has explored the phenomenon of passing as both a transgressive strategy and/or an unintentional process with a capacity for ambiguity. The attendant quality of appearing/being perceived as resembling/being the *same* as the ethnic, sexual and gender norm(s) can be regarded as a privileging aspect of passing. *Difference* from the ethnic/racial, sexual and gender norm(s) is deliberately or unintentionally camouflaged as *sameness* and/or resemblance to the norm for the sake of safety in order to escape hegemonic oppressions such as Antigypsyism, homophobia and transphobia. These oppressions are the normative effects of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations (i.e. white-normativity, heteronormativity, patriarchy, cis-normativity), based on marked essentialist difference from ethnic, sexual and/or gendered norm(s). As discussed in Chapter 3 with respect to unmarked normative identity categories (e.g.

man/male/masculine, white/white-normative, straight/heteronormative, cis-normative), failure to adhere to these norms is often seen as a negative transgression, a 'deviation'. Consequently, the person or a group of people at issue get marked as 'distinct', 'different' from the norm in a fundamentally essentialist sense of the word. The enunciation of marked difference — the delineation and policing of the boundary separating the normative from the non-normative — is often performed by those occupying and/or trying to maintain positions of hegemonic power and control over binary normative orthodoxies irrespective of whether the norms are ethnic, sexual and/or gender-related. Having reflected on the notions of marked essentialist difference, the following section will consider the notions of commonality, ordinariness and strategic sameness.

6.3 Commonality, ordinariness and strategic sameness

Thus far, this chapter has considered the phenomena of 'the closet' and passing, respectively, in relation to (in)visibilities. The two previous sections have contained implicit, as well as explicit references to *sameness* in the sense of being ethnically and/or sexually (in)visible as Roma and LGBTIQ by appearing the same as the white, cis and straight societal norms. A Romani LGBTIQ person who is 'in the closet' may try not to be seen as different in terms of their ethnicity/race, sexuality, and gender/gender identities by not disclosing them. In this sense, sameness has a protective quality. Yet, sameness can also have a strategic, subversive quality when it comes to dismantling marked difference constructed along essentialist lines. This section will first look at Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of bridging difference and seeking commonality across ethnic, sexual and gender difference (and their intersection). It will then go on to consider Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences of commonality in relation to ethnic, sexual and gender difference, historically constructed through Romani LGBTIQ people's perceived 'deviation' from the norm. In doing so, it will explore the potential for using commonality, and strategic

sameness — echoing some of the theoretical discussions on strategic essentialism in Chapters 2 and 3 as a temporary measure used by marginalised groups, including Roma, in order to forge a sense of collective identity in social movements — as a political endeavour with a view to subverting, unsettling and countering the deployment of marked essentialist difference as the basis on which asymmetrical hegemonic power relations are maintained and reinforced.

In pointing out the contextual aspect of queer intersectionalities, Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated how some of the Romani LGBTIQ respondents have navigated and negotiated ethnic/racial, sexual and gender difference across socially and geographically different settings and environments. In Section 6.2, John talked about being in ‘the closet’ both as a Roma and as a gay man. In the following quote from a focus group, John elaborates on the idea of seeing some common traits between the two:

I thought there are many similar things between the two and I could make the link between the two, because of being in the closet on the one hand or the other hand and that there’s a lot that could be learnt from each group. Roma can learn from gay people, gay people can learn from the Roma. And I am the only one who can see this, I felt, I’m the only one who can make this connection but because I’m young and insecure about myself, I didn’t feel I could just go into any Roma NGO or association and be completely open about myself. And so then I had this feeling that if I did that maybe the Roma community wouldn’t accept me. It’s not my family, they’re other people. And so it kind of kept me from being more engaged in the earlier stage in my life, and earlier stage in the Roma movement (John).

John has experienced both his Romani and gay identities being stigmatised and consequently, he has had to navigate ‘the ethnic closet’ and ‘the queer closet’. He has also experienced being able to pass — or being ‘read’ — as non-Roma, or straight, and/or both

at the same time. Having observed and experienced analogies between the two 'closets', John has been able to determine that mutual learning can take place between Romani and gay people. In his narrative, John states that has been able to discern a series of commonalities in his multifaceted experiences of being 'read' as different, (not) accepted, closeted, and (in)visible as Roma and/or as a gay person. As the one standing in the middle, or in between, and being able 'to make this connection', John felt he had the capacity to facilitate this mutual learning, to mediate this process that involves mutual recognition and affirmation of identities and identifications.

In the following quote from an interview, Veronika addresses a similar notion of being in-between her Romani ethnic and lesbian identities.

My Romani identity is also contextually dependent. I've experienced it the most when I am with aunt. In the huge Romani family, I've found a number of people who are great and they give me a sense of family, which has actually really strengthened my identity. In my childhood, I experienced having a big family, the kind of image of togetherness and the world of women. So it is not a construct in my head or an illusion of belonging because it really makes me feel great although the beginnings were not easy when I was trying to find a place in that family at 18. It was hard because I felt I was different from them. Not that all Roma are temperamental or loud or they needed to spend time together in one room from dawn to dusk. Roma are not that and it is good that I had an opportunity to see this for myself, as well as the fact that it is OKAY to be me: calm, introverted. So even I had that sort of stereotype to a certain extent. I would probably identify myself as a lesbian with occasional heterosexual tendencies. And I'm from an interracial family. I'm half and half; a 'halfie' in the other areas. I am able to love or to have a meaningful relationship with a man — although it is of a somewhat different nature, not so deep — as well as with a woman. I simply understand and can navigate the Romani environment while having access to the Gadzo world. It is clear that this can only enrich you, when you can navigate it and you understand

both sides. At the same time, it can be very difficult at times and I've perceived this from time immemorial, that even from a personal viewpoint, I was a mediator (Veronika).

Veronika's narrative develops the contextual and relational aspects of queer intersectionalities and their role in forming her identities and identifications that have been in the process of always becoming, depending on the different settings she has navigated and the different circumstances that came to dominate her life. Based on her reconnection with her Romani family, it is possible to claim that Veronika (re)constructed her Romani ethnic identity while searching for her sexual identity. Referring to herself as 'a half-Romani lesbian with occasional heterosexual tendencies', Veronika has moved between two binary worlds at the same time: the world of ethnicity, structured by the binary opposition 'Roma/non-Roma'; and the world of sexuality, structured by the binary opposition 'lesbian/straight,' or 'heteronormative/non-heteronormative'. Veronika refers to her capacity to move between ethnicities and genders/sexualities as being a 'halfie' means that she possesses an intimate understanding of both social settings and is able to navigate each of them (the resulting sense that she does not belong with any one specific ethnicity or sexuality is discussed in Chapter 7).

In the following quotes from interviews with Michael and Vasil, it is also possible to identify the notion of the *queer Roma/Traveller* as someone navigating two or more worlds and seeking to identify and/or create commonality by mediating processes of mutual learning between the two social settings.

[My mum leaving my dad for a woman] has kind of affected the future course of the relationships and I still communicate with my mum's family so it's a bit like I almost act as a gatekeeper. So I basically act as a communication post between my mum and her brothers

and so on and that sort of element to it, so it's a little bit tricky but it's manageable and it's been like that for a few years now (Michael).

So I feel that I have this opportunity to kind of be a voice that bridges the two communities that aren't normally bridged. The more we have people from intersecting and polarised communities speaking out about the possibility that you can be both [Roma and LGBTIQ], the more you're gonna have people coming out and being comfortable with all their identities (Vasil).

Where John has implicitly referred to — and Veronika has done so explicitly — the *queer Roma/Traveller's* ability to seek commonality across difference as a mediator located in the middle, Michael calls this positionality being a 'gatekeeper' or a 'communication post'. Vasil, who has negotiated his set of intersecting identities and identifications, uses his queer intersectionalities as a conceptual link that 'bridges two communities that aren't normally bridged.' Despite some minor conceptual differences, all of the four narratives — by John, Veronika, Michael and Vasil, respectively — point to the importance of seeking that which is common; or as Browne et al. (2013) argue, that which becomes commonplace, ordinary, unremarkable, but not normalised or complicit with normativities. Before proceeding to discuss ordinariness and the potential use of strategic sameness, I would like to come back to the notion of difference.

Chapter 5 demonstrated how Romani LGBTIQ people have to navigate intersectional oppressions arising from asymmetrical hegemonic power relations. As a result, the queer intersectionalities Romani LGBTIQ people are faced with create a specificity in terms of lived experiences at the intersection of ethnicity/race, sexuality, sex/gender and gender identity. So far, this chapter has attempted to show how some Romani LGBTIQ people experience this specificity and how some may seek commonalities for strategic purposes

while navigating difference. Chapter 2 demonstrated how, within non-academic and academic discourses, Roma have been historically conceptualised as ‘different’, ‘deviating’ from white-normativity, essentially ‘distinct’ and ‘other’ in relation to non-Roma. While Romani LGBTIQ people’s queer intersectionalities may be understood as a specificity, they are still diverse and heterogeneous. Moreover, specificity is not neatly delineated, thus still engendering plurality and messiness. As such, Romani LGBTIQ people’s queer intersectionalities do not create difference: they cannot be regarded as constituting the basis of marked essentialist ethnic/racial, sexual and/or gender difference along which Roma have been historically conceptualised. Indeed, the difference that non-Romani and heteronormative people stereotypically associate with Romani LGBTIQ people does not lie in Romani LGBTIQ people’s queer intersectionalities. On the contrary, queer intersectionalities are a reflection of the marked essentialist difference that constitutes the basis of hegemonic normativities, to which Romani LGBTIQ people are subjected: white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectionalities precisely because individuals located within the hegemonic ethnic, sexual and gender normativities construct images of ‘minoritarian subjects’ (Muñoz 1999) as located outside hegemonic normativities and therefore essentially different from the presumed ethnic, sexual and gender norm. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 demonstrated that Aleko, Zoltan, Jolana, Dominik and Kerrtu’s parents accepted their LGBTIQ children in a similar, if not the same way as non-Romani parents accept their children; by the same token, rejection happened along similar, if not the same lines. This means that if there is any ‘difference’ (i.e. specificity) whatsoever, it does not lie in whether the families’ ethnicity/race – that is whether they are Roma or non-Roma – but in whether or not they accept or reject their LGBTIQ children. As Chapter 5 and Section 6.1 have demonstrated, there is an additional, intersectional specificity consisting in Romani LGBTIQ people having to deal with the psychological pressures associated with Antigypsyism when

figuring out their multiple identities and identifications. The notion that specificity does not preclude, but instead enables commonality augments our understanding of queer intersectionalities.

The specific constructions of the heterosexual/homosexual binary are contingent upon contextual, relational, material and historic specificities of a given society in a given location (see Chapter 3). This means that lack of acceptance of Romani LGBTIQ people's sexuality by certain Romani families or communities may happen in ways that are similar to and/or the same as those of non-Romani families and communities who reject their LGBTIQ members. In the following quote from a focus group, John comments on these family and community dynamics:

My conclusion is Roma culture or Roma community communities are not more or less homophobic than any other society. [B]asically it's a prescript of the majority society whether it's a southern European or northern European — what the dominant influence is or there's a church influence or something like that. Roma in all their cultures and all of their diversity are not more homophobic or less homophobic than any other culture, and this is very important to emphasise. They're not more or less homophobic than Czechs, or Italians, or Indians, or Pakistanis; we are just the same (John).

John's narrative relating to homophobia being a 'prescript of the majority society' echoes what other participants in the research said in relation to claims that Roma and Romani communities are homophobic being used to essentialise Roma along ethnic/racial/racist lines even further. Such blanket, damaging statements are reminiscent of the notion that discourses that challenge homophobia can be used to stereotype certain communities as being inherently homophobic, thus perpetuating discrimination (Browne et al. 2013, Bryant 2008, Puar 2007). Importantly, John's narrative also speaks to the notions of commonality

and sameness across sections of societies that are often portrayed as different by nature of the binary division between non-Roma and Roma.

The notion that some Romani LGBTIQ people seek commonality across difference also resonates with experiences that various individuals have in common as Roma; or as LGBTIQ. In the former case, Chapter 5 established that Romani LGBTIQ people may experience Antigypsyism in ways which may be very similar to the experiences of non-LGBTIQ Roma. This means that both heteronormative and non-heteronormative Romani people share a vast spectrum of experiences arising from being Roma. Simultaneously, in the latter case of LGBTIQ people, Roma and non-Roma share a gamut of experiences arising from being LGBTIQ. Therefore, as the above narratives have shown, Romani LGBTIQ people are located in the middle/in a mediate position/in between two sets of identities: ethnic (Romani) and sexual (LGBTIQ) — although some may also feel they do not belong with, in or to either of them, as Chapter 7 will show. As a result, Romani LGBTIQ people seem to have much in common with both some non-Romani people who are LGBTIQ and some non-LGBTIQ people who are Roma. Such a conceptualisation of commonality, and indeed, of sameness, is reminiscent of the assertion made by Browne et al. (2013) in relation to queer commonplace ordinariness (see Chapter 3 in relation to belonging and how the concept of ordinariness has been applied in Romani Studies, too). According to Browne et al. (2013), the ordinary, unremarkable could offer a potential politics beyond homo, hetero and other normalisations/normativities through the notion of ordinariness as commonplace (2013, 190). The notion of commonality, of that which is commonplace and ordinary is implicitly addressed also by Michael in the following quote from an interview:

I think that that sort of relationship [with my mother] has been really important and it was her, [a Traveller] that encouraged me in education, which again kind of turned stereotypes on the

head a little bit because everyone assumed that it was my dad, cos my dad's from a settled family. So everyone assumed that it was that side of the family that pushed the education but it wasn't. It was very much my mum that pushed me to do well at school and to get to college (Michael).

In the above narrative, referring to his mother, Michael deliberates on the notion that contrary to the widespread portrayals of Travellers as 'essentially different' from non-Travellers by 'nature' of allegedly not participating in education and/or not sending their children to school, it was his mother, a Traveller, pansexual woman, who pushed Michael into education. Here, the 'ordinary', 'commonplace' notion that irrespective of ethnic heritage, many, if not most mothers have a stake in their child's wellbeing through education is deployed to challenge the misconception and to dismantle the stereotypical, racist myth of Travellers/Roma being 'innately predisposed' not to send their children to school (i.e. as opposed to non-Travellers/non-Roma).

Commonality or indeed sameness echo the notion that Romani parents respond positively or negatively to their child's non-heteronormative sexuality just like all parents do — including non-Romani ones. That means that there is no essentialist ethnic difference, grounded in ethnic heritage, as to whether a parent accepts or rejects their child for being LGBTIQ. In the following quote from an interview, in a similar spirit, Andrea elaborates on the idea that much of the current Romani Studies scholarship on, and the resulting representations of Roma are based on Romani people's presumed, historically constructed essentialist difference:

It's this constant need to somehow locate us, [Roma], always in some idealised past whether it's an idealised past that the academic agrees with or not, that used to be our place and they just have the hardest time letting go of that. I think the LGBT Romani movement is such a great example because it just blows the minds of a lot of academics, like 'we didn't think'.

Well I didn't think it would happen either but it is happening and I know what's happening and I think I can see it for what it is. But for the ones who were like 'no', they still have this very rigid conception of a traditional Romani community because they're the anthropologists. And again, this is my whole thing with gadzology [study of non-Romani people as opposed to Romani Studies; my addition]. People are funded to go and find out how these 'other people' are different! They're not funded to go and find out how they're the same. And you still have this problem [with academia] where one of the ways they're portrayed as different is that they're allegedly stuck in the past and their culture doesn't change. It's very conservative and it's really ultimately sort of economic needs that a lot of these academics have in order to have their work funded and read and interest other people. Because if your conclusion is gonna be 'well actually the Roma LGBT movements and a lot of other stuff about [Roma] in many of their communities is taking the same exact trajectory as it's taken with all the other communities', well then I guess the conclusion it has reached isn't so valid in their opinion. But they can't quite get to actually the most interesting research: the research that flies in the face of the popular imagination. But nobody seems to want to do that a lot of the time so that's why I think this work is so hugely important and to really lay it out there and talk about the academic culture and the assumptions that people are making and try to get at why they're making them. I don't know if it's totally the same with Native Americans but I have this in my crazy doll pictures, I have this like Native American girl who just says 'Is this where you want me?' and she's in the woods and it's entitled 'nature/past' and it's like exactly all the people, including academics, need us to be surrounded by nature, and in some kind of past context even if it's 2016 (Andrea).

