




# Irish Traveller Children's Play: A Scoping Review

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Accepted: 27 September 2023 / Published online: 12 October 2023  
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## Abstract

Irish Traveller children, an ethnic indigenous minoritized community in Ireland are identified in Ireland's play policy as at higher risk of exclusion from realising their right to play, alongside a reported absence of research on indigenous children's play. This scoping review aimed to identify the breadth and scope of available research on representations of Irish Traveller children's play and the factors influencing play opportunities. Applying the updated Joanna Briggs Institute methodological guidance, a systematic search was completed of nine databases. Thirty-five peer reviewed studies met the inclusion criteria, descriptive study information was charted and summarised and enabling and restricting factors influencing Irish Traveller children's play were identified using an existing conceptual model. The scoping review findings revealed a limited focus within research on Irish Traveller children's play. Included studies however, provided evidence of; the importance of feeling a sense of belonging and safety to enable Irish Traveller children's access to preferred play opportunities, involving real life activities, physical play outdoors and play with others; Irish Traveller parents value and facilitation of play; and the significant restricting influence of racism on Irish Traveller children's play. Limited knowledge on Irish Traveller children's own perspectives on play and the need to address racism as a restricting influence on play in school and community environments are considered in relation to practice and further research. Discourses representing Irish Traveller children as marginalised, were problematized as reflective of culturist assumptions, and a shift towards understanding the situated nature of Irish Traveller children's play, as a capability is proposed.

**Keywords** Play · Schoolyard · Irish Travellers · Capabilities Approach · Racism

## Highlights

- Despite a limited focus within existing research on play, diverse representations of Irish Traveller children's play and multiple enabling and restricting factors were identified from included studies.
- Based on the reviewed literature, racism was identified as a significant restricting factor influencing Irish Traveller children's access to play opportunities intersecting with factors at societal, environmental, role of others and individual levels.
- Further research is needed to develop knowledge and understanding of Irish Traveller children's own understanding of play and play practices within schoolyard settings to support a realisation of play rights.

The inclusion of play as a right, for all children, in Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 2013) is premised on a significant body of evidence, generated from diverse disciplines, establishing play as central to childhood and children's health, learning

and wellbeing (Baines & Blatchford, 2019; Dankiw et al., 2020; Fahy et al., 2020; Gibson et al., 2017; Russell, 2018; Yogman et al., 2018). Despite almost universal ratification of the convention, Janot and Rico (2020) identified Ireland as one of the few European states to have recognised the importance of play through the development of an Irish play policy, noting however, Ireland's limited efforts towards children experiencing marginalisation. To address governments limited recognition of children's play rights, the UNCRC (2013) produced implementation measures in General Comment No. 17, identifying children from indigenous communities, as specifically at risk of exclusion

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from realising their play rights, due to ethnic and racial discrimination.

Ireland's play policy identifies Irish Traveller children, as at higher risk of exclusion from play opportunities, citing potential barriers as, inadequate accommodation, an absence of play spaces and discrimination (National Children's Office, 2004). Irish Travellers, an ethnic indigenous community in Ireland, also use *Pavees* or *Mincéirs* to describe their identity as people with a shared history, culture, and traditions including, nomadic ways of living (McGinley & Keane, 2021). Based on the evidence of persistent deficiencies in policy implementation to address the denial of basic human rights to Irish Traveller children (Community Foundation for Ireland, 2017; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Watson et al., 2017) advocating for the implementation of Ireland's Article 31 obligations and policy recommendations to address barriers to Irish Traveller children's right to play, would seem appropriate. However, this presumption requires further consideration, for different reasons presented in recent literature, including the potential commodification of play for government agendas (Gerlach & Browne, 2021; Russell, 2018) assumptions of the universality of play, children's rights and the nature of childhood (Evans et al., 2016; Gerlach et al., 2014; Roopnarine et al. (2015)) and critiques of representations of children as marginalised (Tisdall & Punch, 2012; Vanderbeck, 2009).

### Shifting Perspectives on Play for Development, to Play as a Right

General comment 17 defines play as, intrinsically motivated and undertaken for its own sake, differentiating play from recreation, leisure, rest, and cultural activities (UNCRC, 2013). This definition reflects the most frequent characteristics attributed to play, despite the lack of a consensus definition across diverse disciplinary perspectives

(Henricks, 2015). Play for the sake of play, according to Fahy et al. (2020) contrasts with previous instrumental representations of play for development, based on adult assumptions of what is considered play. Irish play policy advocates for Irish Traveller children's play as a means of overcoming prejudice and discrimination - play for social inclusion, presenting an agenda for play that conflicts with the policy's adopted definition of play as, freely chosen and not based on a predetermined outcome (National Children's Office, 2004). Russell (2018) cautioned against this recruitment of play stating that the public provision of play has predominantly been driven by government health, social and educational agendas. Increasingly, as play is situated within rights frameworks, Roopnarine et al. (2015)

points to a shift in the scholarship on play, as Horgan et al. (2017) describes towards play as an act of participation. This is evident in recent proposals of play as a capability that forefronts children's agency and their freedom to choose what they value (Hart & Brando, 2017; Sterman et al., 2020). The centrality of agency according to Evans et al. (2016) is key to understanding play as a right, in which children's capabilities to exercise agency and choice during and through play is relational and situated, both shaped by and shaping their social worlds (Sen, 2009; Sterman et al., 2020). Debates within child's rights research regarding an overemphasis on child protection rather than participation obligations is a reminder of the inherent tensions in recognising children as social agents (Horgan et al., 2017; Sirkko et al., 2019; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). However, for Irish Traveller children, Joyce (2015) argues that agency is constrained primarily, not by protectionist agendas, but by a society that views Irish Travellers as needing to be fixed. The relevance of culture to play and the potential influence of deficit culturist assumptions on representations of Irish Traveller children as at risk of play exclusion, thus requires further interrogation.

### Representations of Traveller Children as at Risk and Marginalised: Deficit & Culturist Discourses

Holmes' (2013) review of the research on play in different societies and cross culturally, affirms the relationship between play and culture, presenting diverse understandings of play and how it is valued. Despite a consensus regarding the universality of play as an activity of childhood (Roopnarine et al., 2015) increasingly, play researchers have criticised assumptions on play as representing mostly urban, white, middle-class perspectives (Bazyk et al., 2003; Gerlach et al., 2014; Roopnarine et al., 2015; Russell, 2018). Dender and Stagnitti's (2015) research confirmed an absence of literature on the everyday play of indigenous children. However, several studies have described observations of indigenous children involved in a wide variety of play, in all spaces and interpretations of play as preparation for adulthood, connected to real life experiences and contributing to cultural learning (Bazyk et al., 2003; Brown, 2012; Dender & Stagnitti, 2015; Gerlach et al., 2014; Levinson, 2005). This small body of research concludes that descriptions of indigenous children's play as different, is reflective of the normative framing of play and challenges assumptions of deprivation. Recognising that the meaning of play and indeed childhood are not universal, taking different forms in different cultures, shifts the focus from comparing children's play based on assumed norms, towards understanding play as situational and socially

constructed (Dender & Stagnitti, 2015) inclusive of the role of culture in children's play (Holmes, 2013).

