Dika Saouve (In Plain Sight): A Case Study of Romani Marginalization in Modern Athens

Vivian King Morgan

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.memphis.edu/etd

Recommended Citation
DIKA SAOUVRE (IN PLAIN SIGHT):
A CASE STUDY OF ROMANI MARGINALIZATION IN MODERN ATHENS

by

Vivian King Morgan

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements of the Degree of

Doctor of Liberal Studies

Major: Liberal Studies

The University of Memphis

May 2023
Acknowledgments

If you hear the dogs, keep going. If you see the torches in the woods, keep going. If there’s shouting after you, keep going. Don’t ever stop. Keep going. If you want a taste of freedom, keep going.

― Harriet Tubman

This journey has been more than I could have ever imagined and there were possibly hundreds of times that I had to heed Harriet’s words to “keep going.” But I am not foolish enough to believe this journey was mine alone.

I start with my incredible husband Edward Morgan. It was he who suggested that I return to academia and, later, that I leave the journalism profession and concentrate my efforts on my degree. Edward, however, did not just make suggestions. He removed every obstacle in my path. When it was time to conduct field research, he was a fellow researcher who asked pertinent questions and tirelessly maneuvered through the streets of Greece as I traipsed alongside him. He is my center.

There are not enough accolades I can bestow upon my committee chair Dr. Colin Chapell. It is he who first ignited my interest in international human rights. I was deeply entrenched in African American Studies until his Liberal Studies Seminar course during my MLS program. It was there that Dr. Chapell introduced me to Gary Haugen and Victor Boutros’ The Locust Effect, Sandy Tolan’s The Lemon Tree, and Joseph Stiglitz’s The Price of Inequality. Throughout my MLA and DLS programs, Dr. Chapell has been a constant source of support and his friendship is one I plan to keep for the remainder of my life.

My committee members Drs. Lorraine Meiners-Lovel, Joanne Gikas, and the late Radie Krueger have been phenomenal. Dr. Meiners-Lovel and I became fast friends even before the DLS program when she was a coordinator of the summer language school at the University of
West Bohemia. It was during that trip that she introduced me to the incomparable Dr. Charles Hall and he who piqued my interest in the Romani. Dr. Gikas used her Greek heritage and connections to guide me through my field research and, with the untimely passing of Dr. Krueger, she kindly agreed to serve on my committee. As former journalists, Dr. Krueger and I shared a sense of comradery. Her guidance will be fondly remembered.

I give thanks to all of my friends and family who listened to me whine for the last several years but, especially, Michael Grinnell, Phyllis Campbell, Ann Sloan, Barbara Esmond, Muriel Dixon, Regina Carney, and my beloved sons — Koda Dixon, Malcolm Dixon, and Nathan Dixon. There is also special gratitude to my DLS colleagues and shoulders to cry on — Pam Lynn Lewis and Bonnie Oliver-Brandon. We are sisters for life.

Finally, there is my beloved mother Mattie Lucy Smith. She was only days away from passing in 2018 when she heard a nurse remark about her having raised eight children. Even in her weakened state, my sisters say she rose up and said, “And all of my children are educated.” She was so proud of that and, without her love and sacrifice, our lives would have definitely taken different directions. When I receive that doctoral hood, this one is for you, Mama.
Abstract


The Romani people have been subjected to discrimination and marginalization in all aspects of their lives since the Middle Ages. While there has been considerable research conducted on the Romani, especially those living in the Eastern European countries that were once part of the Soviet Union, there has been minimal research pertaining to Roma marginalization in Greece. Like Roma throughout the European Union, Greek Roma consist of heterogeneous groups with different experiences and needs but there are common threads of marginalization that run throughout all of their communities. This qualitative case study focuses on two communities of Roma in the greater Athens areas of Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio and is predicated upon the narrative analysis of open-ended interviews with ten participants. These participants provide data that is representative of seventy-five family members in their communities. This research provides valuable insight into the participants’ perceptions and realities of marginalization in the areas of housing, education, employment, healthcare, aid, and police harassment while also analyzing how marginalization, perceived and otherwise, impacts the overall well-being of oppressed people. In addition, this research examines the impact particular aspects of Romani culture have on marginalization while providing a comparative analysis of Greek Roma communities and other Roma communities throughout the European Union.
Table of Contents

List of Tables v

Introduction 1
   Terminology 5

Chapter 1. Who are the Romani? 7
   Romani Origins and Migration 9
   Romani Culture 12

Chapter 2. Literature Review 20
   Romani Identity 21
   History of Marginalization 24
   European Policy and Roma Rights 29
   Greek Roma 32
   Conclusion 36

Chapter 3. Methodology 38

Chapter 4. Romani Marginalization in the European Union 47
   History of Enslavement 49
   Social Diminishment 51
   Nazi Persecution 52
   Expulsions and Exclusions 56
   Housing Discrimination 62
   Forced or Coerced Sterilizations 66
   Healthcare Disparity and Discrimination 71
   Marginalization in Education 78
   Denial of Citizenship Rights 85
   Police Harassment 87
   Current Activism 90

Chapter 5. Romani Marginalization in Greece 100
   Housing Discrimination 102
   Marginalization in Education 107
   Employment Discrimination 109
   Healthcare Marginalization 111
   Hate Crimes and Police Brutality 113
   Uniqueness of Living Roma in Greece 118