In the above narrative, Andrea refers to the Romani LGBTIQ movement as epitomising the notion of sameness as a strategic challenge to Roma being continuously constructed and portrayed as essentially ethnically different from non-Roma. Just like in the case of ordinariness (Browne et al. 2013), such a strategic deployment of sameness — or what could be termed 'strategic sameness' — has a potential to subvert normativities. Aided by the theoretical considerations in Chapters 2 and 3 regarding strategic essentialism as a

temporary measure used by marginalised groups, including Roma, in order to forge collective identity in social movements, strategic sameness refers to the notion of a relational use of identities and identifications whereby links and connections are created for strategic purposes. Strategic sameness entails the notion of a relational sense of sameness across difference.

Using the example provided by the above narrative from Andrea, strategic sameness would be subversive to the vested interest in producing knowledge that constructs Roma as fundamentally different from non-Roma when in fact, according to Andrea, 'a lot of stuff about [Roma] in many of their communities is taking the same exact trajectory as it's taken with all the other communities'. By the same token, strategic sameness, grounded in an endeavour to seek commonality across difference, would also contribute to subverting, disrupting and doing away with the normativities sitting at the roots of intersectional oppressions discussed in Chapter 5.

Romani LGBTIQ people have been conceptualised, and consequently treated as different on at least three different grounds: ethnicity/race, sexuality and/or gender/gender identity. Thus far, aided by Chapters 3 and 5, this current chapter has established that the specificity of Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities cannot be understood as the basis of inherent, marked essentialist difference: this pluralist specificity does not preclude, but instead enables commonality and sameness. Queer intersectionalities can help facilitate a better understanding of how hegemonic normativities engender and maintain marked essentialist difference and why Romani LGBTIQ continue to be constructed and perceived as being markedly, essentially 'different', 'deviating' from the unmarked norm. From a theoretical perspective, it is, indeed, helpful to think through the aforementioned queer

reading of ordinariness (Browne et al. 2013); in this study, the notion of ordinariness deeply resonates with many of the above narratives due to its capacity to

make those who are out-of-place ordinary (...). Conceptualising ordinariness in this way does not neglect the need to critique continuing hierarchical power relations and normalising regimes that operate in inequitable ways (Browne et al. 2013, 193)

In practical terms, where Browne et al. (2013) state that ‘sexual/gender dissidence was once read beyond the boundaries of the nation-state (...) where that which was once legislatively and culturally deviant was rendered somewhat ordinary’ (2013 2, 190), Chapter 3, with reference to McGarry (2017), has demonstrated that Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, still remain constructed as ‘deviant’ and ‘extraordinarily’ ethnicised/racialised ‘dissidents’ who have never been allowed by the white-normative and heteronormative social orthodoxies to even reach the status of being ‘somewhat ordinary’. McGarry argues that this has been the case due to Roma having ‘been used by nation-builders and state-builders to furnish material power and to generate ideas of solidarity, belonging and identity that have served to exclude Roma from mainstream society’ (2017, 6). In other words, modern nation-states have systematically located Roma beyond the boundary of neoliberal democracies, with Antigypsyism lying at the root of this historic, institutional exclusion. As discussed by Tremlett (2014a), such mechanisms have also been encouraged, reproduced and commercially exploited in popular culture, thus perpetuating the vicious cycle of always constructing Roma through ‘essentialist difference’ — or what could be termed ‘intersectional essentialism’ in the case of Romani LGBTIQ people — with mainstream discourses rendering Roma ‘deviant’, ‘other’, ‘extraordinary’, ‘out-of-place’ and ‘not belonging’.

Despite being highly relevant, the concept of ordinariness does not seem to be attuned to the specific queer intersectionalities that Romani LGBTIQ people have to navigate. This is why, alongside queer critiques of dominant normativities such as white-normativity, cis-normativity, homo/heteronormativity, and patriarchy, it is critical to consider concepts that may be more adequately equipped for doing away with the intersectional oppressions that Romani LGBTIQ people continue to be faced with such as the possibilities afforded by strategic sameness: a concept emanating directly from the above narratives about facilitating mutual learning processes, mediating communication, bridging communities and seeking commonality across difference. In order to do so, first, it is important to clarify what strategic sameness may mean. Chapter 5 and Section 6.2 of this chapter have demonstrated how passing as non-Romani and non-LGBTIQ due to being perceived/appearing (the same) as white and heteronormative can undermine manifestations of Antigypsyism and homophobia. Just like ordinariness, strategic sameness *does not have to be* read through assimilation, conformity and normalisation while working with and within dominant social norms and orthodoxies (Browne et al. 2013, 11, 108). If employed politically in the aforementioned subversive way, strategic sameness does not follow the assimilationist route, nor does it reproduce norms and normativities even though it may seemingly imitate and/or mimic them. Simultaneously, strategic sameness does not counter or undermine queer or queerness. In fact, here, sameness is queer by virtue of being a positionality resisting marked essentialist difference constituted along the lines of norms and normativities. Chapter 5 established that ethnic, sexual or gender hyper-visibility may hamper the use of sameness as a strategic, queer positionality by some Romani LGBTIQ people who are hyper visible (even though Aleko's narrative demonstrated that it is possible to be both hyper visible, 'in the closet' and passing). If and when possible, the queer Romani bearer of strategic sameness (or of that which is camouflaged as such) can be seen as a subversive force both within and outside normativities also discussed in

Chapter 3 in relation to Muñoz's (1999) concept of disidentification, elaborated in Chapter 7. Using insight from Gonzalez-Torres (in Katz, 2015) who spoke of his queer positionality as an HIV positive gay man, the queer Romani bearer of strategic sameness may be regarded as a 'spy', strategically deploying sameness in lieu of the contagious AIDS virus to infiltrate and infect normativities from within institutions in order to overwhelm and shatter orthodoxies and dualisms engendering the binary opposition between social norms and that which deviates from them.

At this point I do not want to be outside the structures of power, I do not want to be the opposition, the alternative. Alternative to what? To power? No. I want to have power. It's effective in term of change. I want to be like a virus that belongs to the institution. All the ideological apparatuses are, in other words, replicating themselves, because that's the way culture works. So if I function as a virus, an imposter, an infiltrator, I will always replicate myself together with those institutions (Gonzalez-Torres, in Katz 2015, 24)

Strategic sameness as an extension of ethnic and queer (in)visibilities thus has a potential to counter, subvert and undermine marked essentialist categories of difference and differentiation within dominant normativities such as white-normativity, hetero/homonormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Strategic sameness is still characterised by messiness and queer paradoxes that may result in inclusions of some queers to the exclusion of others. As demonstrated in this chapter by using Markus's narrative of invisibility as a trans gay man who passes for cis and straight in most spaces, including queer ones, strategic sameness does not subvert new norms and normativities within queer spaces that may resist and resent heterosexualisation, and hence require queers to appear queer and not otherwise. This signals that even within spaces that purport to be 'queer' (i.e. non-normative), new norms and normativities are being established and installed, resulting in the emergence and policing of new boundaries of identities. Strategic

sameness cannot account for that; strategic sameness is always configured and reconfigured, assembled and disassembled alongside queer intersectionalities and the workings of marked essentialist difference constructed within dominant normativities, which it seeks to infiltrate, infect and subvert.

Coming back to Veronika and Markus's narratives, it is possible to see that identities — whether ethnic, sexual or gender identities — can be constructed and reconstructed in the space between difference and sameness on an individual level. John, Michael, Andrea and Vasil's narratives have demonstrated a capacity for constructing and reconstructing identities both at the level of an individual, as well as a group(ing) of people who may share experiences of intersectional oppressions: in this case Romani LGBTIQ people. This process of 'becoming/s beyond being/s' (Puar 2005, 128) points to the fluid, constructed, non-fixed nature of identities, identifications and disidentifications (discussed more in detail in Chapter 7) that Romani LGBTIQ people make. Just like in an assemblage, certain aspects of a Romani LGBTIQ person's identity become more prominent at different times during one's life time, as expressed in the following narratives:

For me, it's a bit complicated because I'm an immigrant, my mother is from Mexico, I was born in Mexico too. As for the question of Roma identity, it's complicated too because [my country] is a bit conservative with the question of the cult of purity of the blood. And more when you're gay, and even more when you're from Mexico. It's for myself who I am. I am a good Roma. I am no Roma. I am half Roma. What part of me is Roma? Is this finger Roma? Or none of the fingers are Roma? What's the point of all of this? Identity is something complex, it's not possible to make measures like 'I have 1 kilo of Roma and 1 kilo of Gadzo from Mexico, 1 kilo of indigenous blood, it's not possible to talk about it like that. For me, this is identity. The question of being LGBT Roma is one part of my identity (Bruno).

What does it mean to be Roma? To be Roma in France, in the United States or Canada? There are many different groups of Roma within France itself. There are many traditions and histories, there is not *one* Roma culture, there are *many* Roma cultures. There are people who have an identity and that identity cannot be separated: you're not 50 percent LGBT, 50 percent Roma. I'm 100 percent Slovak, 100 percent American, 100 percent Roma and 100 percent 'G' (John).

The above narratives demonstrate the notion that such assemblage-like 'becomings' occur in the context of dominant normativities, thus augmenting our understanding of queer intersectionalities. The queer intersectional specificity of Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences arises from asymmetrical hegemonic power relations upon which identities and identifications are partially contingent. Contextually, they depend on the diverse social settings and geographical environments and spaces some Romani LGBTIQ people navigate while seeking to identify and/or to create commonality across intersectional difference, historically constructed along essentialist lines. Operationalised by and through (in)visibilities — and in some cases hyper-visibility — that is associated with the notional spaces of 'the closet' and passing, and deployed in a queer way to unsettle and subvert dominant normativities within which strategic sameness operates, strategic sameness can thus be understood as part of this queer assemblage, which is in the process of being always configured and reconfigured, assembled and disassembled alongside the workings of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations grounded in categories of marked essentialist difference.

Conclusion

Underpinned by the theoretical insights from Chapters 2 and 3 in relation to how marked essentialist ethnic/racial and sexual/ethnic difference has been attributed to Romani and LGBTIQ identities and identifications, this chapter has considered the various degrees of

ethnicised/racialised, sexed, gendered and queer intersectional (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility, in the spaces between difference and sameness arising from asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that Romani LGBTIQ people navigate. Romani LGBTIQ people often negotiate queer intersectionalities by means of employing protective survival strategies such as 'the closet' or passing. The use of 'the closet' is contextual and relational: it depends on the settings and environments Romani LGBTIQ people navigate and is constituted and reconstituted through social relationships, thus requiring the Romani LGBTIQ person at issue to be able to 'read' these settings and environments and to make important choices as to whether or not it is safe to 'come out of the closet'. Within queer intersectionalities, 'the closet' (Tucker 2009, Baker 2015) — whether ethnic, queer and/or intersectional — can be understood in a relational and contextual sense as a notional protective space in which one constantly negotiates and renegotiates the boundary of various degrees of (in)visibilities delineating difference and sameness that one may 'step in' or 'step out of' depending on how one 'reads' a given social setting and how one is 'read' within that context. The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that the contextual and relational dimension of queer intersectionalities in relation to 'the closet' and passing means that these strategies are only available to some Romani LGBTIQ people. Nonetheless, due to there being a direct relationship between hyper-visibility and the invisibility of 'the closet', the assumed binary between 'being hyper visible/out of the closet' and 'being invisible/in the closet' does not always apply. Consequently, some Romani LGBTIQ people 'hide in plain sight' by being ethnically, sexually and/or intersectionally hyper visible and simultaneously in 'the closet'. Negotiating the spaces between difference and sameness as a relational and contextual process also applies to the notion of 'coming out of the closet', which is not always an option due to the specific configuration of the heterosexuality/homosexuality binary (Tucker 2009). As a result, some Romani LGBTIQ

people stay 'in the closet' whereas others are 'partially out' in order to preserve complex social relationships, on which many Romani LGBTIQ people depend for survival.

Just like 'the closet', passing encompasses notional spaces between difference and sameness navigated by Romani LGBTQ people. Passing can be understood as both a survival strategy and a relational and contextual process of 'reading' by others that occurs irrespective of whether one is 'in' or 'out of the closet'. The notion of passing as concealing/revealing one's ethnicity and/or sexuality is a privileging process enabling the person at issue to pass under the guise of white-normativity and heteronormativity. The analysis in this chapter has shown that in this process of 'reading' and/or 'being read', just like queer assemblages, queer intersectional identities and identifications are 'read', separated, put back together, and are thus defined and affirmed by others against the backdrop of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Historically, non-Roma have conceptualised, stigmatised and consequently treated Roma, including Romani LGBTIQ people, as 'other' (see Chapters 1 and 2). The analytical insights from this chapter have demonstrated that the queer intersectionalities that Romani LGBTIQ people are faced with engender a specificity which cannot be regarded as constituting the basis of marked essentialist difference; in fact, specificity enables commonality. In order to counter the marked essentialist ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender difference that lies at the root of normativities, some Romani LGBTIQ people seek commonality and sameness for strategic purposes. Strategic sameness refers to the notion of a relational use of identities and identifications whereby connections are created for strategic purposes. Although strategic sameness entails the notion of a relational sense of sameness across difference, it does not read through assimilation, conformity and normalisation. Operationalised by and through (in)visibilities — and in some cases hyper-visibility — associated with 'the closet'

and passing, and deployed in a queer way to defy and subvert dominant normativities, within which it operates (Katz 2015), strategic sameness is a positionality resisting norms and binaries. The queer Romani bearer of strategic sameness can be seen as a subversive force strategically deploying sameness to do away with orthodoxies and dualisms.

Chapter 7: Queer non belonging

Introduction

In this final analysis chapter, I consider the notion of 'queer non belonging' as a queer, non-normative positionality in relation to how Romani LGBTIQ people experience and negotiate the queer intersectionalities they are faced with. This chapter draws on some of the theoretical insights from Chapters 2 and 3 with respect to belonging and disidentification. Chapter 3 established that belonging is a dynamic process reflective of the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations in which individuals are located. Belonging can be understood to encapsulate 'other manners of being and desires for becoming-other'; it signifies a wished-for 'movement of and between categories,' thus challenging and/or defying 'a certain logic of identity [politics], which proceeds through division and designation' (Probyn 1996, 5, 9-10). For Romani LGBTIQ people, possessing stigmatised queer and ethnic identities that are often highly visibilised – or hyper visible – has consequences for how Romani LGBTIQ people can/cannot/do not belong with, in or to majority white-normative, heteronormative societies, as well as Romani and LGBTIQ communities. Whether or not Romani LGBTIQ people feel they belong impacts on the identifications and disidentifications made.

This chapter also draws heavily on the analytic insights from Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5, I considered Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities in relation to the lived experiences of Antigypsyism and other forms of societal oppression associated with the hegemonic systems of heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy that generate asymmetrical power relations. Associated with ethnic hyper-visibility and the deeply pronounced negative social valuation of Romani ethnic identity by non-Roma, Antigypsyism impacts on the lives of some Romani LGBTIQ people in a pre-eminent, stigmatising way

that may eclipse Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of other oppressions. Even though Antigypsyism is a key aspect of Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences impacting on queer intersectionalities, it is not the only one. This confluence of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations gives rise to a queer intersectional specificity of Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences. I looked at the associated relational, material and contextual aspects of family and community acceptance, inclusion, rejection and exclusion and explored how these varied lived experiences inform and shape Romani LGBTIQ people's fluid, non-normative (queer) ethnic/racial, sexual and gender identities and identifications that come together and apart in an assemblage-like manner.

In Chapter 6, having considered the relational and contextual dimension of queer intersectionalities, I examined the link between various degrees of ethnicised, sexed, gendered and queer intersectional (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility; 'the ethnic closet', 'the queer closet', 'the intersectional closet'; and passing in relation to spaces between difference and sameness. I demonstrated how a conscious, strategic, subversive take on passing as non-Roma and non-LGBTIQ due to 'reading' and/or 'being read' (the same) as the ethnic/racial, sexual and gender norm can undermine manifestations of Antigypsyism and homophobia. This is by no means to suggest that Roma should strive to be the same and/or to assimilate. In the same vein, I proceeded to analyse how as mediators, bridges, halfies and in-betweens, some Romani LGBTIQ people seek to create commonality, and indeed, strategic sameness, in order to defy and do away with marked essentialist ethnic/racial, sexual and gender difference. Strategic sameness does not read through assimilation, conformity and/or normalisation. Strategic sameness is therefore queer by virtue of being a positionality resisting marked essentialist difference constitutive of and/or constituted along the lines of social norms, with a potential to unsettle and subvert dominant normativities within which it operates. These analytical discussions in Chapter 6

have gradually paved the way to introducing and unravelling the concept of queer non belonging in this chapter.