Exploring the role of culture in Irish Traveller children's play is difficult given the reported dearth of research (Levinson, 2005) however, the evidence of predominant representations of Irish Travellers as at risk or as marginalised, framed in terms of culture (Snowdon & Eklund Karlsson, 2021), is relevant in attempting to understand the everyday experiences of Traveller children. Recent analysis of National and European research, policy and practice, reveals findings of Irish Travellers having little control in the construction of their social narrative, describing the historic racialization of Irish Travellers as rooted in ideologies of Irish Travellers as inferior to the majority "white, settled" population and significant evidence of pervasive AntiTraveller attitudes, discriminatory practices and oppressive, assimilative, and coercive policies (FRA, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020; Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021; Snowdon & Eklund Karlsson, 2021). Irish anti racist policy aligns with the definition of racism in the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) that includes racism towards individuals based on ethnic origin. Despite a recent survey reporting that only 15% of Irish people would consider an Irish Traveller as a friend, the social construction of Anti Traveller racism in Ireland manifests in a predominant denial of racism (Community Foundation for Ireland, 2017; McGinley & Keane, 2021) while implicitly blaming Irish Travellers for their disadvantages (Snowdon & Eklund Karlsson, 2021). Lauritzen and Nodland (2018) criticise the effectiveness of research on Irish Travellers to date, as focused on discourses that problematise culture, while failing to name racism as the primary cause of exclusion. According to Byrne and Szira (2018) the development of policy and practice interventions based on such discourses further legitimise inequalities and exclusion, presenting the attainment of rights as a complex process. A shift towards critically analysing the factors that influence indigenous children's play opportunities is thus advocated by Gerlach et al. (2014) as a means of tackling injustices and is integral to a rights-based approach to play according to Russell (2018).

## Reconceptualization of Play as Situated - A Focus on the Factors Influencing Access to Play Opportunities

The importance of context in realising play rights is present in the General Comment's focus on creating optimum environments and the specific reminder of the indivisibility of rights for indigenous children (UNCRC, 2013). Increasingly, disciplines such as Occupational Science and

Social Geography have applied frameworks to explore the socio-cultural and temporo-spatial factors influencing play (Evans et al., 2016; Gaskins et al., 2007; Moore & Lynch, 2018). Janot and Rico's (2020) review of the primary factors focused on across conceptual models, identified sufficient space as the most reported factor alongside time, resources, playmates, and permission. This focus on physical space is not reflective of the evidence on the importance and transaction of social, temporal, and systemic factors also in children's construction of play (Massey et al., 2020; Wenger et al., 2021). The interconnections between factors influencing play opportunities are acknowledged in Finney and Atkinson's (2020) proposed application of the Manchester circle model adapted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory. Based on a review of research on children's perspectives of play, factors associated with the individual, the physical environment, the role of other people and society were identified. Finney and Atkinson (2020) identified a need for further research on how factors influence play access across different contexts to support understandings of how adults can work to promote opportunities for play, referring specifically to groups identified by the General Comment.

A significant disparity exists within research on children's play and understandings of indigenous children's play (Gerlach et al., 2014) and there is an absence of play research in Ireland with diverse populations, including Irish Traveller children (Moore et al., 2020). The aim of this study is to identify and summarise the available research on representations of Irish Traveller children's everyday play and the factors influencing play opportunities. Given the exploratory and anticipated diverse nature of the research, a scoping review is recommended to gauge the breadth of evidence available. Scoping reviews allow for inclusion of findings across disciplines using varied methods and the identification of important concepts and factors apparent in the existing body of work (Peters et al., 2020).

## Methods

The structured systematic methodology guidance from the Joanna Briggs Institute (Peters et al., 2020) was employed for this scoping review. Metadata and results have been made available with this publication (Peters et al., 2020) and further details are available on request from the corresponding author in alignment with an open science approach.

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The development of research objectives and establishment of inclusion and exclusion criteria were informed by

discussions with expert researchers and Irish Traveller advocacy organisations. The Population, Concept, Context framework (Peters et al., 2020) was used to agree broad inclusion parameters given the exploratory nature of the research aims: 1) Studies with or about Irish Traveller children and youth inclusive of gender, ability, and religion, acknowledging the diversity and heterogeneity of Irish Travellers 2) Studies with any reference to the word, play, sport, games, use of toys, leisure, recreation, physical activity, or social interaction. This decision was based on the existing literature's critiques of assumptions of universality within existing definitions of play 3) Peer reviewed studies in English published from 1989-present as Irish Travellers reside primarily in English speaking countries and Article 31 was adopted in 1989. This decision to limit sources was informed also by the anticipated breadth of the scoping review and the critical intent to inform further research by mapping current evidence in peer reviews studies. Studies were excluded if 1) Studies applied ambiguous terms regarding ethnicity e.g., Gypsy, unless a clear statement of inclusion of data relevant to Irish Traveller children was present 2) The sole focus of the study was literature analysis or theoretical discussion.

### Search Strategy

A Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses- extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) flow chart diagram provides details of the search strategy process and results (Fig. 1). The search strategy involved a three-step design (Peters et al., 2020), an initial search to generate the search string, a title and abstract review and a full text review. An initial search of primary databases (Web of Science, Scopus, Psych Info) was performed to generate a concept analysis and trialled in consultation with a research librarian. Wide search terms using few limits were necessary to locate relevant findings. The first author performed a search of established databases across two university library systems in Sweden and Ireland using the agreed search string. ("Traveller" OR "Gypsy") AND child AND (play OR sport OR Games OR Leisure OR Recreation OR toys OR physical activity OR social interaction). The first author completed an initial screen of Google Scholar search results to remove titles on different topics ("Gypsy butterfly", "Virtual Traveller", authors named "Roma" and "tourism"). All remaining citations were uploaded to *Mendeley* Referencing Software, duplicates removed and exported to rayyan (rayyan.ai/) software for peer review. The first and second author completed a separate title and abstract review, consulting to clarify inclusion and exclusion criteria with corresponding authors. A full text review was completed separately by the first and second authors and the third author reviewed ten percent of

the studies, uploading decisions to rayyan (<https://rayyan.ai>). Follow up discussions resolved all disagreements. The final step in the search process involved hand-searching the reference lists of the 35 articles included, as recommended in scoping review guidelines due to the increased likelihood of sourcing relevant literature. A further 21 articles were identified and reviewed, however excluded due to the absence of any references to the search terms.