Chapter 6. Qualitative Analysis of Participant Interviews 123
   Participant Descriptions 124
   Interview Analysis and Discussion 125

Chapter 7. Conclusion 147
   Limitations of Study 150
Contribution of Research to Romani Studies 151
Implications for Future Research 151

Bibliography 153

Appendix A 167
List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Data Collection 40
Table 2. Description of Research Participants 42
Table 3. Discrepancy in Housing Conditions 65
Table 4. European Union Countries’ Statuses on Segregated Schools 81
Table 5. Viewpoint on Roma in 2015 98
Table 6. Viewpoint on Roma in 2019 115
Table 7. Greek Reports of Hate Crimes 116
Table 8. Perception of Marginalization 126
Table 9. Adult Levels of Education 133
Table 10. Narrative Analysis 138
Introduction

Without commitment, you’ll never start, but more importantly, without consistency, you’ll never finish.

— Denzel Washington

My interest in the Romani began quite casually when, in 2019, I had the pleasure of participating in the Thirtieth International Summer Language School at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, Czech Republic. During that trip, one of many illuminating conversations ensued and Dr. Charles Hall, a founder of the summer language school and a former University of Memphis professor, mentioned the Romani and their marginalization in the Czech Republic. I was mesmerized as I began to realize the parallel nature of Romani marginalization and that of African Americans in the United States. At the end of the program, my husband Edward Morgan and I went to Paris for a short holiday. Upon checking into our lodging accommodations and explaining to our host that we planned to visit Les Puces de Saint-Quen the following day, she frantically began to tell us to look out for the Roma because “they are filthy people and nothing but thieves.” I turned to Edward and said, “Oh, the Romani are the Black people of Europe.”

At that moment, my connection with the Romani was cemented and I knew I had been presented with the focus of my doctoral research. As an African American, I clearly understand how stereotypes and other negative preconceptions can poison someone against you before they even meet you. Many times, I had felt my Blackness introduce me when I walked into a room.

The starting point for any discussion on Romani-related issues is the need for widespread acknowledgment in government, academic, and civic society arenas that the Romani population in the European Union (EU) and throughout Europe, in general, continue to face

---

disproportionately low access to quality education, healthcare, housing, and employment within the formal labor market.² This overt discrimination and marginalization is not a twentieth or twenty-first-century occurrence but began in the Middle Ages and has consistently plagued Roma for more than six centuries. While present-day conditions of Roma vary from one country to another, and often from one community to another within the same city or country, the blanket of discrimination covers them all. Although protests against the police murder of George Floyd in 2020 began in the United States, protestors in countries across the globe, including the EU, also took to the streets to express their outrage. Simultaneously, these same protesters and their governments ignored the discrimination and human rights violations that continue to be perpetrated against Roma in their own countries.

The central ambition of this dissertation, “Dika Saouvre (In Plain Sight): A Case Study of Romani Marginalization in Modern Athens,” is to raise international awareness about the historical and present-day marginalization of Roma in the EU. This research also examines the extent to which Roma in modern Athens perceive and experience discrimination and marginalization as well as whether marginalization is the result of a cumulative disadvantage, ongoing discrimination, or a combination of the two and other circumstances. Its foundation is a case study of two Roma communities in greater Athens - Ano Liosia and Nomismatomkopio. In addition, this dissertation examines the priorities of need that exist from one community to another and develops into a comparative analysis examination of the status of Roma in modern Athens, other parts of Greece, and of Roma throughout the EU.

One of the biggest challenges with initiating any narrative regarding Roma is to provide an accurate clarification of the Romani identity. “Chapter 1: Who are the Romani?” dispels many of the myths about Roma that have been characterized in literature, film, and music. The placement of this chapter is critical to this research because much of what people believe they know about Roma comes from non-Romani people and is riddled with negative stereotypes and innuendos that Roma are indolent and subject to thievery. As an ethnic group, Roma have also been portrayed as child kidnappers, unclean individuals, and so forth. It is the perpetuation of these stereotypes and innuendos that has been the driving force behind the discrimination and marginalization of Roma for centuries. This chapter and “Chapter 2: Literature Review” utilize the work of noted Romani linguists and historians Ian Hancock and Yaron Matras to clarify the origins of Roma in what is now northern India and Pakistan. Not only do these first chapters delve into the origins of Roma but they also trace Romani migration and explain how the Romani developed into a culturally rich, heterogeneous people.

The bombardment of systemic racism against Roma, in the form of enslavement, expulsion, genocide, forced and coerced sterilization, police harassment, healthcare discrimination, housing segregation, and educational segregation, has been well analyzed by a wide array of Roma and non-Romani scholars. The representative work of scholars in “Chapter 2: Literature Review” explains how generational marginalization serves as a clear illustration of the permanence of racism and how the historical effects of exclusion and discrimination have created a cumulative disadvantage for Roma.

A clear example of this cumulative disadvantage is seen in the existence of Gypsy Urban Areas (GUAs). While GUAs have a strong presence throughout Europe in countries like Greece, France, and Italy, they are most prevalent in the countries where they were first introduced and
where the majority of Roma live – the Eastern European countries that were part of the former Soviet Union. Another example is the persecution of Roma at the hands of the Nazis based on the manufactured argument that Roma were asocial. This asocial label did not die with the Nazi regime but continues to persist throughout the EU and has been instrumental in stifling the educational and employment advancement of Roma.