In this chapter, I expand on the theoretical insights from Chapter 3, particularly in relation to the subversive quality of Probyn's (1996) concept of 'outside belongings'. Having done so, I examine Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences with a view to first sketching out what queer, non/counter-normative 'non belonging' — not to be confounded with not belonging! — may mean as a positionality, what it may entail in terms of the strategies used and what it may or may not do. In order to do so, I first look at the ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people experience (not) belonging with, in or to one or both of the two main categories of identification: Roma and LGBTIQ. I explore how Romani LGBTIQ people may experience identifying with certain aspects of Romani ethnic identity, and/or LGBTIQ sexual and gender identities while disidentifying with those aspects of Romani ethnic identities that may feel hostile, threatening and/or oppressive. I examine how Romani LGBTIQ people may experience normative modes of (not) belonging and how, in turn, this sense of queer non belonging poses a challenge to and subverts the normative, conventional modes of belonging. Echoing Gamson's notion of the 'queer dilemma' (1995), and McGarry and Jasper's concept of the 'identity dilemma' (2015) — that is the notion that in identity politics, identity may become the basis for both political power and oppression (Gamson 1995; McGarry and Jasper 2015) — I go on to discuss how Romani LGBTIQ people's queer non belonging may epitomise the need for creating a strategic response reconciling some of the tensions between the two extremes of the 'queer identity dilemma': between, on the one hand, identity forming the basis of Romani LGBTIQ people's political power, around which Romani LGBTIQ people may choose to mobilise, thus creating fixed identity categories and binaries; and, on the other hand, the notion of 'queer' as non-normative, non-identitarian positionality countering societal normativities, binaries and orthodoxies. Queer non

belonging as a strategy may thus help some Romani LGBTIQ people — and by extension other ‘minoritarian subjects’ (Muñoz 1999) — negotiate queer (non-normative) intersectional identities, identifications and disidentifications.

7.1 (Not) Belonging with, in or to Roma and/or LGBTIQ?

Chapters 2 and 3 established that identity is a ‘contested concept’ (Gallie 1956); identity, including Romani identity, is not a cohesive tangible ‘fact’ and this has consequences for how individuals feel they belong in, with or to other people (McGarry, 2017). I also established ‘queer’ as a positionality, which is at odds with dominant social norms and orthodoxies. Queer by its nature is fundamentally transgressive, challenging, and subversive. It is hard to describe and/or categorise queer: according to Halperin, it is by default ‘an identity without an essence’ (1995, 62). Yet, a key function of queer and queerness is their non/counter-normativity which destabilises, unsettles, defies, challenges and subverts the ‘normal’, the ‘legitimate’, the ‘dominant’. Queer theoretical concepts make it possible to understand identity categories as historical and social constructs, or ‘regulatory fictions’ (Butler 1990, 32), shaped by histories, practices, taboos, social rules, customs and traditions, that are necessary, viable and politically useful (Gamson 1995). Queer, queerness and queer theoretical concepts are therefore well-suited to do away — in the theoretical sense of the word — with those regulatory fictions underlying social orthodoxies, such as heteronormativity, cis-normativity, patriarchy and white-normativity, and the binary opposition of unmarked and marked terms. Referring to Laclau (1990), Hall (1996a) and Butler (1990, 1991, 1993), Sections 3.2 and 3.3.3 established that marked categories of identification are queer, subversive by nature of being reduced to the function of an ‘accident’ as opposed to the ‘essentiality’ of the unmarked ones; they are constructed through difference, through the relation to what they are not and/or to what they lack. Consequently, marked categories of identification are transgressive and disruptive to the

dominant orthodoxies of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity, and patriarchy: hence they are counter/non-normative (queer).

As part of the discussion on queer concepts, in Section 3.3.3 I fleshed out Muñoz's (1999) concept of disidentification as a strategy whereby queer people of colour — i.e. those outside the ethnic/racial and sexual/gender mainstream — negotiate the dominant ethnic, sexual and gender canons and orthodoxies. They do so by working with and within these canons, transforming them for their own purposes instead of aligning themselves with or against exclusionary practices. Applying it to Romani LGBTIQ people, who find themselves outside the mainstream non-Romani ethnic orthodoxy (i.e. white-normativity), as well as outside the mainstream non-Romani and Romani sexual and gender orthodoxy (i.e. heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy), I argued that disidentification is a strategy that Romani LGBTIQ people may use simultaneously within, as well as outside these four dominant social canons.

7.2 Identification, disidentification and queer non belonging

Section 5.4 showed that Romani LGBTIQ people's families and, indeed, Romani LGBTIQ people themselves are located within broader Romani communities upon which they depend in often fundamental ways: for safety, livelihood, survival, and protection from Antigypsyism. The section also looked at how acceptance and inclusion on the one hand, and rejection and exclusion from communities, on the other, contribute to defining Romani LGBTIQ people's lived experiences. As illustrated by the following quote from an interview, in Kerrtu's case, it was rejection and exclusion, and especially homophobic discrimination and persecution from the Romani community, which have been key factors impacting on her sense of not belonging with the Romani community:

I'm Roma, a woman and [northern European nationality]: it comes in that order. It's part of my history, my parents' history. For me it's important to be part of this particular ethnic group. I know a lot about my culture, other European Roma's culture and language. The way of thinking, actually what comes to feelings, the way I do things, maybe moving, dancing, playing guitar, and so on. I just feel that it's me. Somehow [my Romani identity] is stronger now than it was maybe twenty years ago. If you are very near to Romani community you can't be openly what you are. In this country, these 'culture polices' treat you badly and say loudly that this and that person is not a proper Roma because he/she is living differently than they should. There was a huge argument who is and who is not a proper, real Roma 15 years back. They were also talking about kind of hair and clothes proper Romani woman should have. If you used trousers, you were not a good woman. It is the wrong way to try to save Romani culture by discriminating your own Romani people. No one has apologised [for] what they did to me. I can't forgive or forget. I'm unable to appreciate them and I don't respect them. I don't want to be with them anywhere. When people are against you, you don't see them like 'your own' group. You don't have to accept me, you need only to let me be who I am. We don't need to live in the same way inside the Romani community. The best way is that we all know where we come from, you know your relatives and you know that you're important. [T]he Romani community in this country is so small, everybody knows somebody in your family, so people just [have] this big brother mentality for watching and telling that someone's daughter is doing this and that. But understanding is slowly growing too. After [I moved abroad] many things have been much easier, clear in my head and heart. I can be what I am, if somebody asks me if I'm a gay I can answer 'well, yes and how about you?' But if you go back 15 years, maybe it was not so easy. Why it's so important to be visible Roma lesbian? For me, having this life, that's really a good thing but to relate the Roma and the lesbian together! It has been *so much* trouble. I have had so much bad things because of that combination. I'm happy there's a Roma LGBT movement, so that's a good thing (Kerrtu).

Kerrtu has negotiated her identity as both Romani and a lesbian in the face of the Romani community's identity policing of the boundaries of 'authentic' Romani ethnicity and womanhood, defined for instance by particular hairstyles, clothes and/or heteronormativity

and childbearing (as discussed by Kerrtu in Chapter 5), and the resulting persecution she was subjected for having trespassed those boundaries. Kerrtu she has been able to negotiate her Romani lesbian identity by coming to *disidentify* with the Romani community. She does not consider the local Romani community her own; she does not belong with it. However, Kerrtu has maintained her identification with Romani ethnic identity: she clearly states that her Romani identity has become stronger. In keeping with Muñoz's (1999) conceptualisation of disidentification as recycling, reconfiguring and transforming the majority's — in this case the Romani heteronormative majority's — hostile codes and norms, Kerrtu has transformed her sense of Romani identity in a way which makes it possible for her simultaneously not to belong with the Romani community and to be Roma nonetheless. As for Kerrtu's being a lesbian, she sees her lesbian identity as the reason for which she has suffered persecution from the Romani community. While she appreciates the emergence of the Romani LGBTIQ movement that has recently contributed to validating Romani non-heteronormative sexual identities, including her own, she questions the importance of being 'visible Roma lesbian'. This seems to indicate a certain degree of disidentification, or not belonging with 'lesbian'. Yet, she has learnt to endorse and acknowledge being both Romani and lesbian. In her disidentification, she has found a strategy in terms of reconciling both identities (see the quote in Chapter 5: 'I am what I am'). This also entails not making these identities even more visible — or hyper visible — than they have already been. According to her, there is no need for her to belong with the Romani community or the label 'lesbian'.

The notion that Romani ethnic identity, sexual/gender identity and the Romani LGBTIQ identities are often perceived as socially stigmatised/stigmatising plays a role in terms of the identifications and disidentification Romani LGBTIQ people make (see Chapter 3). In

the following quote from a focus group, Martina talks about reconciling her sense of stigmatised ethnic and sexual identities:

Being Roma and lesbian? Perhaps the only positive thing is that nothing worse can happen to you [sarcastic laughter]. (...) I've come to terms with it, who I am convenes me, but do I find a positive in it? That everyone remembers you? Perhaps that. But when you think of children, you give them a 'great' start [irony]. Like really. Romani women, two faggots at home, like that is really 'amazing' [sarcasm] (Martina).

Reminiscent of Muñoz's (1999) account of how Martha Gomez performed disidentification with her stigmatised lesbian identity, Martina has come to accept who she is but sees almost nothing positive about the intersection of the two stigmatised identities, except for her hyper-visibility, including the notional hyper-visibility of her Romani lesbian identities causing that 'everyone remembers you'. She feels that her ethnic and sexual identities can potentially stigmatise her children when/if she has them. Yet, in her everyday life, Martina is an eloquent proponent of the Romani LGBTIQ movement, talking about gay parenting at key LGBTIQ events. This seems to suggest that a certain degree of disidentification must have occurred in order for her to be able to do that. Hence her sense of queer non belonging has been facilitated by both identification and disidentification. In the following quote from an interview, Ana, fundamentally questions what Romani identity (Romanipe) means both on a personal and a community level:

I don't belong to any identity. That's more like queer. I don't belong to majority because I'm Roma. I didn't belong to the Roma community because I don't live in the settlement. I found out that a lot of [non-Romani] people around me felt also they are different [because of] expectation of the community. That was important to me to understand that it is okay to have that feeling. Then I spoke with [Romani lesbian] women and realised they also feel that they don't belong. You can say it is queer theory but I really think it's revolutionary. I think we have to

counter categories. It is important to have affinity. Not identity but affinity, like Donna Haraway says. It is that feeling that you don't belong that makes us more similar to others, the basis that we do not identify ourselves as on one category but like not belonging to categories. What makes me identify myself as Roma is the discrimination against Roma because I saw discrimination on my own skin and on the skin of other people. This is my political statement, that I'm Roma. [W]hen I realised that I'm lesbian, I just felt political about my lesbian existence. I have [Romani] friends, I love them, I like to dance with them, I like speaking Romanes, but deep in my heart, I don't feel that I have that feeling of being Roma. What is Romanipe? It is some kind of constructed feeling. [My identifying as Roma] is on purpose. Not anything else because I don't have anything in common. Being Roma lesbian is so subversive to this not perfect society: we can smash patriarchy, homophobia and sexism. I remember one sentence on the internet when an article about Roma lesbians organisation came out and one man said: Roma lesbians? Where is this world going? In that way, we are very subversive to the system and that is our stance. We can make a difference with our freedom if we are free and speak about different identities, that we exist and we have rights to be different (Ana).

The above narrative suggests that Ana attaches political significance to her identifying both as Romani and lesbian. Ana discusses how she chooses to identify with certain aspects of her ethnicity while she also chooses to disidentify with others. She makes identities work together by reconfiguring those dominant cultural codes around her that she finds threatening and oppressive. Where Ana chooses to identify with being Romani 'on purpose', she does so as a political statement, a gesture of solidarity and a subversive act of challenging hegemonic oppression: Antigypsyism. Ana effectively redefines the terms of belonging — or in this case not belonging — with Romani identity and community and she makes use of both identification and disidentification in order to do so. By so doing, Ana transforms the meaning of Romani ethnic identity and the dynamics of (dis)identifying with those exclusionary aspects of Romani ethnic belonging that would have most likely rendered her Romani lesbian female existence hard, hidden and/or invisible, as discussed

by Ana in Chapter 5. In this sense, her ability to choose to disidentify with those aspects of Romani ethnicity is a privilege: just like in relation to passing discussed in Chapter 6, she can 'choose her battles': to identify and/or to disidentify. As a radical feminist, her identification as a lesbian woman follows a similar pattern: it is also a political gesture challenging patriarchy, sexism and heteronormativity. Unlike Kerrtu, Ana *does not disidentify* with lesbian. She openly and publicly acknowledges her Romani lesbian existence within majority society and Romani communities: importantly, in Section 5.4, Ana says that she was able to do so because she had not grown up or lived in the Romani community. She thus hints at the notion that living in the Romani settlement is often seen as a lived, qualifying experience and a prerequisite for Romani ethnic 'authenticity' (discussed also by Kerrtu in relation to particular hairstyles and clothes as markers of identity boundaries in Section 7.2), as well as a limitation in relation to the ability — or lack thereof — to enact non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities due to peer pressure and mechanisms of social control (discussed by Ana in Chapter 5). Additionally, by appealing to and mobilising around the queer intersectionalities of her ethnicity (Roma), sex/gender (woman) and sexuality (lesbian), not only does Ana challenge white-normativity, patriarchy and heteronormativity, but also Romani lesbian women's invisibility discussed by her in Chapters 5 and 6. She makes a political statement directed at the Romani communities, too, laying a strategic claim to every Romani person's freedom and right to be different, including in terms of sexuality, sex/gender and gender identity. Ana's plea to affinity represents a conceptualisation similar to some the new forms of relational, inclusionary identities based on affinity, modelling a flexible process for personal and collective identity formation through inclusion rather than exclusion proposed by Anzaldúa (2002) in Chapter 3. Such a relational conception of an increased visibility of Romani lesbian existence, solidarity, affinity and queer non belonging that counter identity categories has a

potential to undermine patriarchy and heteronormativity both within majority societies and Romani communities by redefining identities and identifications.

Vasil, who self identifies as an intersex non-binary trans Roma of Russian heritage, talks about his experiences and sense of queer non belonging in the following quote from an interview.

I don't really know a lot of immigrants that continue to identify as Roma after they emigrated to [North America]. And I definitely don't have a [Romani] community out here with regard to that, to the point where actually my own family will just talk about themselves as Russian. I'm pretty vocal [about my Romani identity] but the average [North American] bear¹⁴ doesn't even know what that means. So there is a pro and a con, the pro being that there's no stigma attached to it, the con being that people don't understand what it means. And they don't really have an understanding of my identity. It's pretty difficult to find a community out here. Communities are often polarised against one another and I feel like the only real way that we can achieve any sort of real productive activism is to have voices from communities that intersect. You have LGBTQ people for example who are in [North America] who place an expectation on me to hate Russia. And embrace US imperialism. Like there's a big component of the queer community here that is really into that. And then you have Roma people and there's an expectation that I'm going to make my trans and queer identity second to my Roma identity from going to advocate for Roma people in [North America]. That's not something that I'm willing to compromise on (Vasil).

Vasil discusses his identification as Roma in a situation where there is practically no local Romani community that he can have face-to-face interaction with, participate in and/or be a member of. This lack of face-to-face interaction with a Romani community results in there being little or no point of reference for him. According to Vasil, due to this absence, non-

¹⁴ Here, 'bear' refers to a particular type of male gay sub-culture. In the male gay culture, 'bear' is often associated with larger, hairier men projecting images of rugged masculinity.