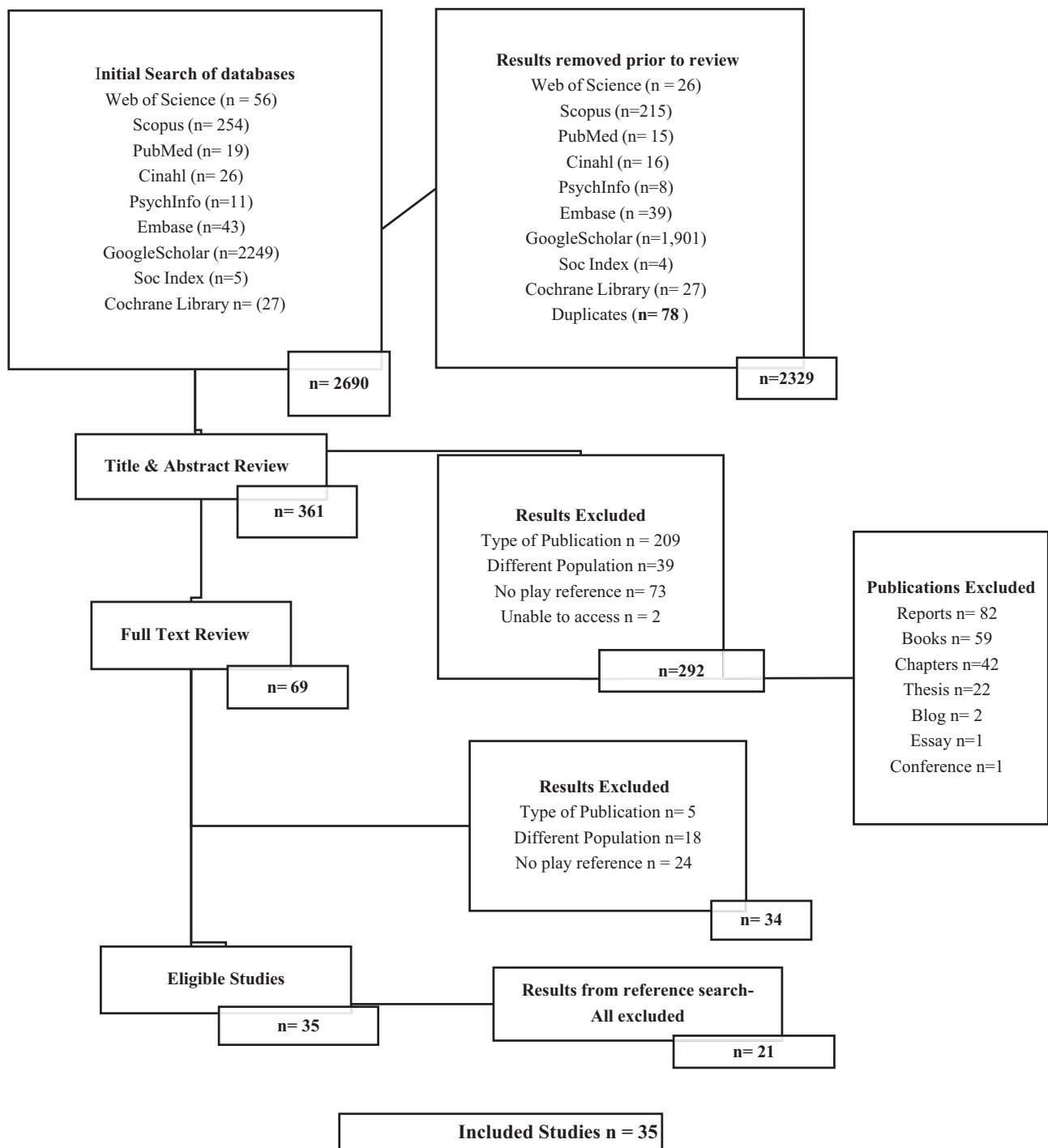
### Data Extraction, Charting and Analysis

A data extraction form was developed as part of the research protocol, piloted, and refined by the first author and discussed collaboratively with the research team (Peters et al., 2020). Descriptive information regarding the study characteristics and methodologies was extracted and charted by the first author and peer reviewed by the third author. As the research also aimed to explore factors relevant to play, Finney and Atkinson's (2020) model was used to create a coding framework as an extension to the data extraction form. The first author identified extracts from each article that described play or referred to play, or factors influencing play and categorised these results. A review of the full text articles was repeated by the first author and third author together with descriptive categories. The first author, third author and fourth author reviewed jointly the summarised findings in relation to the research aims.

## Results

### Overview of Characteristics of Included Studies

Thirty-five peer reviewed studies met the inclusion criteria. Descriptive characteristics including publication details, study design, participants, and relevance to play research are summarised in Table 1. Three studies of the thirty-five included described research objectives focused on play (Brunnberg & Visser-Schuurman, 2015; Levinson, 2005; Mason & Broughton, 2007). The remaining studies reported findings that included descriptions of play, sports, games, social interaction with peers or factors influencing access to play. Seventeen studies described research completed in a U.K context, relevant given the importance of context to children's play, with four studies referring to Gypsy, Roma, Traveller communities, a term used in U.K policy (Cudworth, 2015; Mason & Broughton, 2007; Myers et al., 2010; Smith & Ruston, 2013). Of the thirty-five studies, six reported on different analyses of the same dataset gathered as part of an ethnographic study (Levinson, 2005, 2007, 2008; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2004, 2006) and three reported on different analyses of an Early Years preschool case study (Boyle et al.,



**Fig. 1** Flow Chart Diagram of Search strategy and results using Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses- extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR) (Peters et al., 2020)

2018, 2020; Hanafin et al., 2018). All studies except for Fitzpatrick et al. (1997) employed qualitative methodologies with twenty-one studies reporting the voices of children and youth aged from 4-17 years, using interview, focus group methods and child orientated approaches including mapping and photovoice. Observational data

informed findings of eleven studies based in home, early years, school, and community environments. Fourteen studies described findings based on interview data from adults only, eleven including parents and adult Irish Travellers and ten including education, health, and social care practitioners.



