

A misty, blue-toned park scene. In the foreground, a wooden bench with a dark metal frame sits on a path covered in fallen leaves. The background is filled with bare, dark trees, their branches silhouetted against a hazy, light blue mist. The overall atmosphere is quiet and somewhat somber.

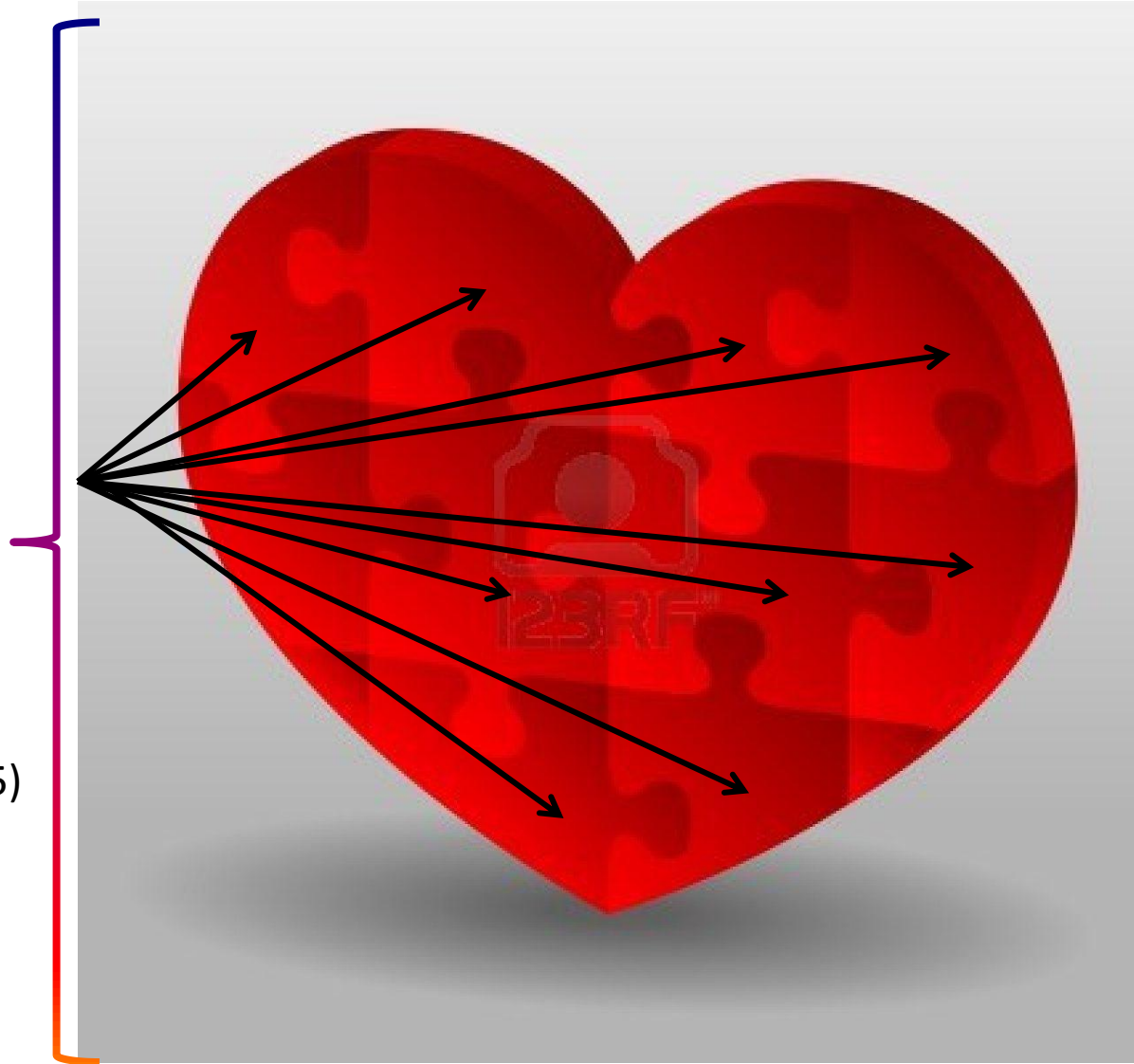
Hidden voices....guiding the way

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Vulnerability and health

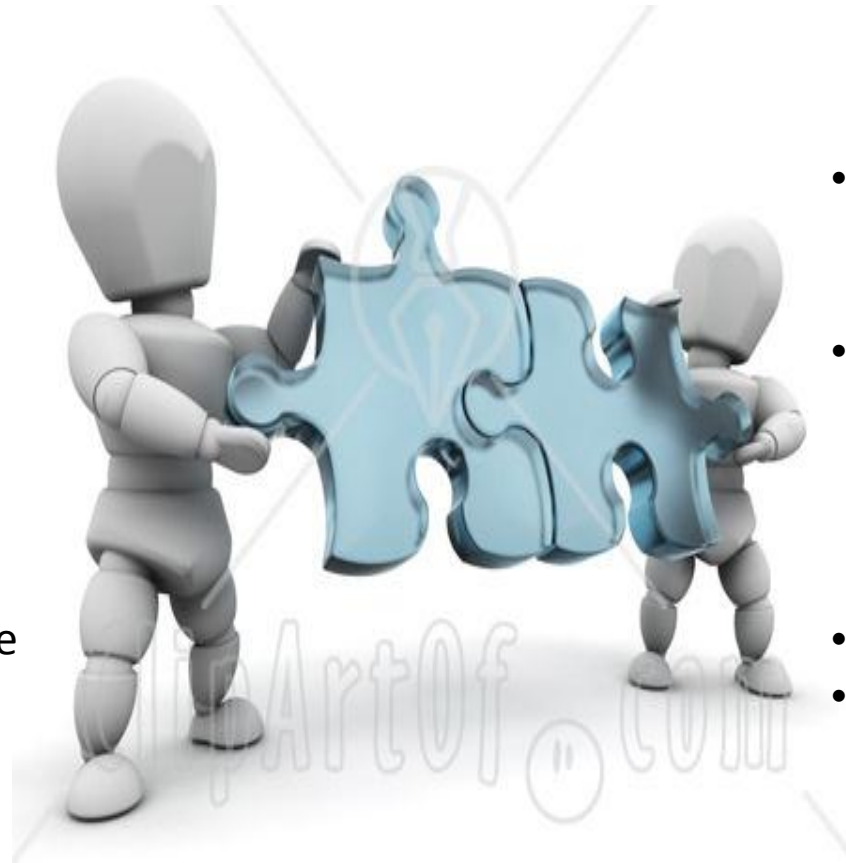
- People can experience vulnerability whenever their health or usual function is compromised, thus vulnerability increases when they enter unfamiliar surroundings, situations or relationships (NMC 2002).
- Within health care a host of situations can “herald” vulnerability for a person, including becoming a patient as this often incorporates a loss of identity (Barker 2005:5)
- Spiers (2005) identifies that vulnerability is an essential concept for nurses due to its links with health and health problems.



Understanding Vulnerability

Etic

- Susceptibility to & possibility of harm.
- Externally evaluated/judged normative, dichotomous, homogeneous.
- Quantitative biomedical measure of health
- says nothing about what the person might be experiencing

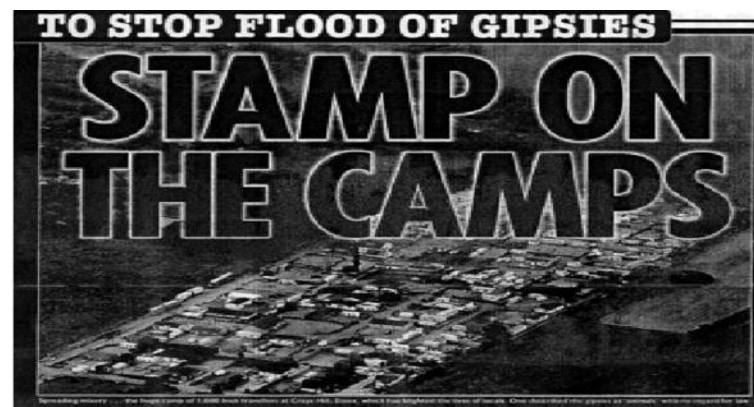


Emic

- State of being threatened & feeling/fear of harm”
- Internally judged, description of the experience of being/feeling vulnerable.