Romani people, including LGBTIQ, are not able to grasp the meaning of 'Roma' and 'Romani identity'. Vasil states that this lack of knowledge impacts on him in a positive way: his ethnic identification as Roma does not stigmatise him. Belonging with, in or to Romani ethnicity can often be a source of anxiety for some Roma due to the historic social stigmatisation of Romani ethnic identity (see Chapter 3). In this instance, however, Vasil's belonging with, in or to Roma is facilitated by the absence of social stigmatisation of Romani ethnic identity. Yet, as he points out, he experiences a different type of social stigmatisation as a person of Russian heritage, supporting McGarry's (2017) claim about the elevation of certain subjects at the expense of excluding others by forging specific dynamics of belonging based on the exclusion of the 'Other'. Vasil refers to an expectation that some Roma have of him in terms of compromising on his sexuality and gender identity as if 'Roma' and 'intersex non-binary trans' were mutually exclusive. This results in him experiencing very specific queer intersectionalities. In a way similar to Ana, Vasil identifies with some facets of Romani ethnic identity, sexuality and gender identity, which he sees as meaningful, while disidentifying with those white-normative, heteronormative and cis-normative aspects dictated by ethnic, sexual and gender orthodoxies. He productively transforms the dominant, majoritarian modes of belonging and the otherwise exclusionary practices for his own strategic and political purposes.

So far, exploring the experiences of three Romani lesbian women and an intersex trans person, this chapter has demonstrated that ethnicity in conjunction with gender, non-heteronormative sexualities and gender identities constitute very particular facets of Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities and of the identifications and disidentifications Romani LGBTIQ people make in the face of four dominant normativities: white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Reminiscent of Probyn's (1996) *outside belonging*, queer non belonging encapsulates the notion that

Romani LGBTIQ people often find themselves outside these four dominant normativities. Both identification and disidentification operationalise queer non belonging: as Kerrtu's case has demonstrated, her non belonging with the Romani community does not hamper her identifying as Roma. Her not condoning visible lesbianism does not hamper her loving women. Aided by the narratives of those Romani gay men whose are 'read' as feminine explored in Chapter 6, the narratives of the three Romani lesbian women and the intersex trans person have also helped to illustrate an important aspect of gender and/or gender identity: that women, passive gay men, trans and intersex people — by virtue of representing marked categories associated with (trans)womanhood/femininity as discussed in Chapter 3 — are often fundamentally transgressive and subversive to white-normative, heteronormative, cis-normative, and patriarchal social orthodoxies. In these instances, queer non belonging has been used as a strategic alternative and a positionality transforming conventional, normative modes of belonging associated with three social orthodoxies governing the workings of sex/gender and gender identity that are present in both mainstream society and Romani communities: heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. In Kerrtu's case, and also in Ana's to a certain degree, these heteronormative gender and sexual orthodoxies are deployed as benchmarks for 'measuring' who is and who is not a 'proper' Romani woman. Heteronormativity is thus co-opted into conservative 'definitions' of what constitutes 'authentic' Romani ethnic identity, thus delineating the boundaries of Romani ethnicity. However, Kerrtu, Ana and Vasil's queer non belonging by identification with certain aspects of Romani ethnicity and by disidentification with conservative patriarchal and heteronormative conceptualisations of Romani ethnic identity are subversive to patriarchy and heteronormativity. Not only that; their very lives and (in)visibilities, which are both queer and Romani, are transgressive and transformative in that they show not only the real possibilities but also actual existence of Romani queer people who live both within and outside the white-normative, patriarchal, heteronormative

and cis-normative paradigm. Thus, (in)visibilities can be understood as a mechanism that activates identification and/or disidentification, which, in turn, operationalise queer non belonging. In a somewhat similar spirit, Markus discusses his experiences of not belonging:

I'm a gay Rom trans guy. But I'm feeling not really part of the Roma community. I'm a bit afraid how the Roma community will react if they know that I'm trans because I don't know how transphobic the straight hetero community, will react. I'm not feeling belonging to any community. I'm pretty tired, I have to say. I would really enjoy to rest. I'm feeling much more lonely than I felt before, especially after the second transition. In general, I don't feel so comfortable with those trans things because it always gives me those 'freak [label]'. I identify just as a guy. It's also really hard to see how my sex life is changing because I'm more and more attracted to other guys. I always heard stories from those friends who were doing the transition, afterwards they're just into gay guys. It's really hard because I don't have a dick and they expect me to have [one]. The gay community is really transphobic. They fetishize trans women as an object, and trans men are not existing because [they] don't have a dick. I think a lot of my problem is the fear how people will react if they find out that I don't have a dick. And the fear is often so huge that I don't even want to come to the point. A very good friend of mine [is Romani], we can talk about a lot of things but he is a gay guy. When he goes to a gay sex club, we both have the point that we can be confronted with racist people but he has a dick, so everything is fine. You don't have to be afraid when somebody's offering a blow job and say 'hey there's nothing you can blow on' (Markus).

Markus identifies as trans, Roma and gay. He first transitioned from female to male in his mid-teens. He refers to this period when he learnt that his biological father is Romani as his 'second transition': that is transition from the non-Romani cultural heritage in which he was brought up to his biological father's Romani cultural heritage. The notion of transitioning in terms of gender, cultural heritage, and sexuality is very much attuned to the concept of Puar's (2007) concept of queer assemblages: identities and identifications assemble and

disassemble against the backdrop of the specific relational, material and contextual queer intersectionalities unfolding within white-normativity, heteronormativity, homonormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Following these multiple transitions, Markus states that he has been experiencing feelings of loneliness, marginalisation, isolation and feelings of not belonging. These experiences have been exacerbated by his fear of homophobic and/or transphobic reactions from within the Romani community, and by his experiences of transphobia, homonormativity and exclusion within the gay community. Additionally, he feels his gender role as a trans man has been reduced and invisibilised by his specific queer intersectionalities, including due to not having a 'dick'. Despite Markus's disidentification with the communities that are associated with his ethnic, sexual and gender identities, he has maintained his identification as Roma, gay and trans. This enhances our understanding of the role that queer non belonging, operationalised by both identification and disidentification, may play as a strategy for some Romani LGBTIQ people when negotiating identities and identification within queer intersectionalities.

In the following quote from an interview, Lisa offers a similar account of how she has experienced being the partner of a Romani trans man whose masculinity is doubted by gay men due to him not having a penis:

Several gay friends of mine told me that they wanted the best for me, that they had not envisaged this [being with a trans male] for me, that they had wanted me to have children, my own biological children and so on. So I am not sure how they meant it, whether they were dead serious about this, but this is how I came to understand it. The truth is that it made me really sad. I mean my own father accepted it, so what are they on about? But what took me aback the most is that effectively the LGB community gives the impression — at least that is how I feel — they all say that they are oppressed and suddenly here comes the trans person. Whether they are female to male, or male to female, all of a sudden, gays who feel they have been oppressed, laughed at

by straight men all their life because they are not real men, they are snowflakes, they have been ridiculed and the trans person comes along and all of a sudden, the gays are higher up, they are the 'real men'. Do you understand? They have IT. They may be wearing high heels, but they have IT. I find that the whole world is revolving around 'cock'! It is everywhere. I find this to be a sad finding, I must say (Lisa).

In the above account, Lisa's experiences of not belonging with the Romani gay community as a queer straight woman suggest that even within groups or communities that may present themselves as representing LGBTIQ people's interests and as not abiding by the heteronormative canon, the presence or the absence of a penis is seen in very heteronormative terms. In Markus and Lisa's narratives, experiences of homonormative exclusions of trans people (Browne and Lim 2010, Hines 2010) have been some of the key factors shaping the two Romani queer people's sense of belonging (or lack thereof) with the groups or communities they may have initially sought to identify with. Consequently, following Muñoz (1999), while, on the one hand, queer non belonging may mean disidentifying with those very groups or communities that represent the dominant ethnic, sexual and gender norms, as a strategy, it facilitates the negotiation of counter/non-normative queer intersectionalities and the maintaining of the process of making queer identifications both within and outside the four dominant social canons: white-normativity, heteronormativity — and by extension homonormativity — cis-normativity and patriarchy.

This section has demonstrated that queer non belonging can be read as an alternative, counter/non-normative (queer) version of belonging that shakes up and reorganises the conventional modes of belonging. This may entail identifying with certain aspects of one's ethnicity, sexuality and/or gender identity while disidentifying with others. In the above examples considered by this chapter, the dimension of sex/gender was of key importance especially in terms of the specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani lesbian

women, and trans and intersex men. Particularly with respect to the notion of stigmatised identities, queer non belonging as a strategy makes it possible for some Romani LGBTIQ people to disidentify with the ethnic community while maintaining identification with Romani ethnicity. Furthermore, this section has shown that some Romani LGBTIQ people such as Ana may choose to counter identity categories by choosing not to belong with any identity, and by actively encouraging other relational practices such as affinity and solidarity. The situations where they may choose to belong can be seen as strategic, political statements made on purpose. They are a response to the everyday asymmetrical hegemonic power relations associated with the specific queer intersectionalities that some Romani LGBTIQ people may choose to challenge in this way. Marked identity categories such as 'lesbian', 'woman', 'trans' and 'Roma' can be used — and in fact get used — strategically and transformatively as political vehicles challenging dominant social orthodoxies. This is possible because they are located in opposition to the unmarked categories of 'straight/heteronormative', 'man', 'cis' and 'white'.

Having explored queer non belonging, including in relation to groups and communities, the following section will first discuss queer non belonging in relation to group and community mobilisation around fixed identity categories. It will do so in order to explore the possibility of queer non belonging as a strategic response to the 'queer identity dilemma': the tension between queer as a non/counter-identity on the one hand; and, on the other, the strategic, or even political need to mobilise around identity categories.

7.3 Queer non belonging as a strategic response to the queer identity dilemma

Just as queer counter/non-normative sexualities and genders have the potential to unsettle and disrupt heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy due to being marked categories of identification (see Chapter 3 and Section 7.2), so do non-white-normative

ethnicities, including Romani ethnicity. They have the potential to challenge white-normativity as a social and ethnic orthodoxy. Queer, queerness and queer theoretical concepts shake the foundations of identity politics: not only those of gay and lesbian politics, but, by extension, also those on which Romani identity politics has been built. Just as it takes apart the idea of a 'sexual minority' and a 'gay community,' indeed of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and even 'man' and 'woman' (Gamson 1995, 390), it has the potential to take apart the idea of an 'ethnic community,' and a 'Romani community'; indeed, even of 'Romani man' and 'Romani woman'. What Gamson (1995) has termed a 'queer dilemma', and what McGarry and Jasper (2015) have called 'identity dilemma' discussed in Chapter 3, I will refer to herein as the 'queer identity dilemma': fixed identity categories are necessary as the basis for political power (strategic essentialism) but they can also become the basis for oppression (Gamson 1995). This section will look at ways in which queer non belonging reiterates some of these tensions.

In the following quote from an interview, Zoltan dwells on some of the aspects of the queer identity dilemma:

In the gay culture, we have one of the most stereotypical communities. We have many boxes. I am a human being but if I have to choose from the stereotypical boxes, probably I'm a twink, and also a queer and a man. So the best thing is mixing up these boxes and create one that fits you. We can't and shouldn't completely forget about [these labels] because they are useful. Everybody wants to belong somewhere; and it's also the heritage, your own story and identification. Everybody's labelling when you're just going on the street. When you try to be open to [others], accept it and understand it, you begin to understand your personality and recognising your own labels through the other person. After coming out, I identified myself with my own homosexuality for years and in the others' eyes, I was just a gay. I identify myself also as gender-fluid person. I was born as a transsexual child. I learnt early in my life that I cannot be a girl, but I had the feeling that I'm a girl inside. I could see that I could be a girl if I want. I have

a skinny body, a very feminine face. Many times, I was noticed as woman. I began to live like that, to wear women's clothes. I looked up the operation but then I realised that I would never do that to my body, that it would be the biggest lie in my life. I knew that this isn't me. The biggest lesson I learnt from that is I have to accept [and respect] my body as I am. I fully respect those persons who are making this operation but I really had my time to think about it. I feel one hundred percent man in my everyday life and sometimes there is this queer and diva stuff coming out when I'm just shaking my ass, snapping with my hands in the performance. My woman's side has just turned into queer stuff (Zoltan).

Belonging is often associated with the safety and security of knowing one's place, as well as with a dynamic aspect of belonging consisting in 'movement of and between categories' (Probyn 1996, 9; see Chapter 3). In the above narrative, Zoltan discusses his urge to remain true to himself by not identifying with — hence not belonging with — stereotypical identity categories. Simultaneously, he elaborates on the usefulness of identity categories and the need that people have to belong with, in or to them. His narrative thus encapsulates the queer identity dilemma in relation to identification and disidentification: both have facilitated his queer non belonging. He describes his identification as gender-fluid and queer, and the process of coming to disidentify with the binary of biological sex (i.e. male-female), gender identity (i.e. man-woman), sexuality, or even with the notion that trans people need to be fixed by surgery: all of these identifications and disidentifications have allowed him to find his own way of being queer. The process of working through these externally imposed identity 'labels' towards finding an all-encompassing queer *wholeness* in which all of these categories disappear may be seen as epitomising Zoltan's understanding of queer non belonging: his subversive take on the notion of belonging. Thus, Zoltan defies 'a certain logic of identity [politics], which proceeds through division and designation, ultimately producing polarisation' (Probyn 1996, 9-10).

In keeping with some of the critique levelled at mainstream queer theorising by queer of colour critique scholars (Gopinath 2005, 3; Reid-Pharr 2002; Eng et al. 2005, Ferguson 2004; see Chapter 3), even 'queer', understood as destabilising and/or rejecting fixed identity categorisation, may become a label and a 'formulaic grid' (Puar 2007, 212) of stereotypical fixed identities exploited for political purposes. The problematisation of such a queer identity dilemma is explored in the following quote from an interview. In it, Markus elaborates on how queer itself has often become a 'label' in some queer collectives:

I feel somehow included in queer but also somehow excluded because I cannot identify myself with queer anymore. I see what people make out of the label 'queer' and it doesn't have [anything] to do anymore with Stonewall and how all of this started. I think it's more and more academic, pretty male and you have all those gender studies and queer theory. Suddenly you see voting posters from one of the parties saying something about queer and gender and I like 'what are you using even this word for if you don't know what it means and actually where it came from?'. It's a huge party label, fashion suddenly to play with gender roles but they are people's existence. Queer for me was always the thing where you can just be who you are but also goes always together with the history, with fights, with a lot of violence against transgender people, against lesbian people, against gay people. Today I see the word 'queer' but I don't see it belong to the history. I moved out of the queer white community because I didn't feel that it's mine any more. In the queer scene, trans guys are [seen as] cooler than trans women, trans women really have a hard [time] to be taken serious, not just as a drag queen or as a fetishized person. Trans guys are not allowed to pass pretty well because you should still make visible that you are a trans guy, stay kind of queer. It's a bit in an overdosed way, with a huge sign, or a tattoo on your forehead with the transgender flag so that everybody knows you're one of us (Markus).

In the above narrative, Markus discusses his disidentification with an interpretation of 'queer' that he feels has turned into a normative, over-politicised, white-washed, empty term void of its original meaning grounded in a particular historic context. As discussed above in

Section 7.2, his identification as Roma, trans and gay in conjunction with his disidentification with the white queer community has facilitated his queer non belonging. Here, Markus further disidentified with a normative understanding of 'queer', thus reaffirming the notion of queer non belonging as a strategic positionality countering norms and normative practices applied even in group(ing)s and communities that claim to be 'queer'.

Staying on the subject of the queer identity dilemma, Teresa, who identifies as a Romani gender fluid queer woman, talks about her take on moving fluidly between genders in the following quote from an interview:

I took testosterone for a few months. I had a half-year to train for a role as professional boxer. I put on 7 kilos in muscle. I stopped because I was not sure about this transition. If I really start to pass as a guy, I will not get roles. I got afraid and didn't want to risk it. I don't really want to be a man, I just like to be more boyish. I was planning to start again this summer with a friend of mine but we were both not 100 percent sure. I didn't like that I was starting to get a beard. It is quite strange: usually, [trans men] really want to pass and to have beard, so that people are not doubting about their gender. They're queer getting a beard and so proud of it, shaping it. But I hated it from the beginning and it doesn't go 100 hundred percent back if you stop it. One point why I'm not completely happy taking testosterone is that I like being in between: gender fluid. A lot of people see me like very like pretty and feminine, and also like very masculine. Often, guys ask me [if I'm] lesbian' and then they say 'it's really obvious, the way you're acting and your clothes, and also you're so fucking pretty'. I think it's also a quality to present both [traits]. This is also why I'm an actress, playing with roles. I think it's also why I'm still doubting losing one part [by taking testosterone]. For me, the LGB community is completely mainstream and unpolitical and also I know that many of them vote for the right party and are very conservative. If you are lesbian but suddenly you have a boyfriend, you're out of the community (Teresa).