“Chapter 3: Methodology” illustrates how qualitative analysis can effectively be used to determine the existence and degree of marginalization experienced by oppressed people. In addition to explaining how the two Roma communities in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio were chosen to be representative of Roma communities in Athens, this chapter explains the use of semi-structured interviews to reveal the areas of marginalization participants perceived to be most critical to them and their culture.

A general-to-specific approach was taken in “Chapter 4: Romani Marginalization in the European Union” and “Chapter 5: Romani Marginalization in Greece.” Chapter 4 examines racism, in general, and argues that historian George Frederickson’s assertion of three overtly racist regimes ignores the ongoing discrimination and marginalization of Roma. This chapter then categorically analyzes the history of Romani marginalization in the EU under the subheadings of enslavement; social diminishment; Nazi persecution; expulsions and exclusions; housing discrimination; forced or coerced sterilizations; healthcare disparity and discrimination; marginalization in education; denial of citizenship rights; and police harassment. Chapter 4 also

---


examines the degree of negative sentiment about Roma present in select EU countries and the current trajectory of that sentiment as well as the status of current Roma activism throughout the EU.

After an extensive analysis of Roma marginalization in the EU, Chapter 5 takes a more specific approach and dissects the areas of marginalization experienced by Roma in Greece. The subheadings for this chapter include housing and expulsions; education; employment; healthcare; and hate crimes and police brutality. In addition to examining the uniqueness of Roma marginalization in Greece, this chapter points out the commonalities of marginalization Greek Roma share with Roma throughout the EU.

“Chapter 6: Qualitative Analysis of Participant Interviews” implements deductive analysis in the coding process by establishing a predetermined set of categories of discrimination while also allowing for the inclusion of additional categories and subcategories as determined by the individual and collective narratives of participants. The established categories are housing, healthcare, employment, education, police harassment, access to aid, and education level. An analysis of the open-ended interviews establishes the areas where participants perceive discrimination and marginalization while further analysis reveals a more detailed understanding of Greek Roma marginalization and the driving factors behind it.

**Terminology**

For the purposes of this research, it is necessary to provide some clarification of terminology. While many scholars and activists have primarily used the term “Romani” in the past, the tendency is now to use the term “Roma.” Both terms have been, and will continue to be, utilized interchangeably throughout this dissertation. In addition, some scholars and activists,
like law professor Istvan Pogany, use the term “Gypsy” as a synonym for “Roma” and “Romani,” but that will not be the case in this discourse.⁵ A greater understanding of political correctness dictates that certain words and phrases, by their nature, are derogatory, discriminatory, and insulting, “Gypsy” is one such word and it will only be used in this research in the contexts of the referenced texts.

The term “Gadje” is used by Roma to refer to non-Romani people. Its singular male form is the term “Gadjo.” Gadje will be utilized interchangeably throughout this dissertation with non-Romani. In addition, the historical name for the peninsula that encompasses Athens and its countryside is Attica.⁶ Athens and Attica will also be used interchangeably.

Finally, the term “activist scholarship” denotes practices by both activists within social movements who do research and scholars within academia who conduct activism-oriented research. In both cases, the emphasis is on the acts of research conducted in different institutional settings toward similar shared goals.⁷ Depending on the position in which one sees himself, herself, or themself, the term utilized might be “activist scholar” or “scholar activist.” I, personally, identify as an activist scholar in that the activism precedes the scholarship and, therefore, serves as a catalyst for the scholarship. The scholarship is an effective outlet for the activism.

---


Chapter 1

Who are the Romani?

We are not savages but a civilized people of another civilization. We are neither inferior nor superior to the rest of humanity. We are different. That’s all.

— Sandra Jayat

It is perplexing that for a people who have resided in Europe since the Middle Ages, there continues to be a lack of understanding about who the Roma are. The primary reason for this lack of comprehension is that the bulk of information passed down and dispersed about Roma and their culture has been generated by Gadje (non-Romani). This includes the fact that Roma have been labelled “Gypsies” because it was originally and erroneously believed that they hailed from Egypt. In addition to misrepresenting the origins of the Roma, non-Romani have perpetrated negative stereotypes and harmful misinformation that have portrayed Roma as a homogenous ethnic group characterized by such stereotypes as laziness, bad hygiene, thievery, child kidnappers, and uneducated vagabonds. This is the image that is depicted in film, literature, and songs like Disney’s “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” the children’s book Madeline and the Gypsies, and Cher’s “Gypsys, Tramps, and Thieves.” It is also the racist ideology that has plagued the Romani for centuries. In the opening scene of “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” Frollo, the villain, refers to Gypsies as “vermin” and later states that they are insects that should be squashed, while the remainder of the film also perpetuates negative, stereotypical images of Roma.8 Throughout Madeline and the Gypsies, Roma are depicted as friendly and loving people but also as child kidnappers and masters of deception.9 As the title reflects, “Gypsys, Tramps,


and Thieves” refers to the opinions of the non-Romani about Roma and the song also perpetuates images of sexually active young girls and a people traveling in wagons, dancing for coins, and selling fake tonics.10

Hancock systematically deconstructs the stereotypes that serve as the foundation of anti-Romani racist ideology by replacing the images of thieves and con artists with the image of a multifaceted group of people who have endured centuries of enslavement, expulsion, and pogrom only to continue to face discrimination and marginalization in all aspects of their lives.11 The Romani are, in essence, a people of two identities – their true identity and the one that is familiar to most non-Romani.12 Not only are there two Romani identities but, because of the centuries-old discrimination and marginalization they have been subjected to, the Romani world is, essentially, divided even further into Roma and non-Romani.13 This separation of worlds, much like W.E.B. Dubois referred to with regard to African Americans living behind the veil during Jim Crow, has been at the heart of the Romani culture for centuries and continues in the twenty-first century.14