- Qualitative & holistic
- Silent in health care literature

Ethic Perspectives of Gypsy/Traveller Vulnerability

- Poorer physical (Goward et al. 2006) and mental health (Parry et al. 2007).
- 31% not permanently registered with a GP (Peters et al 2009).
- Inadequate information, inequitable & poorly delivered services (Hodgins et al 2006.)
- One of the most socially excluded marginalised groups (McCaffery 2009; Van Cleemput et al. 2007) who experience discrimination (Karner 2004; Turner 2002).



Where are the Gypsies/Travellers voices...??
Are we hearing them..??



“Can you talk to me about your life as a Gypsy/Traveller and describe all the times the word vulnerability applied to your life, time in which you felt vulnerable”

A feeling of vulnerability created by the potential or actual lack of physical travelling experience

- Tommy, (showman) ***“there’s something about the freedom of it just to be outside”***
- Christina (Romany), noted that travelling was an integral part of her life as a child growing up ***“We went away every summer in a wagon”***.
- Issy (Romany) ***“...there is a recent saying that you can take the travelling from the gypsies but you can’t take the gypsies from the gypsies or travelling. Although, I’ve got this base here, I go off; I suppose a bit like the Aboriginals, we go walkabouts. You know, we suddenly think well I’m going to go and you go”***.