In the above narrative, Teresa discusses the notion of queer non belonging by identification as a gender fluid queer person: she prefers to occupy the queer space 'in between' by displaying both feminine and masculine qualities. Echoing some of queer of colour critique's key objections to mainstream binary understanding of sexuality and gender/gender identity by lesbian and gay studies, mainstream lesbian and gay communities, as well as mainstream theorising (see Chapter 3), Teresa disidentifies with the conventional gender binary and with mainstream LGB (lesbian, gay and bi) communities, parts of which she considers unpolitical, conservative, even right-wing leaning due to the perpetuation of heteronormative binary orthodoxies in the form of homonormativity. Thus, both identification and disidentification operationalise her sense of queer non belonging as a positionality defying and countering normativities within mainstream LGB communities.

Aided by the theoretical discussions in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.3 relating to marked categories of identification being queer, transgressive and disruptive in relation to the dominant orthodoxies of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity, and patriarchy, the beginning of this section established that non-white-normative ethnicities, including Romani ethnicity, effectively display the traits of 'queer' and 'queerness' as counter/non-normative positionality in relation to dominant, normative majority white ethnicities. By so doing, they have the potential to 'queer(y)' ethnicity: to unsettle and disrupt white-normativity as a social orthodoxy just as non-normative sexualities and genders destabilise and subvert heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. In the following quote from an interview, Veronika dwells on the subversive implications of the fluidity of her ethnicity and sexuality:

As for my identification, it is very multi-layered and fluid. First, it is based on my natural resentment to labels, second, it is influenced by my own experiences, and third, it is the analytical benefit I've gained through my studies. All of this makes me unable to express myself clearly, but it is very contextual. I don't like identity politics much but I understand that from a certain

viewpoint and at different points in history, it may be a way of tackling the issue, at least to a certain extent because society still operates on the basis of these oppositional categories often based on some sort of cultural difference. So it is clear that when everyone treats you this way and labels you, in fact you don't have a solution and then emancipation must happen on the same basis or rules although for you, another aspect of your identity may be pivotal, so that is what is contextual. I find that [due to] this intersection of sexuality plus a different ethnicity, I've always been somewhere in between. I didn't belong here or there. So emotionally and intellectually, this has been challenging. But for me it is a marvellous thing because it develops me in many respects (Veronika).

In the above narrative, Veronika touches upon a key debate in queer theorising (see Chapter 3): the issue of labels being oppositional categories, or binaries, structuring the social world. She believes that as a result of these binary oppositions, the social world is predicated upon and governed predominantly by identity politics. At the same time, because oppression and inequality occur along the lines of binary oppositions, identity politics often functions as the basis for emancipation. Such emancipation may overlook not only the specific queer intersectionalities facing Romani LGBTIQ people as a result of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations, but also the contextual, fluid and multi-layered identifications — and, as this chapter argues, also disidentifications — that Romani LGBTIQ people such as Veronika make. Such identifications and disidentifications are counter/non-normative, hence queer. The social world structured by binary oppositions may attempt to force Veronika and other Romani LGBTIQ people such as Zoltan or Teresa (see Section 7.2) to adopt labels — to make identifications — that they are not necessarily comfortable with. Veronika has moved between two binary worlds at the same time: the world of ethnicity, structured by the binary opposition Roma and non-Roma; and the world of sexuality, structured by the binary opposition gay and straight/heteronormative and non-heteronormative. This ability to move in between ethnicities, sexualities and genders

encapsulates her queer non belonging, operationalised by the identifications and disidentifications that she has made.

The ever-present queer identity dilemma requires individuals, who oftentimes identify as members of sexual, gender and ethnic groups, including Romani LGBTIQ activists, to strategically negotiate the value, utility, and impact of collective identity (McGarry and Jasper 2015). The Romani rights movement, too, and Romani Studies have had to negotiate numerous identity dilemmas, including the articulation of nationhood in the 1970s or the more recent negotiations of intersectional identities, including LGBTIQ identities (Fremlova and McGarry, forthcoming). The emergence of intersectional feminist discourses within the largely patriarchal and heteronormative Romani rights movement and Romani Studies scholarship has shaken the foundations on which the dominant understandings of Romani identity, seen predominantly through the lens of ethnicity, have been built (see Chapters 2 and 3). Nonetheless, until quite recently, omission and at times avoidance of sexuality from Romani Studies discourses have resulted in the invisibility of the specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people, and Romani lesbian women in particular, as discussed below by Ana in the following quote from participant observation:

Our existence is not visible either in Romani community, Romani movement specially or in LGBT movement. I'm a radical feminist, activist in Romani women's network. We have a group dealing with Romani lesbians. We gather Romani lesbians, we empower ourselves. My focus is intersectionality, actually, between different grounds of discrimination. As Roma, we can be discriminated by gender: Romani women [face] multiple discrimination. Also within Romani women group, we [are] discriminated based on our sexual orientation. It is important to figure out that we can be different inside of the Romani community. We have rights to be different.

(Ana)

As discussed by Ana in Chapter 5 and in Section 7.2, Romani lesbian existence is both hidden and invisible within the rubric of both Romani communities and mainstream society, including the mainstream LGBTIQ movement. The invisibility of Romani LGBTIQ people on all major fronts of the Romani rights movement and Romani Studies has led to some Romani lesbian women feeling they do not belong with, in or to the Romani community, the Romani movement or the LGBT movement. Romani LGBTIQ (in)visibilities also prompted the recent emergence of the Romani LGBTIQ movement. However, some from within the Romani rights movement have been sceptical about the idea of building alliances with the LGBTIQ movement, as evidenced by John in the following quote from a focus group:

I know for a fact that it's also scary for Romani organisations because the LGBT movement is more powerful than they are and if they cooperate or build alliances, some of them even say 'we might get swallowed up by them, they might take control, we need to be careful, we need to take a step back.' And this is actually coming from people who are very open to LGBTIQ Roma or other LGBTIQ issues. They say 'we need to keep a little bit of distance from the LGBT movement because they're bigger and more powerful than us even though we can learn from them and they can be allies'. We [Romani LGBTIQ people] don't have to use the rules of everyone else, we can fit in according to our rules. It's worked for the last 800 years and we're still here. It's this queer approach (John).

John and Ana's narratives imply the presence of some of the tensions associated with the queer identity dilemma. While John touches upon the notion that some Romani activists and organisations are wary of building alliances with the larger LGBTIQ movement, he also suggests that Romani LGBTIQ people do not have to play by anyone's rules. This queer approach resembles the queer slogan 'We're here, we're queer, get used to it!' In Section 7.2, Ana argued in favour of a queer, revolutionary approach by means of countering identity categories by not belonging to any identity. In the above quote, she appeals for Romani LGBTIQ people's right to be different from the prescribed ethnic, sexual and gender

normativity. As the analysis in Chapters 5 and 6 has demonstrated, Romani LGBTIQ people's (in)visibilities often serve to preserve the white-normative, heteronormative, cis-normative and patriarchal status quo. Making the specificity of Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities visible and asserting Romani LGBTIQ people's right to be different from dominant normativities is a strategic, political need. Yet, it encapsulates the very notion of the queer identity dilemma: that this specificity, this process of marking Romani LGBTIQ people as 'different', may turn into a political truth and a potential basis for oppression, as Gamson (1995) suggests. This is not to claim that Romani LGBTIQ people, activists or advocates want to reinforce this specificity. Rather it is to assert that if formulated along the lines of identity politics, the political power (Gamson 1995) of Romani LGBTIQ people would be premised on difference (McGarry and Jasper 2015). Yet, as this section has attempted to show, the route that some Romani LGBTIQ people have been taking seems to diverge from identity politics: queer non belonging by identification and disidentification. Thus, queer non belonging can be seen as a strategic response to the queer identity dilemma.

Romani LGBTIQ people's invisibilities within the predominantly heteronormative patriarchal Romani rights movement and the mainstream, predominantly ethnocentric LGBTIQ movement has led to some Romani LGBTIQ people's disappointment, disenchantment, and a sense of disidentification with both movements. Some Romani LGBTIQ people feel that within the Romani rights movement discourses on Romani women over the past two decades have been exhausted; at the same time, ethnocentrism, paternalism and white-normativity within the mainstream LGBTIQ movement seem to hamper any kind of meaningful dialogue, as suggested by the following quote from a focus group.

Romani organisations are starting to have some interest for the LGTBQ Roma because the discourse of the women is finished. [A]fter 25 years, it's not new. It's like [them saying] 'it's not exactly my thing but we need to make new programmes and a new discourse'. I think it's only a

political strategy. In reality, [Romani LGTB] people are in the same situation of discrimination inside the community, we have the problems because some people [are] kidnapped, fight, [go] through terrible personal situations. The political discourse does not match the reality. In general, intervention with Roma people, and especially we want to speak about LGTB, is paternalistic. The LGTB movements from the majority have one idea what is emancipation, what is liberation, what is respect in the LGTB community. Sometimes it's not exactly the same in the Roma community. We have this problem of ethnocentrism. This produces toxic minority-majority relations because the perception is that the Roma is a problem and we need finish with the problem. [Roma] is not perceived like a human group with self dynamics. And it's for this that we need make self-forms of fighting this problem. [W]e need the help from the movements, not the patronising approach. I think the LGTB movement need make an evolution, something to speak about intersectionality and multiple discrimination. I think it's something general for the Roma movement, for the women movement, for the feminist, too: this problem of ethnocentrism. It's like we have one model of liberation and we need to follow this model because if you don't follow this, you are not in the good way. We need to break this toxic minority-majority relation. We need start to make in the Roma community strategies with other minorities, too. In [my country], we're starting work with Muslim feminists and the LGTB Muslims (Bruno).

In the above narrative, Bruno elaborates on the idea that due to the exhaustion of old discourses, some Romani organisations may be turning to the Romani LGBTIQ discourse out of necessity rather than genuine conviction. In doing so, they are often quite disingenuous because they often fail to tackle the real everyday queer intersectionalities still facing Romani LGBTIQ people both outside and inside some Romani communities. These queer intersectionalities remain largely unacknowledged. According to Bruno, the mainstream LGBTIQ movement takes a very white-normative, paternalistic approach to issues relating to sexuality, gender and gender identity. Some of these failures by the LGBTIQ movement are reinforced and exacerbated by Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of Antigypsyism perpetrated by non-Romani LGBTIQ people as discussed in

Chapter 5. Bruno believes that mainstream LGBTIQ organisations are reluctant to employ an alternative approach as it would disrupt the white-normative orthodoxy, which lies at the heart of the 'toxic majority-minority' dichotomy. However, Romani LGBTIQ people still identify as LGBTIQ: Romani LGBTIQ people belong as LGBTIQ despite their queer non belonging with, in or to the mainstream LGBTIQ movement. In order to come up with a different approach, Bruno suggests building alliances with other non-white LGBTIQ people and collectives such as Muslim feminists and the LGBT Muslims.

Similar proposals in terms of subverting and productively changing the script dictated by the dominant orthodoxy of the mainstream LGBTIQ movement have been made by a number of other Romani LGBTIQ people during the course of the fieldwork for this research. The suggestions concerned in particular the current alliances existing between queer Roma and organisations bringing together queer people of colour from intersecting communities. These communities have similar lived experiences in terms of persistent racism and ethnocentrism from the dominant white-normative, colonial and middle-class (bourgeois) orthodoxies identified as present within mainstream LGBTIQ organisations that often fetishize and objectivise LGBTIQ people of colour. As discussed in Chapters 3 and 6 in relation to the white-normative ethnocentrism of 'the closet' (Tucker 2009) and as evidenced throughout this thesis, as a result of the various (re)constructions of queer sexualities in societies/communities in the context of specific local, temporal and material realities, the heterosexual/homosexual binary may have been constructed in a very specific way, too. Therefore, the optics of 'the closet' and 'coming out' in a very privileged, often Western, white-normative sense may not suffice as people, including Romani LGBTIQ people, choose to 'come out' in very specific ways that are not necessarily the same as the sexual liberationist notion of coming out of 'the closet' of inauthentic secrecy (Tucker 2009, 8-11). Indeed, as Chapter 6 demonstrated, 'coming out' is not always the means through which

Romani LGBTIQ people define themselves and realise their sexualities and gender identities.

As evidenced above, normative social orthodoxies within the mainstream LGBTIQ movement, compounded by Antigypsyism within the mainstream LGBTIQ movement discussed in Chapter 5, have been some of the reasons why some Romani LGBTIQ people disidentify with the mainstream LGBTIQ movement while maintaining their identification with LGBTIQ. Simultaneously, the possibilities offered by queer non belonging, operationalised through identification and disidentification, constitute an alternative approach to the queer identity dilemma.

Conclusion

Supported by theoretical insights from Chapters 2 and 3, the analysis in this chapter have shown that queer non belonging is a transgressive, subversive non/counter-normative positionality that some Romani LGBTIQ people may assume when negotiating queer intersectionalities. Queer non belonging is operationalised by both identification and disidentification. The narratives of Romani LGBTIQ people in this chapter have demonstrated that by deploying queer non belonging, some Romani LGBTIQ people productively transform conceptualisations of Romani identities by disidentifying with hostile, restrictive and/or oppressive aspects of ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identities as represented and/or interpreted by the respective communities while still choosing to identify as Roma and/or LGBTIQ. The data in Section 7.2 have shown that Romani LGBTIQ people may do so for political reasons to challenge the (in)visibilities of Romani queer lives, as well as oppressions such as Antigypsyism, sexism, homophobia and/or transphobia. (Dis)identification may be activated by Romani LGBTIQ people's (in)visibilities, including experiences of exclusion of trans people within homonormativity. The ability to choose to

(dis)identify, which, just like passing, can be considered a privilege, operationalises queer non belonging: a productive, subversive transformation of dominant, majoritarian exclusionary practices and modes of belonging for strategic and political purposes. Echoing the theoretical considerations in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.3 relating to marked categories of identification being queer, subversive, transgressive and disruptive to the dominant orthodoxies of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity, and patriarchy, the analysis in this chapter established that non-white-normative ethnicities, including Romani ethnicity, can be seen as counter/non-normative positionalities in relation to dominant, normative majority white ethnicities. As such, they have the potential to unsettle and disrupt white-normativity as a social orthodoxy just as non-normative sexualities and genders destabilise and subvert heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy.

Due to persisting oppression, mobilising for strategic purposes around the specificity of Romani LGBTIQ people's identities may be and often is a political need that forms the basis for political power (Gamson 1995). Simultaneously, though, such strategic essentialist mobilisation goes against the notion of 'queer' being a non/counter-normative and non-identitarian positionality as it engenders, fixes and stabilises identity categories and binaries. The analysis in this chapter has demonstrated that queer non belonging by identification and disidentification, which diverges from identity politics as epitomised by both the mainstream Romani movement and the mainstream LGBTIQ movement, can be seen as a strategic response to the queer identity dilemma. However, those Romani LGBTIQ people who are simply striving for basic survival against Antigypsyism, homophobia and/or transphobia do not always have the privilege of choosing to 'playfully destabilise' the very same structures that threaten their lives (Tucker 2009). As a result, queer non belonging is context-dependent and may not be available to and/or suitable for

all Romani LGBTIQ people. This means that identity politics, queer non belonging and/or both may be needed when negotiating queer intersectional identities and identifications.

Reading Puar's (2007) concept of queer assemblages in conjunction with intersectionality (see Chapter 3), queer non belonging epitomises the idea that fluid, unstable ethnic, sexual and gender identities and identifications assemble and disassemble around and through the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations that discursively form and shape Romani LGBTIQ people's queer intersectionalities. Just like strategic sameness, queer non belonging can thus be understood as part of this queer assemblage, which is in a permanent process of the fluidity of becoming beyond the fixity of being.

Chapter 8: The lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people as spaces between difference and sameness

Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I first summarise the rationale for this thesis. The chapter recounts the main theoretical milestones: how the historic essentialisation of Roma has been responded to by some Romani Studies scholars; and how employing queer theoretical concepts challenges some of the persisting essentialist conceptualisations of Romani identities. The chapter goes on to outline the main analytical contributions made by this thesis to our understanding of queer intersectionalities; the notion that identities and identifications are fluid, unstable, in a constant process of becoming discursively shaped by asymmetrical hegemonic power relations; and to theorising identities and identifications from a queer intersectional perspective.