10 Cher, Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves (Kapp Records, 1971).
11 Ian Hancock, We are the Romani People (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2007).
12 Hancock, We are the Romani People, xvii.
Romani Origins and Migration

The Romani migrated from what is now northern India between the ninth and fourteenth centuries and are Europe’s largest and most vulnerable minority.\(^{15}\) While estimates vary, some citing numbers of seven million to ten million and others of twelve million or fifteen million Roma in Europe, there is a consensus that the great majority of Roma reside in countries that were part of the former Soviet Union.\(^{16}\)

Matras asserts that it is the belief of most historians that it was the establishment of the Seljuk Turkish reign in parts of Central Asia that precipitated the migration of Romani people into Turkey as artisans, craftsmen, and support servicers to the Turkish armies before traversing to and settling in Byzantine society.\(^{17}\) Although the Romani were Christians, Europeans began to view Romani as Turkish sympathizers because they were willing to work for anyone who would pay for their skills. This led to the emergence of new restrictions against Romani movement.\(^{18}\) Hancock also points out that Romani people could have been captives of the Seljuks or were traveling to avoid the spread of Islam since their move from India and through the Middle East to Anatolia took fifty years or less but it took them another two centuries to reach Europe.\(^{19}\) It is also known that the Romani were enslaved in Wallachia and Moldavia from the fourteenth century.

---


\(^{17}\) Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 22.


\(^{19}\) Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 14.
century until 1864. From the Byzantine Empire, Roma spread into Central and Eastern Europe in the fifteenth century and Western and Northern Europe in the early sixteenth century.

It is the field of linguistics, along with culture and science, that made it possible to track the origins and paths of Roma migration. The Romani language is an Indian language. Today, many Romani words are derived from the Indian language but all Romani languages are not the same in that there are more than sixty Romani dialects. In his foreword to Hancock’s *We are the Romani People*, Ken Lee writes about growing up Roma in England and hearing his parents speak of foreign Roma in a derogatory manner similar to the way non-Romani would speak of Roma. It was later, when Lee began to meet some of these foreign Roma, that he came into the realization of the common ground they shared in language but also language differences based upon the historical migratory movements of the various Romani groups.

In addition to providing multiple examples of Indian words in the Romani language, Hancock cites a 2001 report from the Centre of Human Genetics at Edith Cowan University in Perth that states:

> Analysis of slow-developing polymorphisms have identified a single paternal and a single maternal lineage of Indian origin shared by all groups (of Romani tested…). These lineages belong to a small subset of the known genetic diversity of the Indian subcontinent. Thus, Roma descended from a small, ancestral minority in the Indian subcontinent that has subsequently fractured into multiple population isolates within Europe.

---

20 Crowe, “The International and Historical Dimensions.”

21 Crowe, “The International and Historical Dimensions.”

22 Melegh et al., “Refining the South Asian Origin of the Romani People.”

23 Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, ix-xvi.

24 Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 9.
A subsequent, but similar, study utilized a larger number of European Roma samples and an extended data set of Indian groups. The results confirmed that the origin of the Romani included northern India and possibly Pakistan.25

In addition to language, other aspects of Romani culture derive from their Indian roots. Laws forbidding Roma to settle forced them to assume professions that could easily be packed up and moved to another location. One such profession was fortune telling, which is a highly regarded profession in India.26 The fact that the Romani culture is exclusionary can partially be credited to the history of marginalization they have faced over the centuries but can also be traced back to the Indian caste system. In addition, the Romani belief in having large families is tied to their Indian roots.27 The same applies to the Romani policy of holding family tribunals to settle disputes. Hancock points out that culture, language, and identity are not inherited genetically but socially and, apart from the genetic and linguistic evidence, Roma have a core of direct and unbroken transmission of culture from India.28 Contrary to those who say the Romani have no historical homeland, Hancock asserts that, while the Romani have no present-day homeland in Europe, their historical homeland is indeed India.29

One of the many challenges Roma contend with is the lack of recognition of diversity that exists among them. For example, the European Framework and European Council uses

25 Melegh et al., “Refining the South Asian Origin of the Romani People.”

26 Hancock, We are the Romani People, 59.

27 Hancock, We are the Romani People, 59-60.

28 Hancock, We Are the Romani People.

“Roma” as an umbrella term for people who have similar cultures such as the Sinti, Travellers, Kale, and Gens de Voyage because of their non-sedentary status, although 80 percent of Roma are not nomadic, but sedentary. While the Sinti are a Romani subgroup that resides primarily in Germany, Travellers, for instance, are a completely different ethnic group. In hopes of providing better clarification, a February 2012 statement on “Human Rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe” quotes the Council of Europe’s commissioner of human rights as stating, “The minorities labeled ‘Roma,’ ‘Gypsies,’ and ‘Travellers’ in fact comprise a multitude of ethnicities and distinct linguistic communities, heterogeneous groups that are viewed as a unit primarily by outsiders.” It is this designation as “others” that has plagued the Romani for centuries and continues to do so in the twenty-first century.