**Table 1** Descriptive characteristics of studies reporting findings about Irish Traveller children & youth and play using JBI Appendix 11.1 (Peters et al., 2020)

Author, year, country, publication (alphabetical)	Relevance of study to Traveller children's play.	Play Aim	Study design	Participants (Number)
Boyle et al. (2018), Ireland, Encounters in Theory & History of Education.	Irish Traveller parents' value for the social aspect of play-based learning and the importance of identity on belonging in Early Years settings.	No	Qualitative Interviews, Focus Group, Questionnaire.	Early Years Practitioners (29) & Parents (36) of children Aged 3–5 years.
Boyle et al. (2020), Ireland, International Journal of Inclusive Education.	Irish Traveller parents' experiences of racism in school including during play and the importance of respect for identity to social inclusion with peers.	No	Critical Qualitative Interview, Focus Group & Document Analysis.	Early Years Practitioners (29) & Parents (36) of children Aged 3–5 years.
Brown (2012), U.K International Studies in Sociology of Education.	Irish Traveller child's experiences of exclusion during school breaktimes.	No	Qualitative Case Study Interview & Observation.	Teachers, & Parents & Children (1 of 17) <sup>a</sup> aged 9–11 years.
Brown (2017), U.K Children's Geographies.	Irish Traveller child's experience of peer interactions when moving schools and the importance yet lack of friendship and trust.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Children (1 of 5) <sup>a</sup> aged 11–12 years.
Brunnberg and Visser-Schuurman (2015), Ireland, The International Journal of Children's Rights.	Children identified as being in vulnerable situations, including Irish Traveller children's awareness of rights including Article 31.	Part	Qualitative Focus Group.	Children Youth (8–12) Aged 7–16 years.
Cavalliero (2011), Ireland, Research West Review.	Irish Travellers experiences in rural schools including social interactions and racism during play.	No	Qualitative Interview.	Parents (15) & Youth (15) Aged 15–22 years.
Cavaliero and Levinson (2019), Ireland, Diaspora, Indigenous, and Minority Education.	Irish Traveller's play with siblings, friendships and play in relation to the construction of identities in changing locations, in home and in school.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview.	Adults (28).
Cemlyn (2000), U.K, Child Abuse Review.	Social Work Provision for Traveller children including identification of play support needs.	No	Qualitative Mixed Exploratory Survey Document & Interviews.	Social Services Practitioners (73).
Cudworth (2015), U.K., Power & Education.	Gypsy & Traveller children's play in schoolyards and use of space.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic, Focus Group, Interview, Observation.	Teachers (24), Parents (5) & Children (6).
Devine et al. (2008) Ireland, Race, Ethnicity & Education.	Irish primary school children's experiences of racism during play and the significance of ethnic identity during children's peer interactions.	No	Qualitative Fieldwork Group Interview Participatory Action.	Children (5 of 132) <sup>a</sup> aged 7–10 years.
Devine and McGillicuddy (2019), Ireland, Gender & Education.	Irish Traveller children's experiences of everyday life including play at home.	No	Qualitative Participatory Action Photovoice.	Children (17) Aged 9–13 years.
Doyle et al. (2020), Ireland, The International Journal of Human Rights.	Irish Travellers experiences of exclusionary educational practices including during schoolyard play.	No	Qualitative Literature Analysis & Interviews with stakeholders.	Politicians, educators, interest group representatives (30).
Fitzpatrick et al. (1997), Ireland, Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health.	Irish Travellers completion of a community mothers programme including child development supports through play.	No	Quantitative Questionnaire.	Parents (39) of children Aged 8–32 months.
Forkan (2006), Ireland, Youth Studies Ireland.	Irish Traveller children's participation in schoolyard and afterschool activities and factors influencing disadvantage.	No	Qualitative Case Study Focus Group & Interviews.	Parents (10), Children (20) Aged 9–16 years & Teachers/Stakeholder (30).
Gray and Donnelly (2013), Northern Ireland, International Journal of Early Years Education.	Traveller & non traveller mothers and children with autistic spectrum disorders daily experiences including of play and factors influencing play.	No	Qualitative Case Study Interview & Observation.	Parents (2) & Children (2) Aged 4–7 years.
Greenfields and Smith (2010), U.K Housing Studies.	Gypsy & Traveller communities' adaptation to housing from a nomadic lifestyle including factors influencing play and social interactions.	No	Qualitative Review, Interviews & Focus Group	Youth (1 of 37) <sup>a</sup> aged 13–21 years.
Hanafin et al. (2018), Ireland, Leading & Managing.	Irish Traveller parents experience of factors influencing early years participation including the recognition of cultural identity in toys and games.	No	Qualitative Focus Groups, Interviews, Questionnaire.	Early Years Practitioners (29), Parents (36) of Children Aged 3–5 years.
Hamilton et al. (2012), Northern Ireland, Race, Ethnicity & Education.	Social inclusion, schoolyard play, and access to afterschool activities in relation to educational provision to Irish Travellers in Northern Ireland	No	Qualitative Semi Structured Interviews.	Parents, Educational & Community Practitioners (29).
Hurcombe et al. (2012), U.K, Ethnicity & Inequalities in Health & Social Care.	Irish Traveller's collective supervision of children's play, youth's experiences of restrictions on access to community play/leisure opportunities and factors influencing drug and alcohol use.	No	Qualitative Interview Oral Life History.	Adults (10) & Health Professionals (2).
Joyce (2015), Ireland, Irish Journal of Anthropology.	Irish Traveller youths' experiences of racial boundaries restricting spatial mobility and access to play/leisure/sports/social opportunities.	No	Qualitative Mapping & Focus groups.	Youth (18).