The chapter proceeds to consider the wider implications of strategic sameness and queer non belonging as strategies deployed by some Romani LGBTIQ people when negotiating queer intersectionalities. The chapter reflects on the meaning of the queer identity dilemma between the still much needed identity politics and queer non belonging, and proceeds to propose that a critical awareness of the pros and cons of identity politics and queer non belonging means that the two strategies can complement each other despite the tension between them. The chapter then moves on to a discussion about queer intersectionalities and the role of gender. Finally, the chapter concludes by reflecting on the meaning of the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people and potential future directions this research can lead (in)to.

8.1 Queer intersectionalities: troubling the canon in research *on* Roma

At the time of applying for this doctoral studentship, the rationale for conducting the research underpinning this thesis (see Section 1.5) was driven by an absence of academic literature on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people within what has been an otherwise burgeoning body of Romani Studies literature about Roma (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4). It was — and still is — possible to read about almost every aspect of the lives of members of various Romani group(ing)s and sub-group(ing)s across the globe, ranging, for example, from division of labour, economy, travelling patterns, self-ascription, political groupings, marriage choices, upbringing and gender divisions (Okely 1983); through accounts of structural oppression (McGarry 2017; Albert 2012; O’Nion 2015); to highly controversial assertions that poverty that Roma allegedly share does not constitute the principle of ethnicity (Jakoubek and Poduška 2003; Jakoubek 2004). However, there were only very few academic and non-academic accounts of the lives of Romani LGBTIQ people (see Chapters 1, 2 and 4) that were offering a partial insight into how Romani LGBTIQ people experience additional categories of identification such as sexuality, gender and gender identity. It is crucial to explore and understand the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people to shed light on the fluid and constant process through which identities and identifications intersect and interact with each other while communicating with and being discursively shaped by asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis illustrated how, historically, non-Roma have often either romanticised and/or simultaneously vilified Roma. This is reminiscent of Adichie’s (2009) notion of the ‘danger of a single story’ where stereotypical portrayals of a particular people that ‘flatten’ their experiences by constantly showing the people as only one thing over and over again turn them into a single story, an incomplete stereotype which robs them of dignity by emphasising how ‘distinct’ and ‘different’ they are. Such historically ‘flattened’ portrayals

and representations of Roma by non-Roma have led to Roma being perceived by non-Roma as 'distinct', 'different' from the white, non-Romani majority society, including in academic literature (see Chapter 2). These stereotypical representations have also led to embedding marked essentialist difference presumed by non-Roma at the core of historic and modern negative social valuation of Romani ethnic identity. Non-Roma often associate those who self-identify and/or are identified as Roma with stigmatising conceptions of Romani ethnic identity through ethnic hyper-visibility (see Chapters 2, 3 and 5). In a similar vein, Chapter 3 considered how marked essentialist ethnic/racial and sexual/gender difference, which has engendered the historic construction of stereotypical, stigmatising images of imaginary 'gypsies' and 'queers' as 'distinct species' differing from the white-normative, heteronormative, cis-normative social orthodoxies, has stood at the root of Antigypsyism, homophobia and transphobia. Chapter 3 proceeded to consider the benefits of employing queer theoretical concepts when challenging and countering essentialist/essentialising conceptualisations of Romani identities and identifications. The chapter contributed to the ongoing discussion about the tense relationship between Puar's (2007) concept of queer assemblages and intersectionality by proposing to employ queer assemblages in conjunction with intersectionality — or queer intersectionalities — to be able to account for the fluidity of 'becoming/s beyond being/s' while simultaneously being able to attend to the 'regulatory fictions' (Butler 1990) of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations associated with social normativities, by which identities and identifications are constantly shaped and formed in a discursive manner.

Chapter 3 provided a theoretical discussion about the epistemological journey over the past three years of undertaking this research, during which I came to realise that there is no *one* perfect, only, all-encompassing way of understanding the complexity of people's lives, lived experiences, identities and identifications. Whatever society, population, community,

group(ing) one comes from, there is no conceptual 'magic wand' that one can wave to understand the ontological 'what' (i.e. what exactly is understood about people's lives) and the epistemological 'how' (i.e. how we understand them). However, if there is a way of being able to conceptually grasp and describe the notion that certain people(s) have been historically pushed away, excluded, marginalised, rejected, maltreated, verbally abused, physically assaulted, institutionally discriminated against, killed and/or exterminated due to being perceived as 'distinct', 'deviant', 'different' from what is presumed and accepted to be an ethnic/racial, sexual/gender identity, religious, class, etc. social norm, then one can come to such an epistemological and ontological understanding of these historic and modern realities by employing queer intersectionalities. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 explored the contested and tense relationship between queer assemblages and intersectionality. Referring to Yekani et al.'s (2010) concept of queer interdependencies, Section 3.7 contributed to the ongoing debate about intersectionality and queer assemblages – two concepts which are often examined separately – by proposing to employ queer intersectionalities in order to help generate insight into queer intersectional identities and identifications. Queer intersectionalities allow us to identify and interrogate the workings of the interlocking axes of inequality sitting at the root of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations whilst not assuming the supremacy of one axis over the other, hence not re-inscribing marked essentialist ethnic/racial, sexual, gender and/or other difference embedded within and constitutive of social norms, orthodoxies, and binaries. Simultaneously, employing queer intersectionalities benefits understandings of identities and identifications as rhizomic fluid becomings that are not anchored in the notion of fixed 'groupness' or essentialist difference. This ultimately means that queer intersectionalities allow for an important reconceptualisation of Romani identities and identifications that dismantles norms and normativities, thus doing away with marked essentialist difference that has tended to fix and stabilise Romani identities and identifications across space and time.

Supported by theoretical insights offered in Sections 1.2, 2.5.4, 2.6 and 3.3 regarding Antigypsyism as a specific form of anti-Romani racism that sits at the heart of Europe's neoliberal democratic nation-states (McGarry 2017), Chapter 5 showed that indeed, Antigypsyism — a direct manifestation of white-normativity — is a key aspect of the lived experiences of many Romani LGBTIQ people that often eclipses other forms of oppression. Importantly, however, the analytical insights from Chapter 5 augmented our understanding of the oppression experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people by demonstrating that although Antigypsyism may be a dominant aspect, it is not the only aspect of Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of oppression. Romani LGBTIQ people experience queer intersectional stigmatisation as both Roma and LGBTIQ due to the interlocking negative social valuation of Romani ethnicity, non-heteronormative sexuality and/or non-cis-normative gender identity. These specific queer intersectionalities experienced by Romani LGBTIQ people are inextricably linked to various degrees of ethnicised/racialised, sexed, gendered and queer intersectional (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility (see Chapters 3 and 5), that occur in the spaces between difference and sameness, including in notional protective spaces such as 'the closet' and/or passing (see Chapters 3 and 6). If/when protected by these notional spaces, Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate and renegotiate the boundaries of various degrees of (in)visibilities delineating difference and sameness that one may 'step in' or 'step out of' depending on how one 'reads' a given social setting and on how one is 'read' within that context. Therefore, both 'the closet' and passing are contextual and relational survival strategies: they are constituted and reconstituted through social contexts and relationships. '(Not) coming out of the closet', too, can be seen as a relational and contextual process of negotiating the spaces between difference and sameness: despite the notion of a white-normative, ethnocentric 'expectation' that queers should come out in order to be 'truthful' and 'honest' (Tucker 2009; see also Chapters 3, 6 and 7), some Romani LGBTIQ people stay 'in the closet', while others are 'partially out' in order to preserve complex social

relationships that may be, and often are critical for survival, including in the face of structural Antigypsyism (see Chapter 5). 'The closet' and passing (see Chapter 6) are a privilege not available to everyone: the user is able to 'choose one's battles' in terms of determining when it is safe to conceal/reveal one's ethnicity, sexuality and/or gender identity. Thus, just like queer assemblages (Puar 2007), queer intersectional identities and identifications are contextually and relationally '(re)read', separated, put back together, (re)defined and (re)affirmed by others. Despite there being a direct link between 'the closet', passing and (in)visibilities, the assumed binary between 'being hyper visible/out of the closet' and 'being invisible/in the closet' does not always apply. Consequently, some Romani LGBTIQ people 'hide in plain sight' by being ethnically, sexually and/or intersectionally hyper visible and simultaneously in 'the closet'. This means that just like hyper-visibility communicates with 'the closet' and passing, difference and sameness are not necessarily separate, or mutually exclusive: they overlap, leading to a productive, transgressive positionality that some Romani LGBTIQ people assume in order to subversively defy and challenge the social orthodoxies of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy.

8.2 Strategic sameness and queer non belonging as strategies for negotiating queer intersectional identities

Assisted by the theoretical discussions about 'the closet', passing, ordinariness (Browne et al. 2013; Tremlett and McGarry 2013; Tremlett 2014a) and (in)visibilities, including hyper-visibility in Chapter 3, the analytical insights provided by Chapter 6 demonstrated that as mediators, bridges, halfies and in-betweens, some Romani LGBTIQ people seek to create commonality, and indeed, strategic sameness in response to marked essentialist ethnic/racial, sexual and gender difference that lies at the root of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy. Strategic sameness refers to the notion of a relational use of identities and identifications whereby connections are created for

strategic purposes; the notion of a relational sense of sameness across difference. Chapter 6 contributed to the discussion about difference and sameness by proposing that strategic sameness is a way of negotiating queer intersectional identities and identifications. It is a queer positionality and a political strategy of navigating spaces between difference and sameness; as such, strategic sameness does not read through assimilation, conformity and/or normalisation. Operationalised by and through (in)visibilities — and in some cases hyper-visibility — associated with ‘the closet’ and passing, and deployed in a queer way to defy and subvert dominant normativities within which it operates, strategic sameness is a positionality resisting norms and binaries that enables the queer bearer to deploy sameness in order to do away with social norms, orthodoxies and dualisms.

Recounting the theoretical discussions in Chapters 2 and 3 about identification, disidentification, ordinariness and belonging, including the notion that being Romani may not necessarily be the most pertinent category of identification for some Roma who may seek other identifications, Chapter 7 established that disidentification is a strategy that is located both inside and outside the dominant hegemonic normativities, and employed by some Romani LGBTIQ people when negotiating identities and identifications. Chapter 7 went on to argue that queer non belonging by identification and disidentification is a transgressive, subversive non/counter-normative positionality that some Romani LGBTIQ people may assume when negotiating queer intersectionalities. Queer non belonging is a productive transformation of dominant, majoritarian exclusionary cultural scripts and modes of belonging for strategic and political purposes, which enables reconfigurations of conceptualisations of identities and identifications by identifying with those aspects of ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identities that are empowering while disidentifying with hostile, restrictive and/or oppressive aspects of ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identities. The analytical insights from Chapter 7 demonstrated that queer non belonging

may include disidentification with the bearers of these hostile cultural scripts, which enables a person's disidentification with the respective communities (Romani and/or LGBTIQ) while still choosing to maintain ethnic and/or sexual/gender identifications as Roma and/or LGBTIQ, including for political reasons in order to challenge Antigypsyism, sexism, homophobia and/or transphobia. Conversely, some Romani LGBTIQ people choose to maintain identification with Romani and/or LGBTIQ communities while disidentifying with the actual identities. The ability to choose to (dis)identify can be considered a privilege; (dis)identification may be activated by (in)visibilities, including by trans/non-binary people's experiences of exclusion within homonormativity.

Strategic sameness and queer non belonging epitomise the notion that Romani LGBTIQ people's fluid, unstable ethnic, sexual and gender identities and identifications discursively assemble and disassemble around and through the asymmetrical hegemonic power relations. Thus, both strategic sameness and queer non belonging can be considered parts of this queer intersectional assemblage (see Section 3.7), which is in a permanent process of the fluidity of becoming beyond the fixity of being.

8.3 The queer identity dilemma: identity politics and/or queer non belonging?

Chapter 7 explored the contested relationship between identity politics and queer non belonging. As a counter/non-normative subversive positionality, queer non belonging diverges from the identity politics of the mainstream Romani movement and the mainstream LGBTIQ movement: both have tended to rely on an essentialist model, in which a minority ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identity is a fixed, static category. Aided by the theoretical discussions about the 'queer dilemma' (Gamson 1995) and 'identity dilemma' (McGarry and Jaspers 2015) in Chapter 3, this permanent tension epitomises the queer identity dilemma (see Chapter 7): the idea that strategic essentialist mobilisation around fixed identity

categories and binary orthodoxies goes against the notion of 'queer' as being a non/counter-normative and non-identitarian positionality.

Arguably, strategic political mobilisation around collective, unified and fixed identity categories is still very much needed for successful political resistances and gains (Gamson 1995) given that many Romani LGBTIQ people's lives are still dominated by intersectional essentialism (see Chapters 3 and 5). Aided by the analytical insights from Chapter 5 regarding the intersectional oppression and stigmatisation Romani LGBTIQ people experience due to marked essentialist ethnic/racial, sexual and/or gender difference as the foundation of constructions of stereotypical, stigmatising images of 'gypsies' and 'queers' as 'distinct', Chapter 7 fleshed out the implications this has for some Romani LGBTIQ people. Indeed, as Chapter 5 demonstrated, there are extremely vulnerable Romani LGBTIQ people who, due to structural inequality, poverty and discrimination, do not have basic material things, or, indeed, the possibility of choice to (dis)identify with any one category of identification. This means that for 'minoritarian subjects' (Muñoz 1999) who are simply striving for basic survival against systemic oppression, queer non belonging may not always be an adequate strategy. Sometimes, pronounced and direct resistance associated with identity politics may be necessary; other times, minoritarian subjects need to follow a conformist path to survive.

Chapter 7 demonstrated that some Romani LGBTIQ people are aware that in mobilising around Romani ethnic identity politics for political power, the predominantly heteronormative, cis-normative and patriarchal Romani movement has perpetuated exclusion, and at times oppression of non-heteronormative Roma. The same applies to the ethnocentric, predominantly white-normative LGBTIQ movement: in mobilising for LGBTIQ rights, the movement has perpetuated exclusion and at times oppression of non-white-

normative LGBTIQ people, including Roma. This brings us back to queer non belonging which operates both within and outside the normative scripts of dominant societies: as a contextually dependent strategy, and possibly a new form of 'politics', it gives a powerful tool to those 'queers' who 'read' and/or 'are read' as outside of the dominant cultural scripts of social normativities when negotiating their specific queer intersectionalities within asymmetrical hegemonic power relations.

Supported by the theoretical discussions on intersectionality, queer assemblages and queer intersectionalities in Sections 2.9, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7, the analytical insights from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 enhanced our understanding of the queer identity dilemma: they demonstrated that a queer intersectional approach recognises that depending on context, identity politics, queer non belonging and/or both may be needed as strategies when negotiating queer intersectional identities and identifications. The analytical insights from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 underscored the need for finding a conceptual middle ground between — queer intersectionalities — that allows us to identify and interrogate the workings asymmetrical hegemonic power relations while being able to attend to the notion that identities and identifications are rhizomic, fluid becomings that are not anchored in fixed 'groupness' or essentialist difference. Queer intersectionalities thus bring to the foreground the notion that cultural difference — whether ethnic/racial, sexual, gender and/or other — should be understood to signify a variety, specificity as part of plurality in terms of actual cultural and/or religious practices, customs, traditions, languages, etc. *only*; cultural difference should not be understood as constituting a 'deviation from the norm'; that is 'difference' in terms of the 'normative superiority' and/or 'supremacy' of particular social groups.

8.4 Queer intersectionalities, gendered ethnicity and ethnicised gender

Gender was a horizontal theme interweaving through and across the analysis in Chapters 5, 6 and 7. Supported by the theoretical insights in Chapters 2 and 3 pertaining to marked identity categories such as woman(hood), female/feminine; LGBTIQ/non-heteronormative; trans as opposed to unmarked, neutral identity categories such as man(hood); male/masculine; straight/heteronormative; cis-normative, the analytical insights emanating from Chapters 5, 6 and 7 confirmed that within queer intersectionalities, gender plays a pivotal role. Femininity, including femininity associated with some 'passive' gay men (receivers), and (trans)womanhood are often seen as disadvantaging and disqualifying in heteronormative settings, as well as in some homonormative environments governed by the male/masculine-normative social canon. As a result, the inequitable workings of sex/gender result in Romani (lesbian) women's lived experiences being multiply invisible and distinct from those of Romani (gay) men. Simultaneously, though, some Romani gay men's queer intersectionalities are also impacted by the heteronormativity and patriarchy of social conservatism as shown in cases where social control may be exerted to push some Romani lesbian women, as well as some Romani gay men into opposite-sex marriages¹⁵ (See Section 5.2).