Fear of the future and declining physical health

- Tommy (Showman) found being in hospital a difficult experience due to a feeling of being frightened of both the environment as well as a fear of contracting a nosocomial infection; ***“I don’t have the best of health, I’m asthmatic and as you get older you have more problems. I avoid going, I’ll only go if I’ve desperately got to go/don’t like going, don’t like being involved.. hate hospitals. I find them quite frightening places, people are ill and dying .. I want to get out as fast as I can really”***
- Accessing healthcare is also more problematic if you are nomadic ***“But nearly everyone you go to they say to put down for temporary and that can take maybe a week or so. But in that time, that week while you’re waiting to see the doctor you’re pulled out..... So basically what we do is we just go to the A & E, the emergency hospitals and the doctor will see you.....” Jimmy (Irish Traveller)***

Fear of the future and declining physical health

- **“My future I fear. I never thought about it before but I’ve had plenty of time to think about it that I don’t want to live to the age where I’d be a burden on the boys. They would have to put me into care. I’ve got a fear of going into care. I would rather die than go into care”**
- **“I think losing your identity would be a lot to do with it.Part of our culture is that when you are old you are took back within the community and you are looked after your immediate family with help from others, which we do”**



Being an outsider; variant - insider identity

- ***“...that’s just the way we feel, that people don’t trust us, and therefore we stick to our own”*** Christina (Romany).
- ***“it is the sort of thing that over the generations, and I mean there’s 600 years of generations of being segregated, poked at, made to stand out. You just cling to your own environment; you cling to your own family”.*** Issy (Romany)
- ***“In the bigger school they had me a one-to-one tutor. I had go to the school but I was separate from everybody else. Me mam didn't want us mixing with other kids, because you get a lot of other kids talking about things that we were not allowed to know about.*** Mary (Irish Traveller)



Being an outsider; Variant Perceptions of others outside the Gypsy/Traveller community

- ***“They put me into school and that was when people first started calling me a gypsy, smelly and stuff. And I couldn’t understand it. I didn’t know what a gypsy was. I really realised that we weren’t liked. That we were completely different - different person to what country people were”.*** Jimmy (Irish Traveller)
- Christina (Romany) ***“As soon as they found out I was a traveller, they didn’t want to know. I spent my school life living as a gypsy, unwanted in school and wasting my school years really being the gypsy everybody expected me to be: not bothering in class and everything because that was what was expected of me”.***
- ***“Because I don’t like bricks and mortar. They bear down on me. They cut me off. They segregate me”*** Issy (Romany).



Vulnerability connected to the ambiguities of their historical, cultural and geographical identity.

- The Irish travellers that I spoke were all born in England and had never lived in Ireland still ascribed themselves to be Irish Travellers, denoting a strong cultural identity. Jimmy said ***“So, just because I’m an Irish traveller. I was born in the UK though. My wife was born in the UK. All my kids and grandkids were born in the UK. I wouldn’t say any of my kids have been in Ireland in all their life for more than 24 hours”***.
- For Christina, her cultural identify as Romany was not challenged by where she was living, although it would affect non gypsies perception of her ***“We moved into a house I was probably coming up to my GCSEs and it was really weird because one of the posh girls actually said to me: “Oh, now you are not a gypsy anymore, do you fancy coming into town with me.” And I said: “No, I am still the gypsy I always was.” And it is amazing how they did see that if I did live in a house I wasn’t a gypsy. It was just madness”***

Vulnerability connected to the ambiguities of their historical, cultural and geographical identity.

- ***Because all the government now is trying to do is to stop planning so that they can put us in housing and hopefully we will lose our identity and behave and be one of them eventually. That is their aim. ..there is a sinister element here that we are going to go through another ethnic cleansing – Issy (Romany Gypsy)***
- ***You take it from me, within another 20 years...you won't see a traveller on the road it, it's gone....they want to wipe us out...that's what I'm saying. You might say that its going a bit too far, but I'm telling you honestly and a lot.. lot of people of my culture are thinking the same way – Jimmy (Irish Traveller)***
- ***In years to come there will be no travellers, no offence but people like outsiders are just going to try to erase travellers to get rid of them like we were never there – Mary (Irish Traveller)***
- ***Because you know the traveller way is certainly dying out Christina (Romany Traveller)***





It is clear that listening to hidden voices provides us with a very different, contrasting perspective. These voices have to be listened to, if we are to be effective working with other cultural groups.

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