**Table 1** (continued)

Author, year, country, publication (alphabetical)	Relevance of study to Traveller children's play.	Play Aim	Study design	Participants (Number)
Levinson and Sparkes (2003), U.K., British Journal of Sociology of Education.	Gypsy including Irish Traveller children's performance of masculine identity during play at home and in school environments	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Levinson and Sparkes (2004), U.K., International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education	Gypsies including Irish Traveller children's spatial orientations and interactions during play within home and school environments	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Levinson (2005), U.K., Journal of Contemporary Ethnography	Gypsies including Irish Traveller children's orientations to play in different contexts and sociocultural interpretations of play patterns.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Levinson and Sparkes (2006), U.K., Research Papers in Education.	Gypsies including Irish Traveller children's play and gender influences at the home school interface.	Yes	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Levinson (2007), U.K., American Educational Research Journal.	Gypsies including Irish Traveller children's play at home and in school in the context of attitudes towards literacy.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Levinson (2008), U.K., Research in Comparative & International Education.	Gypsy (incl) Irish Travellers play experiences and learning and identity at home and in school.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Interview & Observation.	Parents (50) & Children (47) Aged 7–16 years.
Mason and Broughton (2007) U.K., Social Policy & Society.	Play and leisure opportunities within an English social service for Gypsy/Traveller families identifying limitations and recommendations	Yes	Qualitative Service Evaluation.	Parents & Children.
Monaghan and Gabe (2016), Ireland, Social Science & Medicine.	Children with asthma including Traveller children's experience of physical activity, sport and play in relation to health identity.	No	Qualitative Explorative Interview.	Children (14 of 31) <sup>a</sup> aged 5–17 years.
Myers et al. (2010), U.K., Race, Ethnicity & Education.	Gypsy and Traveller children's play at home, school and after-school in the context of parents' perceptions of education and social change.	No	Qualitative Interview.	Parents (10) & Education Practitioners (4).
O'Sullivan et al. (2018), Ireland, European Early Childhood Education Research Journal.	Traveller children's play at home and during a collaborative arts education project developed in partnership with Irish Traveller mothers.	Part	Mixed Qualitative, Participatory Action.	Artists (5) mothers (11) Children Aged 5 months – 3 3/4 years.
Piazza (2014), U.K. Discourse & Society.	Irish Traveller children's play at home in the context of mothers' conceptualizations of place and identity.	No	Qualitative Interview.	Adults (5)
Rose (2013), Ireland International Journal of Inclusive Education.	Irish Traveller children's engagement in art, craft, and outdoor play in the context of a family literacy home programme.	No	Qualitative Case Study Group Interview, Interview & Observation.	Literacy Practitioners (4) Parents (7) of children Aged 4–11 years.
Smith and Ruston (2013), U.K., Sociology of Health & Illness.	Factors influencing Gypsy and Travellers play and use of community facilities in relation to health.	No	Qualitative Interview.	Adults (39).
Vanderbeck (2009), U.K., ACME: An international E Journal for Critical Geographies.	Gypsy and Traveller experiences of a social service including playgroup, sports, and recreation activity programmes.	No	Qualitative Ethnographic Case Study Interview & Observation.	Youth & Community Work Practitioners.
Van out (2011), Ireland, Critical Public Health.	Irish traveller youth's exclusion from sports, community and peer group activities and drug use.	No	Qualitative Focus Group.	Adults (41) & Youth (16) Aged 17–20 years.

<sup>a</sup>Numbers of Irish Traveller children in relation to the total sample

## Representations of Irish Traveller Children's Play

Play was primarily described within included studies as with other children, a social activity contributing to Irish Traveller children's social development, learning and health. While children's experiences of enjoyment, autonomy and choice during various activities was reported, it is unclear if these activities were always representative of play for Irish Traveller children, as this was not defined or clarified in most instances. Representations of play as a freely chosen, fun, activity were present in findings of Irish Traveller children's play with siblings, cousins and Irish Traveller friends within home and school environments (Cavaliero & Levinson, 2019; Cudworth, 2015; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Forkan, 2006; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Joyce, 2015; Levinson, 2005; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2006; O Sullivan et al., 2018; Piazza, 2014; Vanderbeck, 2009). Outdoor play (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Levinson & Sparkes, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2009) was described as central to children's everyday lives allowing for freedom and for overall health benefits (Cemlyn, 2000; Cudworth, 2015; Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2004; Levinson, 2005, 2007; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; Myers et al., 2010; Piazza, 2014; Smith & Ruston, 2013; Vanderbeck, 2009). Irish Traveller children playing together as demonstrating solidarity and as a means of bonding was strongly present in descriptions of play specifically in the schoolyard and community (Cudworth, 2015; Forkan, 2006; Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Levinson, 2005; Piazza, 2014; Vanderbeck, 2009; van Hout, 2011).

Representations of play as learning was reported in findings of Irish Traveller children engaging in real life activities (Cavaliero, 2011; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Levinson, 2005; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2006) including descriptions of Irish Traveller boys enjoying and choosing to spend time with adults, observing and trying out practical activities such as dismantling cars and selling scrap metal (Levinson, 2005, 2008; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2006; Vanderbeck, 2009) and Irish Traveller girls reporting enjoyment of everyday tasks involving role play and caring for animals (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Joyce, 2015; Levinson & Sparkes, 2006). Play as associated with perceived adult activities was further represented as reinforcing gender identities in relation to descriptions of girls play involving chatting, fashion, role play with friends and limited sport and exercise (Brown, 2017; Joyce, 2015; Levinson & Sparkes, 2006; Levinson, 2008; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016) and boys play involving sport including running and football, being fit and strong, fighting and role-playing men's work (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Levinson, 2008; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; Vanderbeck, 2009). Art, craft, musical and

play for learning activities were described in studies as valued by parents (Boyle et al., 2018; Rose, 2013) and as an important aspect of necessary Early Years programmes and Youth work interventions for Irish Traveller children (Cemlyn, 2000; Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Mason & Broughton, 2007; O Sullivan et al., 2018; Vanderbeck, 2009). Parents described similar activities as playful interactions with children in the home environment in post early years intervention studies (Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; O Sullivan et al., 2018).

## Factors Influencing Irish Traveller Children's Play Opportunities

Factors identified in the studies as influencing Irish Traveller children's play opportunities were charted using Finney and Atkinson's (2020) conceptual model and further expansion of this model was completed to categorise both enabling and restricting factors presented in Table 2. Factors associated with the individual, the physical environment, other people (adult & peers), and society are presented separately, however the findings from included studies provided evidence of interacting relationships between influencing factors and Irish Traveller children's play opportunities (Table 2).

### Individual Factors

Play opportunities that provided a sense of fun, competence and autonomy for children were identified as enabling factors. The ability to practice and demonstrate physical skills during sports activities, to explore outdoors, to engage in art & craft, to be with friends and enact real life activities were described as preferred play choices and as motivating engagement in play. The importance of feeling a sense of belonging was an enabling factor prevalent throughout the included studies and intersected with all factors influencing access to play opportunities.

Conversely, most studies provided evidence of Irish Traveller children, not feeling a sense of belonging, due to ethnic discrimination as a restrictive factor to accessing play opportunities. Findings described tensions for Irish Traveller children between revealing and hiding their Irish Traveller identity in community spaces (Boyle et al., 2020; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Myers et al., 2010) and the importance of identity was evident in Irish Traveller children's prioritisation of the right to their culture (Brunnberg & Visser-Schuurman, 2015). Being unable to make valued choices and demonstrate agency due to limited access to play and leisure opportunities was described most significantly in studies on older children, as resulting in boredom, potential mental health difficulties and drug use (Hurcombe et al., 2012; Joyce, 2015; Levinson, 2005;



Vanderbeck, 2009; van Hout, 2011). Irish Traveller children identified feeling unsafe as a restrictive factor, describing a fear of injury impacting on play opportunities at home, due to dangers in the physical environment (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019) and a fear of bullying and racism in school environments (Boyle et al., 2020; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Mason & Broughton, 2007; Murray, 2012).

