

May 2010

## Roma stereotypes not born out by reality

Attitudes held by the public about the Roma community are likely to improve if communities have more contact with one other, according to new research at The University of Manchester.

The results will be presented at a special event at the University on Thursday, 10 June, at 5pm in the main Lecture Theatre, Samuel Alexander Building (Humanities), on the University's Oxford Road campus.

The findings of the survey in East Manchester also found that suspicion toward the Roma is based on pre-conceptions and second-hand reports rather than on direct encounters with the Romani community.

Professor Matras said: "These results add to the body of evidence that communication barriers are the root of many problems between the Roma and non Roma communities. Though the overwhelming majority of local respondents were found to hold negative attitudes, they admitted that those attitudes were formed mainly on the basis of media reports and hearsay rather than personal encounters."

He added: "What many people don't realise is that the Romani people of Gorton belong to an Evangelical Church and adhere to a strict ban on smoking, alcohol consumption, and any form of violence. Their children attend local primary schools and continuing on secondary school."

Professor Matras and his team of researchers have also conducted earlier research to look at the Romani community in the same area of South Gorton. They concluded many Romani left their home town in South Eastern Romania to escape poverty, social exclusion and discrimination as 'Gypsies'. However, many found it hard to make a living in the UK.

The team recommended that outreach workers of Romani background be recruited to serve as 'role models' for the younger generation.

The latest research investigated Romani families who have emigrated to Manchester in recent years, and attitudes among local residents of non-Romani origin and public service employees.