Whether lumped together as a single group or recognized for the heterogeneous groups that they are, the Romani have a shared history and present that include enslavement, genocide, expulsion, forced sterilization, and marginalization in education, housing, employment, healthcare as well as adverse treatment in the criminal justice system.

**Romani Culture**

It is the Romani history of marginalization and discrimination that has shaped many aspects of Romani culture, in particular, social exclusion and poverty. Romani tradition has ultimately internalized and accepted centuries-old marginalization and stigmatization from non-

---


Romani as a given fact. There is good reason for this. More than five centuries after first arriving in Europe, in the minds of the masses of non-Romani, the Romani are considered no more European than they were when they first presented their letters of penance to authorities guarding the city gates in Hildesheim, Germany in 1417. Those letters were required for admission and served as a declaration that Roma who wished to enter the church-controlled city had turned away from sin and were asking for forgiveness for past transgressions.

Ringold et al. point out that a defining aspect of poverty is its relationship to social exclusion and that social exclusion manifests itself in a number of ways, including economic, political, socio-cultural, and geographic. The Romani have faced exclusion in all of the aforementioned areas. Geographically, the majority of Romani communities, often at the hands of the authorities and through no fault of their own, have been relegated to substandard housing in GUAs. This geographic exclusion then leads to economic exclusion and social exclusion. Historically, Roma have been subjected to expulsions by governments and this practice has continued into recent years by countries, such as France, Italy, and Romania, despite having developed strategies for implementing Roma inclusion as required by the EU.

While Roma self-exclusion can be seen throughout Europe, the concept takes on different meanings depending on whether one is Gadje or Roma. Gadje assert that Roma are practicing self-exclusion by failing to understand the importance of education, not learning the national language of the country where they reside, or by such practices as driving but not acquiring a

---

35 Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, 12.
36 Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, 12.
driver’s license. In essence, the Gadje argument is that Roma are excluding themselves from mainstream society by not conforming to mainstream practices such as acquiring an education and, therefore, having the skills needed for employment. While, on the other hand, Roma assert that they are being excluded by Gadje in school systems because instruction is not in their Romani mother language and they are being relegated to special classrooms. Roma also point out that being consigned to GUAs often leaves them without addresses to use for the purpose of obtaining a driver’s license, and the inability to use the Romani language with government agencies makes it impossible for them to pass driving tests. Roma further argue that the goal of European governments is assimilation instead of integration. The Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities states that “members of national minorities can freely use their language or writing privately and publicly.” That, however, has not been the case for Roma and, because of this they are subjected to linguistic dislocation. Stephen May asserts that when governments set out to create a “unified linguistic state,” the majority language prevails as the “vehicle of modernity,” while the minority language (in this case Romani), is essentially seen as an obstruction to upward mobility and a cause for “ghettoization.” May further argues that linguistic dislocation is often accompanied by socio-cultural and socio-

39 Cretan, “From (Self-) Exclusion,” 31.
economic dislocation, which translates to lack of access.\textsuperscript{42} While Gadje will argue that Roma seek to be dependent upon welfare systems and be burdens of the state, some Roma have chosen self-exclusion and sought peripheral locations on the edges of cities because such locations minimize interference from social control agencies and provide protection from discrimination and anti-gypsyism.\textsuperscript{43} Gadje policies of exclusion and forced assimilation are seen as a means of reducing the visibility of Romani communities, therefore, denying these communities and individuals the right to their own culture.\textsuperscript{44}

The center of Romani culture is the family. Like their Indian ancestors, Roma perceive their children as their wealth and are fierce protectors of them. A common Romani saying is “but chave but baxt” (many children much luck).\textsuperscript{45}

While key aspects of Romani culture include customs such as marriage practices, tribunal settlement of disputes, language, funeral ceremonies, music, dance, and religion, these cultural practices are not the same across the spectrum because Roma are not a homogenous ethnic group. Romani cultural practices have been influenced by the cultures of the communities through which they have travelled and settled.\textsuperscript{46} For example, different Romani groups practice different religions. Traditionally, Romani have adapted the religion of the majority around them. Prior to the arrival of the Turks, most Balkan Romani were Christians. During the Ottoman

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{42} May, “Misconceiving,” 132.

\textsuperscript{43} Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe}, 13; Cretan, “From (Self-) Exclusion,” 31.

\textsuperscript{44} Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe}, 19.

\textsuperscript{45} Hancock, \textit{We Are the Romani People}, 59-60.

\textsuperscript{46} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 83.
\end{footnotesize}
period, many Romani became Muslims. While they began to drift back to Christianity in the twentieth century, there are still large Muslim Romani populations in the Balkan nations. The Romani see religion as not just something that is reserved for one day of the week but as a living embodiment of their lives. Hancock writes, “One’s spiritual batteries can only be recharged by spending time in an all-Romani environment – in the normal course of events, in family houses. It is in this area of spiritual and physical wellbeing (baxt) that the Indian origin of our Romani people is most likely seen.”

Again, because of the diversity of Romani people, Romani customs are not one-size-fits-all. For some groups, the “core” Romani culture has been diluted to the extent that it is nonexistent, as in the instances created by deliberate government policy in Hungary and Spain during the eighteenth century. There are, however, some cultural aspects that are typical of a larger Romani community.

Matras points out that Romani culture views the display of wealth and prosperity as a sign of good fortune and generosity. This accounts for the wearing of golden bracelets and headscarves adorned with gold coins in some communities. This display of wealth and the belief in generosity toward others is reflected in many aspects of Romani life.