### Environmental Factors

Access to outdoor spaces surrounding the home environment was described as enabling Irish Traveller children's play opportunities allowing for free unrestricted movement and contributing to wellbeing (Cudworth, 2015; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2004; Levinson, 2007; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; Myers et al., 2010; Piazza, 2014). Proximity, affordability, and limited knowledge of service providers were reported in Mason and Broughton's (2007) results as influencing Irish Traveller children's opportunities to access community play & leisure environments. Evidence was presented of discriminatory attitudes and racism as the most restrictive factor influencing access, though rarely addressed by service providers, intersecting with individual, other people and societal level factors. Findings included limited space for play inside the home environment (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019) outdoor spaces containing dangerous elements such as rubbish and broken glass and lacking in natural elements (Cemlyn, 2000; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Joyce, 2015; Levinson, 2005; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; O Sullivan et al., 2018) increased surveillance within halting sites (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019) and restrictions to spatial mobility within school and community environments due to layouts, setting rules, surveillance and racist attitudes (Cudworth, 2015; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Joyce, 2015; Levinson, 2005; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; Smith & Ruston, 2013; van Hout, 2011). This restriction on spatial mobility was presented as a mismatch to Irish Traveller children's preference for navigating environments freely (Cudworth, 2015; Levinson, 2007).

### The Role of Other People: Adult & Peer Factors

Parents and adult family members facilitated Irish Traveller children's play during everyday routines (Boyle et al., 2018; Levinson, 2008; Levinson & Sparkes, 2006; Mason & Broughton, 2007; Rose, 2013) providing opportunities for playfulness, loving play, and intergenerational bonding activities (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Levinson, 2007; Smith & Ruston, 2013) and to learn through trying and practicing new activities (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Levinson,

2008; Levinson & Sparkes, 2006; O Sullivan et al., 2018; Vanderbeck, 2009). Framed primarily in terms of safety, collective adult supervision was identified by Irish Traveller parents as an important enabling factor for outdoor play (Cudworth, 2015; Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Piazza, 2014; Smith & Ruston, 2013) increasingly limited by societal and environmental factors (Levinson, & Sparkes, 2004; Smith & Ruston, 2013; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Piazza, 2014). Findings within the included studies described Irish Traveller parents' reporting a preference for social interactions with Traveller peers in community settings (Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Myers et al., 2010; Piazza, 2014). Parental experiences of racism were described as contributing to protectionist parenting practices that restricted social play opportunities (Cavaliero, 2011; Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Levinson, 2008; Myers et al., 2010; Piazza, 2014; Smith & Ruston, 2013; Vanderbeck, 2009) and more so for Irish Traveller girls (Brunnberg & Visser-Schuurman, 2015; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2004., 2006; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016).

Irish Traveller peers were reported as an enabling influence on access to play opportunities, with Irish Traveller children spending most time together, and play together described as contributing to children's sense of belonging, social solidarity, and identity (Cavaliero, 2011; Cavaliero & Levinson, 2019; Cudworth, 2015; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Forkan, 2006; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Hamilton et al., 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2003, 2006; Piazza, 2014). Racism from non-Irish Traveller peers in schoolyards was a predominant restricting factor for accessing play and friendships (Boyle et al., 2020; Brown, 2017; Cavaliero & Levinson, 2019; Devine et al., 2008; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Doyle et al., 2020; Forkan, 2006; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Greenfields & Smith, 2010; Hamilton et al., 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Levinson, 2008; Myers et al., 2010; van Hout, 2011) and extended to opportunities for play outside of school (Devine et al., 2008; Joyce, 2015; Rose, 2013; van Hout, 2011).

### Societal Factors

The primary enabling factor for play at a societal level was the delivery of services that respected Irish Travellers identity providing welcoming, safe spaces. These findings were mostly in relation to Traveller preschool settings (Boyle et al., 2018, 2020; Hanafin et al., 2018; Vanderbeck, 2009) and programmes (Fitzpatrick et al., 1997; Rose, 2013; O Sullivan et al., 2018) which would present reduced opportunities for non-Traveller peer interactions. Engaging parents with programme delivery, providing resources such as books and toys that reflected Traveller identity, flexible

**Table 2** Factors influencing access to Irish Traveller children's play opportunities adapted from Finney and Atkinson (2020)

	Enabling	Restricting
Society	Welcoming spaces \programmes. (Respectful of identity & culture).	Societal attitudes: racism.  Legislative restrictions on nomadism. Legislative\policy rules in educational settings.
Adults	Parents facilitating play.  Collective supervision of children. Intergenerational relationships.	Protectionist parenting - fear of racism, gender expectations.  Dismissal of racism by services and negative perceived characteristics and expectations of practitioners.
Peers	Being with Traveller peers \siblings.  Showing solidarity with each other.	Racism & exclusion in schoolyard & community facilities.
Environment	Access to safe outdoor spaces.	Limited access to community play\leisure opportunities. Unsafe outside space at home.
Individual	Feeling a sense of belonging Ability to demonstrate competence. Capacity to choose interests. Ability to share identity.	Traveller identity due to racism. Fear of bullying & racism.  Fear of personal injury. Perceived denial of valued choices.

timetabling (Boyle et al., 2018; Vanderbeck, 2009) staff diversity training (Murray, 2012) services that addressed the specific needs of Irish Traveller families including child-minding and playgroups for children with disabilities, were described as supporting belonging, inclusion and participation in early years and community services (Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Mason & Broughton, 2007; Piazza, 2014). More recent findings described Irish Traveller children's participation in local popular community sports clubs (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016).

At a societal level, legislation and policy was identified as a restrictive influence on children's access to play opportunities for various reasons; restricting nomadic living and the provision of adequate living accommodation including safe play spaces on halting sites and proximity to community resources (Cemlyn, 2000; Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Joyce, 2015; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Monaghan & Gabe, 2016; Rose, 2013; Smith & Ruston, 2013) restricting collective supervision of children, limiting the rights of parents as primary educators, reinforcing segregation in schools and opportunities for mixed age play (Brown, 2017; Doyle et al., 2020; Hamilton et al., 2012; Piazza, 2014; Vanderbeck, 2009). Societal attitudes and expectations intersected with the role of other people as a restrictive factor impacting on Irish Traveller children's feelings of belonging and safety and subsequent access to play opportunities, specifically in the schoolyard. Findings described the attitudes of teachers as reflecting culturist discourses (Cavaliero, 2011; Cemlyn, 2000; Doyle et al.,