Additionally, aided by the theoretical discussions in Sections 3.2 and 3.3.3 relating to marked categories of identification being queer, transgressive and disruptive in relation to the dominant orthodoxies of white-normativity, heteronormativity, cis-normativity, and patriarchy, the analytical findings from Chapters 5, 6, and 7 added to our understanding of queer intersectionalities by showing that in relation to the marked categories of femininity/(trans)womanhood, an important aspect of gender/gender identity is its potential

¹⁵ This is a practice that happens across various ethnicities and cultures; however, forced marriage which occurs in some Romani cultures has been wrongly used against Roma and Romani communities as a racist argument to claim that forced marriage is a trait typical of Romani culture.

to be fundamentally transgressive and subversive to patriarchal, heteronormative and cis-normative social orthodoxies. This includes cases where heteronormativity has been co-opted into conservative definitions of what constitutes 'authentic' ethnic identity. Moreover, the analytical findings demonstrated that ethnic/racial and/or sexual/gender identities and identifications intersect, interlock, overlap and come together and apart in ways that may at times enable positive lived experiences despite the often-presumed notion that intersectionality tends to entail challenging experiences of asymmetrical hegemonic power relations only. Simultaneously, the gender/gender identity/sexuality nexus has an important ethnic/racial dimension. As a result, as Chapter 5 demonstrated, some Romani gay men may 'read'/pass as straight in some Romani environments due to an assumption that Romani ethnicity and non-heteronormative sexualities are mutually exclusive; the same Romani gay men may be 'read'/pass as white/non-Romani in non-Romani environments due to the assumption that if someone is openly gay, it automatically means that they are white. In a similar vein, some Romani trans men, who are 'read' as non-white, straight and cis, may be ethnicised/racialised and gendered differently to women, trans women or even to their own pre-transition experiences, leading to advantage/preferential treatment in some environments (for example Romani and/or heteronormative ones); and to disadvantage and/or discriminatory treatment in others (white-normative and/or non-heteronormative). This points to another key dimension of ethnicity/race: just as non-normative sexualities and genders 'queer(y)', destabilise and subvert heteronormativity, cis-normativity and patriarchy, by nature of being marked, non-white-normative ethnic/racial identities have the potential to 'queer(y)', unsettle and disrupt white-normativity as a social orthodoxy.

Queer intersectionalities are further complicated by the nexus of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, power relations and social status. Thus, social status — a key privilege validating some Romani non-heteronormative identities — can be considered a *mitigating factor* enabling

acceptance of non-heteronormative queer (in)visibilities for those Romani LGBTIQ people who benefit from having a privileged social status.

8.5 Conclusion and future directions

This thesis has attempted to understand Romani LGBTIQ people's experiences of multiple identities and identifications. In so doing, it has drawn upon the lived experiences of 24 self-identified Romani LGBTIQ people of various ages and backgrounds, coming from several regions in Europe and North America. This qualitative ethnographic investigation does not claim to be representative, especially as most of the research participants (see Section 4.6). came from more privileged backgrounds and positions in Romani communities, spoke multiple languages and/or were able to travel to the two International Roma LGBT conferences in 2015 and 2016. Including the voices of less privileged and/or more vulnerable Romani LGBTIQ people – a line of inquiry that is undoubtedly very much needed – would have necessitated a methodological approach that allows greater flexibility in terms of time and resources to be able to interview Romani LGBTIQ people who cannot travel, do not speak multiple languages and/or do not have access to the internet.

This thesis is amongst the first ones of its kind to offer a very detailed insight into the lives and experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. The lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people included in this study convey powerful messages of personal strength, perseverance, resilience and survival in the face of adversities such as rejection, exclusion, and discrimination. Simultaneously, thanks to the gamut of commonalities that Romani LGBTIQ people share with Roma, non-Roma, LGBTIQ and non-LGBTIQ people, they can be regarded as epitomes of the notional spaces between difference and sameness. As a result of this relatability, this research has the potential to speak to the lives and experiences of many other non-normative (queer) intersectional people.

This research study may be seen as just one of many beginnings. Below, I outline a number of potential next steps and directions.

8.5.1 Community initiatives and social media

What is to follow may involve initiatives to disseminate the research findings, including through social media. As this research has demonstrated (see Sections 1.3.2 and Chapter 4), social media represent important access points and as such, they entail a degree of methodological innovation that can be tapped into, especially around building voice and giving people presence, visibility and representation using visual activism, multimedia and/or text. Additionally, recognising the importance of impactful research for advocacy, the research findings can support and feed into already existing national and transnational Romani LGBTIQ community groups (see Section 1.3.2) and/or recently emerged community initiatives such as Czech Romani LGBTIQ online counselling project 'Řeknu to/I'll say it'¹⁶ and/or a national project of Romani LGBTIQ consultants: a direct outcome of the first International Roma LGBT conference in 2015. The research can also contribute to developing new initiatives such as national outreach services for vulnerable and homeless Romani LGBTIQ people (see Section 8.5 above) and/or initiatives to support the physical and mental well-being of Romani LGBTIQ people of all ages who feel lonely and isolated: a need recognised by the research participants across the many diverse regions covered by this research. Assisted by this investigation, the outputs of these initiatives may benefit service providers, civil society organisations and institutions in the area of application and policy recommendations and may potentially feed into larger national and transnational policy frameworks.

¹⁶ <https://www.araart.cz/reknu-to>

8.5.2 National and transnational policy

Another potential step is to incorporate the research findings and/or any ensuing community, national and/or transnational policy initiatives such as the European LGBTIQ Roma, Gypsy, Sinti and Traveller Platform and/or the Prague Declaration,¹⁷ adopted at the first International Roma LGBT conference in 2015 and available in 8 languages, into larger policy frameworks and interventions designed to tackle and redress multiple and intersectional discrimination at the national and/or translational level. This may include European Union institutions such as the European Commission and/or transnational intergovernmental organisations such as the United Nations and/or intergovernmental organisations and institutions with Romani sections/units such as the Council of Europe and/or the Organisation for Cooperation and Security in Europe. This type of policy intervention would contribute to an acknowledgement of the particular experiences and needs of Romani LGBTIQ people; and of the importance of addressing and incorporating these experiences and needs into any and/or all gender and sexuality mainstreaming and anti-discrimination policy interventions within Romani communities, as well as within non-Romani LGBTIQ communities.

8.5.3 Academic research

The potential next steps may also involve academic research that does not focus on Roma only. In the last stages of data analysis, kinship was a theme coming up as a critical factor enabling Romani LGBTIQ people's intersectional identities and identifications. A potential research study could investigate queer, non-normative kinship across different populations, group(ing)s, and/or communities, including Roma. Taking stock of the rich pool of kinship literatures across various disciplines, including Romani Studies and queer theorising, such

¹⁷ <http://www.osce.org/odihr/188136?download=true>

research would make it possible to explore ways in which queer intersectional identities and identifications play out in various non-normative kinship models. Additionally, aided by queer kinship theorising, such research would help to challenge the persistent essentialising trend that has been characteristic of some Romani Studies literature on kinship, and to counter a number of stereotypical, at times detrimental accounts of Romani kinship. According to one such account, Roma have ‘a significant preference for endogamous marriage’, which the authors believe to be a characteristic trait of traditional Romani culture, as well as an indication that if their conclusions are correct, ‘then the majority of expert literature on family and kinship among Roma is incorrect’ (Budilová and Jakoubek 2007, 65, 67). Budilová and Jakoubek’s (2007) research is not only problematic in their selection of particular Romani populations, group(ings) and/or communities while overlooking different patterns across other Romani communities and/or similar patterns across non-Romani communities. Their ‘hijacking’ of other nuanced, albeit somewhat essentialising and at times outdated research on Romani kinship (for example San Roman 1973; Okely 1975; Gay y Blasco 2000; Martin and Gamella 2005) to serve the purpose of their own research and scholarly publications becomes even more problematic, especially given their claims that the research they ‘use’ presents a sufficient amount of data that allows for generalisations. Thus, they end up drawing far-reaching conclusions about Romani kinship, families and consanguineous marriages that have serious implications for those who ethnically identify and/or are identified as Romani, thus re-inscribing ethnic/racial *difference* and reinforcing ethnic/racial stereotypes by portraying Roma as *distinct* and *differing* from non-Roma. This thesis argues that the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people presented herein pose a fundamental challenge to such stereotypical, one-dimensional and essentialising portrayals of Roma.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form (interviews and Skype interviews)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Name of Researcher: Lucie Fremlova

1. I _____ agree to be involved in this research which investigates the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. I give my permission for Lucie Fremlova to use excerpts from the interview.

2. Lucie Fremlova has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.

3. I am aware that I will be asked to actively take part in a conversation about and share my experiences of being an LGBTIQ Romani person.

4. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential. The data will be retained for 10 years, stored in a secure area and disposed of securely. I understand that relevant (anonymous) sections of any of data collected during the study may be looked at by the supervisors of this dissertation for teaching and research purposes.

5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e by autumn 2016 the latest) without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. I also understand that should this happen, there will be no adverse effects to leaving the study.

6. I understand that the data collected will be used as part of a dissertation project. I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating Lucie Fremlova's research (including in a dissertation which will be held in the School of Applied Social Sciences University of Brighton). I understand that only anonymous excerpts from the research will be used in this write up, unless I specifically request to be named.

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

8. I agree to have the interview audio-recorded.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 2: Consent form (focus groups)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Name of Researcher: Lucie Fremlova

1. I _____ agree to be involved in this research which investigates the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. I give my permission for Lucie Fremlova to use excerpts from the focus group.
2. Lucie Fremlova has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.
3. I am aware that I will be asked to actively participate in the discussion on the experiences of LGBTIQ Romani people as part of the focus group.
4. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential. The data will be retained for 10 years, stored in a secure area and disposed of securely. I understand that relevant (anonymous) sections of any of data collected during the study may be looked at by the supervisors of this dissertation for teaching and research purposes.
5. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest) without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. I also understand that should this happen, there will be no adverse effects to leaving the study.
6. I understand that the data collected will be used as part of a dissertation project. I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating Lucie Fremlova's research (including in a dissertation which will be held in the School of Applied Social Sciences University of Brighton). I understand that only anonymous excerpts from the research will be used in this write up, unless I specifically request to be named.
7. I agree to take part in the above study.
8. I agree to have the focus group to be audio-recorded.
9. I agree to maintain confidentiality of information shared by all the participants in this focus group.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix 3: Consent form (observation)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Name of Researcher: Lucie Fremlova

1. I _____ agree to be involved in this research which investigates the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. I give my permission for Lucie Fremlova to observe me and to use excerpts from the observation.

2. Lucie Fremlova has explained to my satisfaction the purpose of the study. I have been informed of the nature and purposes of the study and have read the information sheet. I understand the principles and processes of the study.

3. I understand that my personal details (including my contact details) will remain confidential. The data will be retained for 10 years, stored in a secure area and disposed of securely. I understand that relevant (anonymous) sections of any of data collected during the study may be looked at by the supervisors of this dissertation for teaching and research purposes.

4. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e by autumn 2016 the latest) without giving any reason, without my rights being affected. I also understand that should this happen, there will be no adverse effects to leaving the study.

5. I understand that the data collected will be used as part of a dissertation project. I understand that the data will be used in writing up and disseminating Lucie Fremlova's research (including in a dissertation which will be held in the School of Applied Social Sciences University of Brighton). I understand that only anonymous excerpts from the research will be used in this write up.

6. I agree to take part in the above study.

7. I agree to maintain confidentiality of information shared by all the participants in this observation.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Name of Person taking consent (if different from researcher)	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 4: Participant information sheet (interviews and Skype interviews)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study entitled *The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma*. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask Lucie Fremlova if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

Currently there is virtually no information available on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. The research aims to make up for this lack of information by investigating and highlighting the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people across Europe. It will explore the ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate their sexual and ethnic identities vis-a-vis different types of marginalisations, oppression, exclusion, as well as inclusion, recognition and belonging in the mainstream majority, Romani, and LGBTIQ communities.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen based on our previous cooperation, which makes me believe that your views and experiences would be a major asset to the study. Approximately 40 other participants will be involved in the research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest) and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect any aspect of your professional or personal relation with the researcher.

What will happen to me if I take part?

- you will participate in an interview which will take approximately 60 minutes
- the whole research will last until the winter of 2017
- you will be involved for a maximum of one interview in 2015, or one interview in 2016
- what exactly will happen

During the interview, we will have an in-depth conversation about your experiences of being and identifying as Romani LGBTIQ (coming out), and ways in which you have (not) been accepted and recognised by your family, Romani community, as well as LGBTIQ community.

The interview will be audio recorded. This is to allow the researcher to analyse the data in detail afterwards by listening to the recording. Should you wish not to be audio recorded, you will be asked to indicate so at your earliest convenience so that the researcher can switch off the device.

Expenses and payments:

You will not be paid or offered any compensation for being involved in the interview.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to engage in the interview about your experiences of being and identifying as Romani LGBTIQ (coming out), and ways in which you have (not) been accepted and recognised by your family, Romani community, as well as LGBTIQ community.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The possible risks may include talking about sensitive subjects in front of the researcher whom do not know, especially if you have not come out yet. This may involve feelings of discomfort or inconvenience.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no intended benefits to you from taking part in the study, apart to being able to talk freely about issues that you may not be able to talk about frequently.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study without incurring any negative effects at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded at every stage during and after the study.

Specifically,

- data about you will be collected during the interview
- it will be stored securely in password protected files
- it will be used for the subsequent data analysis and report writing.
- the researcher's supervisors at the University of Brighton will have access to view your data
- the raw data will be retained for 10 years and will be disposed of securely
- the researcher, Lucie Fremlova, will keep your information private in discussions about the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be published as part of the dissertation; electronic copies of dissertation will be made available to those participants reading English. A Czech summary will be made available to non-English speaking and reading participants. You will not be identified in any report and/or publication unless you have consented to release such information.

What if there is a problem?

Should a problem arise, please contact one of my supervisors at the School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Brighton on the following email address and telephone number:

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Fax: +44 (0) 1273 643473

Email: sassenquiries@brighton.ac.uk

Contact details:

You can contact me with any queries regarding the research study using the following contact details:

Lucie Fremlova

Email: l.fremlova2@brighton.ac.uk

Should you have any concerns/complaints about the study, please contact the school office

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Appendix 5: Participant information sheet (focus groups)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study entitled *The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma*. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask Lucie Fremlova if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

Currently there is virtually no information available on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. The research aims to make up for this lack of information by investigating and highlighting the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people across Europe. It will explore the ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate their sexual and ethnic identities vis-a-vis different types of marginalisations, oppression, exclusion, as well as inclusion, recognition and belonging in the mainstream majority, Romani, and LGBTIQ communities.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen based on our previous cooperation, which makes me believe that your views and experiences would be a major asset to the study. Approximately 40 other participants will be involved in the research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest) and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect any aspect of your professional or personal relation with the researcher.

What will happen to me if I take part?

- you will participate in a focus group which will take approximately 90 minutes
- the whole research will last until the winter of 2017
- you will be involved for a maximum of one focus group in 2015 and one focus group in 2016

During the focus group that you will attend, there will be a maximum of 8 people present, including yourself. During the focus group, the participants will discuss their experiences of identity, being and identifying as Romani LGBTIQ (coming out), and ways in which you have (not) been accepted and recognised by your family, Romani community, as well as LGBTIQ community. Your identity will be known to other focus group participants and the researcher. In order to ensure that others in the groups will respect the confidentiality of the group, the consent form that you will be asked to sign will include a clause regarding confidentiality to indicate that you will keep all comments made during the focus group confidential and not discuss what was said outside the meeting.

The focus group will be audio recorded. This is to allow the researcher to analyse the data in detail afterwards by listening to the recording. Should you wish not to be audio recorded, please indicate so at your earliest convenience so that the researcher can prepare and/or switch off the device. Specific consent forms will be handed out to those participants whom the researcher will decide to quote verbatim.