---


48 Hancock, We are the Romani People, 74.

49 Hancock, We are the Romani People, 75.

50 Hancock, “Beyond Poverty,” 184.

51 Matras, The Romani Gypsies, 84.
While Roma have often been characterized by non-Romani as being unclean, the truth is that Romani communities have a strong concept of honor and shame as well as clean and unclean, with these concepts pertaining to conversation topics, general behavior, food consumption, and bodily cleanliness. For example, the upper body is considered free of shame for men and women while the lower body is seen as unclean and is not to be exposed.\(^52\) In addition, horse meat, which is consumed in some Central European countries, is considered polluted by Roma, and frogs and snakes are seen to be associated with the devil.\(^53\)

Roma are also often recognizable to each other through their language, appearance and dress codes such as older men wearing thin mustaches, a particular style of hat or vest, not wearing short pants, and women wearing dresses or skirts instead of pants.\(^54\)

Another aspect of Romani culture that is a possible carryover from their Indian roots is the practice of arranged and/or early marriages. While arranged marriages are commonplace and are done so with the consent of the parents of the bride and the groom, there are also, of course, instances where the young people choose to marry and present their requests to the parents. Although marriages are often arranged, they never transpire without the consent of the bride and groom. Romani females are not forced to marry against their will but may sometimes consent solely out of respect for their parents.\(^55\) Since the Romani take pride in the virginity of their daughters, these marriages often take place at an early age to ensure that virginity is intact. After

\(^{52}\) Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 84.


\(^{54}\) Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 84-85.

the consummation of the marriage and during the days-long marriage celebration, it is sometimes
the practice to display the marital bed sheets as evidence of the female’s virginity.\textsuperscript{56}

Conflict resolution is another aspect of the Romani culture that appears foreign to non-
Romani. As a sign of respect to the elder male of a family, it is he who resolves family conflicts
but there are sometimes conflicts that go beyond the family. In those instances, some groups of
Romani utilize the kris or Romani court that secures agreements when there is an internal
conflict within the community. The court is based on the principle of consensus where there is a
quest for a solution that is accepted rather than imposed by force upon the parties in the
dispute.\textsuperscript{57}

Music has always been a large part of the Romani culture and, as such, is one of the
oldest Romani occupations. One of the primary features of the music, however, is that it relies
heavily on improvisation while still showing artistic virtuosity. In addition, Romani guard their
music in much the same way as they guard other aspects of their lives with regard to non-
Romani. For instance, songs sung within the family are typically slow and have a more sorrowful
mood. They tell of grief, misery, and misfortune. On the other hand, songs performed for non-
Romani audiences are fast and merry.\textsuperscript{58} This is yet another mechanism Romani have put in place
to protect their way of life based on their experiences with non-Romani.

While some Romani customs seem strange to non-Romani, in actuality, they are not
strange but different from what non-Romani are accustomed to. While conducting research for


\textsuperscript{57} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 113-114.

\textsuperscript{58} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 107-111.
this dissertation, a conversation with a twenty-six-year-old Romani man continues to stand out in my mind. He said, “We want the same for our children as you want for yours. Why is that so hard for people to understand? I am proud of my job, my family, and my children but I am not happy with how we live in 2021. It is inconceivable that we are still in camps. We are in the urban web and we live like pigs.”

The desperation of this husband and father of three is the desperation felt by Roma throughout Europe. While Roma might use their music to present a jovial front, behind the veil they are often forced to live as pigs and tolerate Gadje-created images of themselves and their culture that are the antithesis of the true Romani way of life.

---

59 Christos Katsaris, Interview by author, Athens, June 17, 2021.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

I would not in any way excuse or defend the Roma who are criminals. They must atone for their crimes, of course. But to condemn an entire people as thieves and bandits, is in itself a criminal act…Every human being has the right to be treated fairly and judged as an individual on their own merits.

— Hans Caldaras

Introduction

Romani discrimination and marginalization in Europe has been well documented. For centuries, Romani have faced the bombardment of systemic racism in the form of enslavement, expulsion, genocide, forced or coerced sterilization, police harassment, healthcare discrimination, housing segregation, and educational segregation. In the twenty-first century, many of those human rights violations continue to exist alongside the degradation of individual acts of microaggression such as physical attacks and hate speech. This extended history of discrimination and marginalization has engulfed Roma in a cycle of poverty that has made them the most prominent poverty risk group in many of the countries of the EU.

The repercussions of this level of poverty are substandard housing, food insecurities, high unemployment rates, inadequate healthcare, and compromised educational experiences. The extent of marginalization, however, varies from country to country. There has been extensive

---


62 Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, Roma in an Expanding Europe, xiv.

63 Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, Roma in an Expanding Europe, xiv-xvii.
research conducted on Romani marginalization in the EU. An excellent example is Giovanni Picker’s *Racial Cities*, which focuses on the segregation of Roma into GUAs.64 Another is Celia Donert’s *The Rights of Roma*, which examines the plight of Roma in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism in 1989.65 Both of these are particularly significant in that the great majority of Roma reside in the Eastern European countries and the GUAs, where they live, emerged and persisted in these countries after the end of World War II.66

The magnitude of research that exists pertaining to Roma in the Eastern European countries does not exist, however, with regard to the approximately three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Roma living in Greece.67 This dissertation focuses on two Romani communities in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio at Chalandri, which are located in Attica (greater Athens), and provides a comparison between the marginalization they experience and that of other Roma in the EU in the areas of healthcare, education, housing, criminal justice, and employment.