2020; Forkan, 2006; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Hamilton et al., 2012; Levinson, 2008; Vanderbeck, 2009). Perceived negative characteristics of Irish Traveller children were reported including ignoring setting rules, being preoccupied with fighting, messing, sexual bravado and being too involved with the adult world and limited educational expectations of teachers were identified as contributing to reduced attendance (Boyle et al., 2018; Cavaliero, 2011; Cemlyn, 2000; Cudworth, 2015; Forkan, 2006; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Hurcombe et al., 2012; Levinson & Sparkes, 2004; Myers et al., 2010; Vanderbeck, 2009). Responses to racism towards Irish Traveller children in playgrounds by teachers was reported as ranging from benign to complicit (Brown, 2017; Devine et al., 2008; Levinson, 2007; Myers et al., 2010). Play, recreation and leisure opportunities were identified by services and practitioners as both necessary and lacking (Cemlyn, 2000; Gray & Donnelly, 2013; Vanderbeck, 2009) however findings indicated policies and practices, including policing practices that dismissed Irish Traveller children's preferences and reinforced exclusion rather than addressing structural and racist attitudes (Hamilton et al., 2012; Joyce, 2015; Mason & Broughton, 2007; Vanderbeck, 2009; van Hout, 2011).

## Discussion

This scoping review of the available research on Irish Traveller children's play, identified thirty-five predominantly qualitative studies reporting findings that

contribute to the knowledge on how play has been represented and the factors influencing access to play opportunities. It supports previous findings however, of limited research on indigenous children's play (Dender & Stagnitti, 2015) with only three studies directly focused on Irish Traveller children's play. Included studies provided evidence of the importance of feeling a sense of belonging and safety to enable Irish Traveller children's access to preferred play opportunities, involving real life activities, physical play outdoors and play with others and Irish Traveller parents value and facilitation of play. The discourse of marginalisation framed as cultural difference (Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021) was also evident in the research related to Irish Traveller children's play and racism, was identified as a primary restrictive factor on Irish Traveller children's play.

Play was primarily described within included studies as play with others, a social activity contributing to Irish Traveller children's social development, learning and health. Sports, leisure, recreation, domestic, social, and learning activities occurring in everyday routines at home, in school and in the community were entangled with descriptions of Irish Traveller children's play. As play was not a focus of research studies, knowledge on how play is understood by Irish Traveller children and parents remains limited. It is unclear also, whether Irish Traveller children and parents would ascribe to the separation of play as distinct from leisure and recreation activities as defined in the General comment (UNCRC, 2013). Recent research has provided evidence of children, perceiving multiple occupations such as sports, domestic tasks and schoolwork as play, when experienced as fun (Moore & Lynch, 2018) and play as interwoven into other daily routines (Russell, 2018; Tisdall & Punch, 2012). Being outdoors, being with other children, engaging in activities with adults or related to adult work were all identified as preferred activities for Irish Traveller children, extending normative representations of play. Findings of Irish Traveller children's play providing opportunities for, enjoyment, competence, agency and constructing identity align with the literature proposing play as a capability (Hart & Brando, 2017; Sen, 2009; Sterman et al., 2020).

Irish Traveller children's agency was evident in findings describing engagement in preferred play choices where ingenuity, autonomy, loyalty, and entrepreneurship were demonstrated and developed. These examples, however, were described by practitioners moreso as evidence of Irish Traveller children's engagement in adult like roles and different to perceived norms within school settings. In contrast to discourses of children as social agents, Irish Traveller children's freedom to make play choices may represent what Klocker (2007) refers to as 'thin agency' where opportunities are enabled and restricted by social

spatial contexts. A denial of valued play choices across contexts restricted Irish Traveller children's play opportunities, reported in the findings as impacting most significantly on older children with resulting wellbeing impacts (Hurcombe et al., 2012.; Joyce, 2015; Vanderbeck, 2009; van Hout, 2011).

Play as a capability, through which opportunities to construct and reconstruct identities in relationship with peers and learn Irish Traveller ways of being and doing during play was also present in study findings. This finding supports the research describing play as a social construction where children negotiate power dynamics, identities, and peer cultures (Massey et al., 2020) and identity as an important source of meaning and belonging (Gerlach & Browne, 2021). Identity in study findings was however, often framed in terms of cultural dissonance, a tension between differing values and expectations at home and in school and community spaces, influencing Irish Traveller children's play. Strategies employed by Irish Traveller children during play in schoolyards and community settings, reflected Derrington's (2007) research identifying responses to discriminatory attitudes, as fight, flight and 'playing white' (hiding identity) and McGinley and Keane's (2021) recent research on Irish Traveller children's self-segregation in school settings as a necessity rather than a choice. Fighting and playing with Irish Traveller peers were reported as cultural characteristics by practitioners in included studies rather than a responsive act of social solidarity or resistive strategy to racism. From a capabilities perspective, such essentialism Sen (2009) cautions, fails to recognise children's plurality of identities, restricting children's freedoms to challenge prevailing norms and to construct social identities during play.

Enabling factors identified as influencing Irish Traveller children's play opportunities such as parental permission, access to safe outdoor spaces and spaces that supported a sense of belonging, support for preferred play choices and peers with similar interests, align with current research including Finney and Atkinson's (2020) findings. It is important to note that the included studies were predominantly focused on Irish Traveller children's experiences in school and community settings. The primary difference in this scoping review was the identification of racism as a pervasive restricting influence on Irish Traveller children's play opportunities intersecting with individual, environmental, the role of others and societal factors. Evidence of Irish Traveller parents valuing and facilitating play aligns with Gaskins et al.'s (2007) category of a culturally cultivated perception of play, however, these and other enabling factors such as nomadic ways of living, collective supervision of children and play for transmitting inter-generational knowledge tended to be overlooked or viewed through the lens of culturalism. Conversely, despite

reflecting comparable research in other contexts, (Finney & Atkinson, 2020; Roopnarine et al., 2015) protectionist parenting and reinforcement of gender roles as restricting children's access to play opportunities tended to be described within included studies' findings as due to Irish Traveller cultural values, reflective of the discourse of culture as difference. The impact of indirect and structural racism on Irish Traveller children's everyday lives in the form of discriminatory legislation, policy and practices and societal attitudes described in findings, intersected with factors influencing play opportunities. The legislative denial of accommodation rights restricted access to safe play spaces and opportunities for collective supervision; Policies of segregated schoolyards contributed to Irish Traveller parents' fear for their children's safety in schoolyards; Discrimination in community play, sports and leisure facilities and coercive youth work practices were described as restricting Irish Traveller children's agency in terms of play choices and descriptions of practices and programmes developed for Irish Traveller children only, conflicted with stated objectives to promote inclusion.