Expenses and payments:

You will not be paid or offered any compensation for being involved in the focus groups.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to engage in the focus group discussion about your experiences of being and identifying as Romani LGBTIQ (coming out), and ways in which you have (not) been accepted and recognised by your family, Romani community, as well as LGBTIQ community.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The possible risks may include talking about sensitive subjects in front of people that you do not know, especially if you have not come out yet. This may involve feelings of discomfort or inconvenience.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no intended benefits to you from taking part in the study, apart to being able to talk freely about issues that you may not be able to talk about frequently.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study without incurring any negative effects at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded at every stage during and after the study. Specifically,

- data about you will be collected during the interview
- it will be stored securely in password protected files
- it will be used for the subsequent data analysis and report writing.
- the researcher's supervisors at the University of Brighton will have access to view your data
- the raw data will be retained for 10 years and will be disposed of securely
- the researcher, Lucie Fremlova, will keep your information private in discussions about the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be published as part of the dissertation; electronic copies of dissertation will be made available to those participants reading English. A Czech summary will be made available to non-English speaking and reading participants. You will not be identified in any report and/or publication unless you have consented to release such information.

What if there is a problem?

Should a problem arise, please contact one of my supervisors at the School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Brighton on the following email address and telephone number:

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Fax: +44 (0) 1273 643473

Email: sassenquiries@brighton.ac.uk

Contact details:

You can contact me with any queries regarding the research study using the following contact details:

Lucie Fremlova

Email: l.fremlova2@brighton.ac.uk

Should you have any concerns/complaints about the study, please contact the school office

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Appendix 6: Participant information sheet (observation)

Study title: The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma

Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study entitled *The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma*. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Talk to others about the study if you wish.

Please ask Lucie Fremlova if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

Currently there is virtually no information available on the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people. The research aims to make up for this lack of information by investigating and highlighting the lived experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people across Europe. It will explore the ways in which Romani LGBTIQ people negotiate their sexual and ethnic identities vis-a-vis different types of marginalisations, oppression, exclusion, as well as inclusion, recognition and belonging in the mainstream majority, Romani, and LGBTIQ communities.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen based on our previous cooperation, which makes me believe that your views and experiences would be a major asset to the study. Approximately 40 other participants will be involved in the research.

Do I have to take part?

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest) and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect any aspect of your professional or personal relation with the researcher.

What will happen to me if I take part?

- you will participate in events that the researcher will be observing
- the whole research will last until the winter of 2017

During observation, the researcher will be observing what happens and gets said in the event that you will be taking part in. The researcher will be taking notes only, focusing on the atmosphere and group dynamics. The observation will not be used to judge anyone's performance during the event.

Expenses and payments:

Participants shall not be paid or offered any compensation for being involved in observation.

What do I have to do?

You will be asked to engage in the focus group discussion about your experiences of being and identifying as Romani LGBTIQ (coming out), and ways in which you have (not) been accepted and recognised by your family, Romani community, as well as LGBTIQ community.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

The possible risks may include talking about sensitive subjects in front of people that you do not know, especially if you have not come out yet. This may involve feelings of discomfort or inconvenience.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

There are no intended benefits to you from taking part in the study, apart to being able to talk freely about issues that you may not be able to talk about frequently.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

You can withdraw from the study without incurring any negative effects at any time in the course of conducting the fieldwork (before the research is written up, i.e. by autumn 2016 the latest).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Your confidentiality will be safeguarded at every stage during and after the study.

Specifically,

- data about you will be collected during the interview
- it will be stored securely in password protected files
- it will be used for the subsequent data analysis and report writing.
- the researcher's supervisors at the University of Brighton will have access to view your data
- the raw data will be retained for 10 years and will be disposed of securely
- the researcher, Lucie Fremlova, will keep your information private in discussions about the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be published as part of the dissertation; electronic copies of dissertation will be made available to those participants reading English. A Czech summary will be made available to non-English speaking and reading participants. You will not be identified in any report and/or publication unless you have consented to release such information.

What if there is a problem?

Should a problem arise, please contact one of my supervisors at the School of Applied Social Sciences, University of Brighton on the following email address and telephone number:

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Fax: +44 (0) 1273 643473

Email: sassenquiries@brighton.ac.uk

Contact details:

You can contact me with any queries regarding the research study using the following contact details:

Lucie Fremlova

Email: l.fremlova2@brighton.ac.uk

Should you have any concerns/complaints about the study, please contact the school office

Tel: +44 (0) 1273 643988

Appendix 7: Generic introductory email

Dear ...

I am writing to you in relation to my PhD research study about the experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people which I am currently undertaking as part of my PhD studies at the School of Applied Social Sciences at the University of Brighton.

As your views and experiences would be a major asset, I would like to ask you to consider participating in the study, which will be completely anonymous.

As participation in the research study is on a voluntary basis, I would like to emphasise that there is absolutely no obligation for you to participate in it. Measures will be taken to protect confidentiality of information at every stage of the research.

Should you decide to participate in the study, please indicate so to me in writing.

Please note that you can withdraw from the study at any point in time. Should this happen, there will be no adverse effects to leaving the study.

Should you have any queries in relation to the study, I will be happy to provide you with more information.

Best wishes,

Lucie Fremlova

--

LUCIE FREMLOVA
MPhil/PhD student
School of Applied Social Sciences
University of Brighton
email: l.fremlova2@brighton.ac.uk

Appendix 8: List of service providers Czech Republic

PROUD

www.proudem.cz

Advice and support by email: poradna@proudem.cz

list of providers of psychological and social support

<http://proudem.cz/mimo-proud/psychosocialni-pomoc.html>

ARA ART

email: ARAART@seznam.cz

Joint PROUD and ARA ART LGBT Roma counselling online

<https://www.sbarvouven.cz/cs/zeptej-se-online> (peer counsellor Patrik)

Counselling Centre Justyna

Help and support for victims of hate crime

online form <http://www.in-ius.cz/formular/>

Tel +420 773 177 636 or +420 212 242 300

Email: poradna@in-ius.cz

United Kingdom

Lesbian and Gay Foundation

www.lgf.org.uk

Helpline 0845 3 30 3030

helpline@lgf.org.uk

London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard

www.llgs.org.uk

Helpline 0300 330 0630

Instant messaging <http://www.llgs.org.uk/instant-messaging.html>

Email support chris@llgs.org.uk

Bright & Hove LGBT Switchboard

Web chat <http://switchboard.org.uk>

Helpline 01273 20 40 50

Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gay

<http://www.fflag.org.uk>

Helpline 0845 652 0311

LGBT Helpline Scotland

<http://www.lgbt-helpline-scotland.org.uk>

helpline@lgbthealth.org.uk

Helpline 0300 123 2523

LGBT Youth Scotland

<https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/young-people>

Helpline 0131 555 3940

SMS: 07786 202 370

Email: info@lgbtyouth.org.uk

LGBT Cymru Helpline & Counselling Service

<http://www.lgbtcymruhelpline.org.uk>

Free phone 0800 840 2069

Email: <http://www.lgbtcymruhelpline.org.uk/contact.html>

Cara-Friend LGBT Switchboard Northern Ireland

Helpline 0808 8000 390

email switchboard@cara-friend.org.uk

web chat <http://www.cara-friend.org.uk/projects/lgbt-switchboard-ni>

Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA)

tel. 07719576524

email info@nigra.org.uk

Appendix 9: Interview guide

The aim of the interview is to explore further key issues emanating from the focus groups related (but not limited) to marginalisation, experiences and perceptions of sexuality and gender identity inside and outside Romani communities; acceptance, recognition, ex/inclusion, negotiation, belonging (or lack thereof) of Romani LGBTIQ people and the strategies deployed by Romani LGBTIQ people to negotiate their identities inside and outside Romani communities.

1 Personal questions

Please tell me about yourself

- How old are you?
- Do you come from a town/city/village?
- How many LGBTIQ do you know of that live there?

2 Family-related questions

Please tell me about your family

- How would describe your relationship with your family?
- How are gender roles defined in your community and in the wider society?
- What do you perceive your gender role to be?

3 Questions related to identity, coming-out and social interactions within the family and the Roma/LGBT communities

Please tell me how you identify yourself

- Who have you come out to?
- If/when you came out, how did you feel?
- How do you feel as an LGBTIQ person within your family and the wider Roma community? Have you been accepted?
- How has it been for your family?
- How do you feel as a Romani person within the LGBTIQ community?
- What do you feel is good about being LGBTIQ Roma?
- What would do to make a lasting change to the lives of LGBTIQ Roma?
-

Appendix 10: Focus group guide

The aim of the focus groups is to scope key issues related (but not limited) to marginalisation, experiences and perceptions of sexuality and gender identity inside and outside Romani communities; acceptance, recognition, ex/inclusion, negotiation, belonging (or lack thereof) of Romani LGBTIQ people and the strategies deployed by Romani LGBTIQ people to negotiate their identities inside and outside Romani communities.

Another aim is to identify potential participants in one-to-one interviews with Romani

1. Introduction to the FG – introducing the research and the researcher, consent forms, participant sheets and how the information given by the participants will be used;
2. Introducing the participants in the FG.
3. Some of the following questions may be used to get the group talking and sharing:
 - What does being Romani LGBTIQ mean to you?
 - What is good about it and what are some of the challenges?
 - How do you generally define gender roles?
 - How do you feel as an LGBTIQ person within your family and the wider Roma community? Have you been accepted?
 - How has it been for your family?
 - How do you feel as a Romani person within the LGBTIQ community?
 - What would do to make a lasting change to the lives of LGBTIQ Roma?
4. Conclusions by the researcher, Q&A, thanks, next steps

Appendix 11: Protocol to follow if participants become distressed during participation

This protocol has been devised to deal with the possibility that some participants may become distressed and/or agitated during their involvement in the research. The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer(y)(ing) Roma. Below follows a three step protocol detailing signs of distress that the researcher will look out for, as well as action to take at each stage. It is not expected that extreme distress will occur, nor that the relevant action will become necessary. However it is included in the protocol, in case of emergencies where such professionals cannot be reached in time.

Mild distress:

Signs to look out for:

- . 1) Tearfulness
- . 2) Voice becomes choked with emotion/difficulty speaking
- . 3) Participant becomes distracted/restless

Action to take:

- . 1) Ask participant if they are happy to continue
- . 2) Offer them time to pause and compose themselves
- . 3) Remind them they can stop at any time they wish if they become too distressed

Severe distress:

Signs to look out for:

- . 1) Uncontrolled crying/wailing, inability to talk coherently
- . 2) Panic attack - e.g. hyperventilation, shaking, fear of impending heart attack
- . 3) Intrusive thoughts of the traumatic event - e.g. flashbacks

Action to take:

- . 1) The researcher will intervene to terminate the interview.
- . 2) The debrief will begin immediately
- . 3) Relaxation techniques will be suggested to regulate breathing/reduce agitation
- . 4) The researcher will recognise participants' distress, and reassure that their experiences are normal reactions to abnormal events and that most people recover from experiences of severe distress

- . 5) If any unresolved issues arise during the interview, accept and validate their distress, but suggest that they discuss with mental health professionals and remind participants that this is not designed as a therapeutic interaction
- . 6) Details of counselling/therapeutic services available will be offered to participants

Extreme distress:

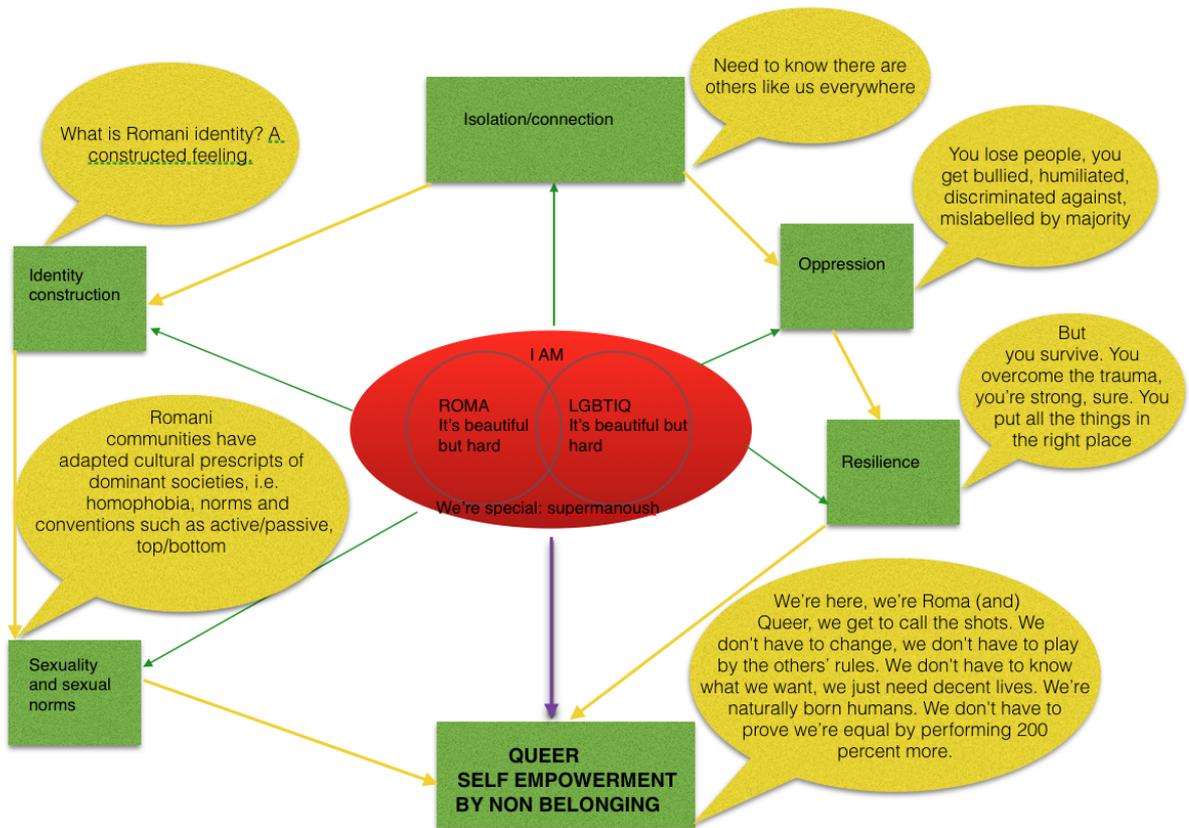
Signs to look out for:

- . 1) Severe agitation and possible verbal or physical aggression
- . 2) In very extreme cases - possible psychotic breakdown where the participant relives the traumatic incident and begins to lose touch with reality

Action to take:

- . 1) Maintain safety of participant and researcher
- . 2) If the researcher has concerns for the participant's or others' safety, she will inform them that she has a duty to inform any existing contacts they have with mental health services.
- . 3) If the researcher believes that either the participant or someone else is in immediate danger, then she will suggest that they present themselves to the local A&E Department and ask for the on-call psychiatric liaison team.
- . 4) If the participant is unwilling to seek immediate help and becomes violent, then the Police will be called and asked to use their powers to detain someone and take them to a place of safety pending psychiatric assessment. (This last option would only be used in an extreme emergency)

Appendix 12: Initial thematic map



The initial six themes included:

- Oppression
- Identity construction
- Sexuality and sexual norms
- Isolation/connection
- Resilience
- Queer self-empowerment by non belonging

Appendix 13: End of project form to College Research Ethics Committee

Version 2 August 2016

End of project report form to College Research Ethics Committee		
Title of project: <i>The experiences of Romani LGBTIQ people: Queer (y)ing Roma</i>		
Name of lead researcher: <i>Lucie FREMLIVA</i>		School:
Date CREC approval obtained: <i>13/7/2015</i>	Dates project undertaken: <i>Aug '15 - Nov '16</i>	Date report submitted: <i>19 Sept 2017</i>
Please state whether the aims of the project were achieved and provide a brief summary of research outcomes :		
Were any changes in protocols made during the project?:		YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please say whether this presented any ethical issues and if so how these were addressed:		
Did any unforeseen ethical issues arise during the project?		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please say how these were addressed: <i>One research participant had an injury unrelated to the research in the summer of 2017 and was unable to sign the informed consent form.</i>		
Did any adverse events which occur during the project?		YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> If yes, please provide details of how these were dealt with: <i>Two of the participants in the 1st Fg in 2015 ended up crying; I comforted them and provided them with all the necessary information re support</i>		
Please provide any suggestions or recommendations for future ethics guidance or processes:		