**Romani Identity**

Modern-day Romani marginalization dates back to the Middle Ages in Europe and is the direct result of the ill-perceived perceptions of non-Romani about who the Romani people are. Hancock’s *We are the Romani People* presents a truer and more nuanced image of Romani people. The accomplished linguist utilizes his extensive language skills to trace the migration of

64 Picker, *Racial Cities*.


67 Vassileios Pantzos, interview by author, Athens, June 14, 2021.
Romani people into Europe from India, not Egypt, and contradicts the current trend toward using the term “Roma” instead of “Romani” by arguing that “Roma” refers to a plural male noun and “Romani” is all-inclusive, regardless of ancestry, gender, or geographical location. Hancock further argues that the growing use of the term “Roma” as an inclusive moniker for all Romani people is a reflection of the vagueness that exists inside and outside of the Romani community about Romani identity. He, however, admits to his more frequent use of the term “Roma” and has declared that, given its popularity, the disuse of the term “Roma” is a losing battle. Hancock also clarifies the definition of anti-gypsyism as the treatment of Romani as less than equals and seeking to deny them the same freedoms in society one wishes for oneself either on the personal level or institutionalized and supported by law.

Like Hancock, Matras attempts to rectify the misconceptions that have been perpetuated about Romani origins, history, and culture in The Romani Gypsies. In doing so, Matras also indicates that a discrepancy exists between being called Rom, Roma, Romani, and Travellers but, unlike Hancock, readily embraces the term “Gypsy” and most often the term “Romani Gypsy” as if the term provides a clear distinction. He also points out that the European Framework and European Council use “Roma” as an umbrella term for people who have similar cultures such as the Sinti, Travellers, Kale, and Gens de Voyage because of their non-sedentary status, although 80 percent of Roma are not nomadic, but sedentary. Matras’ argument is that

---

68 Hancock, We are the Romani People, xx.

69 Ian Hancock, “Beyond Poverty,” 181–85.

70 Hancock, We are the Romani People, 53.

71 Matras, The Romani Gypsies.

72 Matras, The Romani Gypsies, 25.
Gadje have taken all people they consider as outsiders and grouped them together, regardless of their kin structures or community values.

Felix B. Chang and Sunnie T. Rucker-Chang express their agreement with Matras in *Roma Rights and Civil Rights: A Transatlantic Comparison* when they assert that the otherness label has been stamped on Romani people in Europe and has been bolstered by the Romani legacy of state-condoned slavery and, therefore, racialization.\(^73\)

In *Another Darkness, Another Dawn: A History of Gypsies, and Travellers*, Becky Taylor also tackles the ambiguity and inaccuracies surrounding the ethnic designation of “Romani” and the fact that all people grouped as Romani or Roma do not, in fact, claim Romani heritage. It is the otherness that has led governments to lump them into one category and designate the Romani as “undesirable – ‘counterfeit Egyptians,’ vagabonds, vagrants, errants, nomads, those of no fixed abode, travelling people – in order to control, assimilate, or remove them from society.”\(^74\) Taylor asserts that although Romani lifestyles have differed widely across Europe, with some practicing long-term settlement instead of nomadism and others interacting with wider populations rather than within a closed society, Romani racialization continues to flourish.\(^75\) She credits the existence of different Romani groups to the migration of Roma from what is now northwestern India and Pakistan into Europe with some travelling into the Balkans and others spreading out across northern and eastern Europe.\(^76\) Like Hancock and Matras, Taylor bases her


\(^{74}\) Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 11.

\(^{75}\) Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 20.

\(^{76}\) Taylor, *Another Darkness*, 20.
arguments on linguistics, written sources, and genetic sampling. This allows her to chronicle documented Romani racialization and the rationale used by European governments for the subsequent marginalization of Romani from the fourteenth century to the present.

The work of Hancock, Matras, Taylor, Chang, and Rucker-Chang examines the history of misinformation and misidentification that exists about Romani people and the fact that this ambiguous history was created and has been perpetuated by non-Romani and utilized for the purposes of discrimination, marginalization, and racialization. Although recognized as Greek citizens, Roma in modern Athens continue to be adversely affected by the same misinformation and misidentification as other Roma throughout Europe and throughout history.

**History of Marginalization**

Although the Nazis were not the first to discriminate against and persecute the Romani, their actions were among the most egregious in history. Through the analyzation of primary sources from German and Austrian archives, Guenter Lewy reveals the evolution of Nazi policy to manage what they perceived to be the “Gypsy problem” by intensifying control and harassment; subjecting Romani to intense scrutiny and incarceration; and enacting legislation based on alleged racial inferiority. Of great significance about Lewy’s research is that the primary sources he unearthed had never been utilized to examine the fate of Romani under the Nazi regime. Lewy unveils that while the small Romani population was initially of no significance to the Nazi regime, that position escalated to one that encompassed the mass murder of Roma. The lack of verifiable statistics regarding the number of Roma who perished in concentration camps and those who lost their lives in other ways, as the result of Nazi rule, raises

---

questions about whether or not the incident Roma refer to as the Porrajmos or the Devouring (Romani Holocaust) was, in fact, genocide. Lewy, however, points out that the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes of Genocide defines genocide as “a series of acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.” Without the benefit of valid numbers for Romani populations prior to Nazi Rule, there is no way of knowing the percentage of the population that was eradicated. Lewy, however, asserts that the involuntary sterilization of Roma prior to the Auschwitz decree, definitely fits into the category of genocide. Donald Kendrick and Grattan Puxon also argue that the assault on the Romani was indeed genocide when they write, “the ultimate aim of the Nazis was the elimination of all Gypsies.” It was not until 2015 that the European Parliament recognized that Romani were victims of genocide during World War II.