An understanding of the situated nature of play in Irish Traveller children's everyday lives and how play can also transact with and sustain structures and systems that exclude (Angell, 2014) was most evident in findings of racism in schoolyards, as a pervasive restricting factor on Irish Traveller children's play opportunities across multiple generations. According to Baines and Blatchford (2019), research on schoolyard play, confirms its importance in the social lives of children and the impact of bias-based bullying and discrimination towards children is acknowledged as impacting academic attainments, inclusion, and emotional wellbeing (Devine et al., 2008). While research to date has reported persistent racism towards Irish Traveller children in schools (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; F.R.A., 2020; Harmon et al., 2015) play in schoolyards, as a site of exclusion requires further investigation. The findings of teachers' negative attitudes towards Irish Travellers, and a dismissal of racist incidents within the schoolyard, have been established in previous research, highlighting the need for Irish teachers, mostly from white, settled, middle-class backgrounds, to engage in reflexivity on personal attitudes and beliefs given their self-reported challenges, responding effectively to racism within schools (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019; McGinley & Keane, 2021; Myers et al., 2010). Despite the General Comments identification of the major role of schools in supporting children's right to play, recent research has highlighted the absence of educational policies regarding breaktimes and limited research on teacher's perspectives and knowledge of schoolyard play (Baines & Blatchford, 2019; Larsson & Rönnlund, 2020).

## Implications for Research, Policy and Play Practices

The finding of an absence of research on the purpose and meaning of play from Irish Traveller children's perspectives aligns with recommendations to develop knowledge of children's own constructions of play as an issue of justice (Lynch et al., 2018; Fahy et al., 2020). This scoping review also supports further consideration of the relevance of conceptualisations of play as a capability, forefronting children's freedom to choose what capabilities they value. Research on Irish Traveller children's everyday play using participatory methodologies (Horgan et al., 2017) inclusive of indigenous epistemologies (Virtanen et al., 2021) as a means of resisting habitual ways of thinking and practicing (Lester, 2016) will assist in addressing this current gap in knowledge. Irish Travellers have also called for a new narrative of Irish Traveller children as ordinary citizens experiencing everyday life and for the positive aspects of Traveller culture to be disseminated and harnessed (AITHS, 2010).

The scoping review findings of limited attention towards Irish Traveller children's play, highlights the significant challenge of realising Article 31 obligations. Adult interventions in play have been criticised within play research (Russell, 2018; Lester, 2016) however, the General Comment states that adults including parents and service providers should be given guidance to support the creation of optimum environments, aiming for play sufficiency (UNCRC, 2013). Creating optimum environments requires according to Lester (2016), practices that collaborate with resilient, resourceful communities to negotiate conditions to support children's play as an expression of agency and culture. A capabilities approach offers a framework to evaluate a child's possible and realised freedoms or opportunities to do what they value as and through play (Sen, 2009; Stermann et al., 2020; Hart & Brando, 2017) recently applied by Coates et al. (2015) as a multi-dimensional framework to analyse and provide recommendations in relation to Irish Travellers' housing. Crucially this framework, recognizes that children's freedom to choose and access opportunities is relational and situated, and agency and identity are both enabled and constrained by transacting factors at individual, environmental and societal levels (Sen, 2009). Addressing the pervasive and intersecting restricting factor of racism on Irish Traveller children's play opportunities is a key finding in this scoping review. Creating time and space for playing will require for example, addressing the denial of appropriate accommodation rights that result in unsafe play areas in Irish Traveller children's home environments, and the location of halting sites in relation to community facilities. However, Kitchin and Crowley (2015) emphasise that rights can only be achieved by Irish Travellers when pervasive



systemic and structural racism is targeted, and research refocuses on the attitudes and practices of the majority population. Alongside the evidence of the importance of teachers' attitudes to children's play in schoolyards (Larsson & Rönnlund, 2020), this scoping review highlights the need for further research to explore the potential of a capabilities approach to support teachers' reflexivity on schoolyard play and play practices. By promoting consciousness and challenging taken for granted assumptions the capabilities approach may enable new ways of thinking and working towards realising Irish Traveller children's right to exercise agency and choice during and through play in school and community settings (Scott-McKie & Campbell, 2019).

### Limitations

The results of this scoping review should be considered along with the study's limitations. Inclusion criteria limited studies to research peer reviewed publications, however the initial search identified a significant body of grey literature which may provide further insights. Most publications were government reports primarily relating to Traveller accommodation and therefore may include a research dimension with Irish Travellers. This would potentially contribute data on Irish Travellers own narratives of play and the factors influencing play in different contexts. Furthermore, of note were the thesis and chapter publications from included authors which may contain data not reported in peer reviewed publications. A further limitation is the scoping review's broad inclusion criteria which resulted in findings based on both younger children and older youth, of both genders, with identified educational support needs and medical diagnosis, living in two separate jurisdictions and in various contexts. The rationale for this includes a dearth of research overall and an objective to ascertain the breadth of research available on Irish Travellers play, reflecting the heterogeneity of Irish Travellers. While additional criteria would have limited the scoping review findings, they may also have enabled clearer conclusions in relation to Irish Traveller children's play. Clear identification of which country each included study referred to alongside mapping of the factors relevant to play acknowledged the importance of contextual factors.

### Conclusion

This scoping review has highlighted the limited research on Irish Traveller children's play overall and summarised representations of Irish Traveller children's play and the factors influencing Irish Traveller children's play opportunities. The dearth of knowledge on Irish Traveller children's play obligates further research using

participatory and indigenous approaches to explore children's perspectives without preconceived definitions and assumptions (Lester, 2016; Gerlach & Browne, 2021). The identification of the pervasiveness of racism as a restrictive factor on Irish Traveller children's play, supports the need to shift focus from identifying barriers, to exploring the attitudes and practices of the sedentary population to understand and address racism (Kavanagh & Dupont, 2021; Kitchin & Crowley, 2015). Specifically, findings from this review confirm previous evidence of a prevalence of systemic bias-based bullying towards Traveller children in schools (Devine & McGillicuddy, 2019) that highlights a need for further attention to the school and community spaces in terms of supporting Irish Traveller children's right to play.

### Data availability

Metadata and Data from this study are included in the supplementary materials and will be made available in the public repository Zenodo.

**Supplementary information** The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-023-02695-w>.

**Author Contributions** The first author was responsible for the study conception and all authors contributed to the study design. The first author drafted the study protocol and all authors commented on the final version. The first author completed initial searches. The first and second author completed title & abstract review. The first, second and fourth author completed full text review and the first, third and fourth completed the data analysis. The first draft of the manuscript was written by the first author and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

**Funding** This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Curie Skłodowska grant agreement No. 86125. Open access funding provided by Lulea University of Technology.

### Compliance with Ethical Standards

**Conflict of Interest** The authors declare no competing interests.

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