In The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945, Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Wippermann provide an expansive examination of whether or not the modernization theory works in relation to the Nazi regime. In doing so, Burleigh and Wippermann examine the Nazi social policy and the Nazi racial policy. They argue that the policies were different sides of the same coin, policies that were both modern and anti-modern. Since The Racial State examines the totality of the Nazi regime from this perspective, the persecution of Sinti, Roma, and other ethnic minorities is

78 Lewy, The Nazi Persecution, 222.
79 Lewy, The Nazi Persecution, 223.
80 Donald Kendrick and Grattan Puxon, Gypsies Under the Swastika (Hatfield: University of Hertfordshire Press, 1995), 7.
81 Donert, The Rights of Roma, 1.
82 Burleigh and Wippermann, The Racial State, 2-4.
limited to one chapter. Burleigh and Wippermann assert that Nazi persecution of Roma centered around racial policy. In doing so, they examine racial-biological research conducted on Roma and the determination that, because Romani are of Indian origin, they are Aryans. But, since 90 percent of the Romani living in Germany were not of pure “Gypsy” blood, the Nazis decided Romani racial characteristics inclined them toward asocial and a criminal way of life.83

Burleigh and Wippermann’s research coincides with arguments by Peter Widman that the Nazi assertion that Romani were biologically criminal was influenced by the work of nineteenth century Italian psychiatrist Cesare Lombroso.84 Widman expands upon his argument when he references Michael Zimmerman’s assertion that genocide cannot be solely explained by ideas of criminal biology. It is only after the encounter with other concepts, such as racism and Social Darwinism, and the centralization of the criminal police from 1936 onwards, that the specific fatal dynamic was created of which Sinti and Roma in Germany and in other European countries were to become victims.85

Donert asserts that, in the aftermath of World War II, the Romani were essentially a stateless people but the people’s democracies established by the Soviet bloc were home to the largest Romani communities on the continent.86 That continues to be the case. An approximate ten to twelve million Romani currently reside in post-socialist states.87 Donert maintains that

86 Donert, The Rights of Roma, 2.
87 Donert, The Rights of Roma, 2.
most postwar histories of Roma in Europe focus on Germany and Austria, but she researches Romani history from a different perspective in *The Rights of Roma: The Struggle for Citizenship in Postwar Czechoslovakia* where she argues that the discourses on rights were not the monopoly of states in the Eastern bloc and ordinary people also struggled to claim rights to citizenship under socialism.\(^8\) In addition to illuminating the roles of Romani activists during and after Communist rule, Donert maintains that while Roma, primarily those in cities and towns, experienced improved employment and living conditions under Stalinism, they, along with Roma in rural areas, were also subjected to policies that criminalized nomadism and interventionist practices of social medicine that were physically intrusive, humiliating, and violent.\(^9\)

*The Roma Café* explores the impact of successive phases of Central and Eastern Europe on the region’s Roma and how Roma perceive these phases. The phases Pogany examines are the inter-war period and the war years of World War II, the Communist era, and the post-Communist transition.\(^10\) Pogany agrees with Donert that while Communist policies toward Romani varied significantly from country to country, particularly after the 1950s, there was a general effort by Communist authorities to integrate Roma by providing them with jobs, housing, and access to services.\(^11\) With the fall of Communism and the transition from command to market economies,

---


Romani poverty and social exclusion worsened drastically and reversed the gains many Roma experienced under socialism.92

Chryssy Potsiou and Eft Dimopoulou’s “Access to Land and Housing Aspects of the Greek Roma” emphasizes one of the ways that Romani poverty and social exclusion in Greece has worsened in recent years in spite of governmental efforts to improve the situation of Roma through social services. They argue that the 2009 economic crisis in Greece led to an erosion of all social services and, with Roma already suffering weak legal rights to land and real estate, they suffered the most.93 Although the Greek government harmonized its legislation in 2005 in terms of equal treatment of its citizens and the Greek Constitution stipulates that the government is obligated to provide an acceptable level of living for all of its citizens and their families, construction and the provision of subsidized housing lagged. In addition, legal rights impacting the provision of subsidized housing were not codified.94 While the government did make available micro financing for home loans for approximately nine thousand Roma, those who obtained the loans were often unable to repay them and maintain the real estate because of their lack of adequate employment.95 The lack of adequate or any employment is often tied to inadequate levels of education and employment discrimination.

The Roma Café also provides an overview of the extreme difficulties Roma have faced in recent years in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, Pogany helps liberate the Romani from

two-dimensional cliches of being faceless statistics and perennial victims of social exclusion, harassment, and economic dislocation to being viewed as a people possessing the full range of individual traits and qualities.96

**European Policy and Roma Rights**

While acknowledging that there were significant strides made in Romani integration in Central and Eastern Europe during their Communist period, Kalman Mizsei joins Pogany and Donert in pointing out that progress unraveled when the countries were liberated. She reconstructs and analyzes the unraveling of Romani integration in the post-Communist market and argues that what was partially and distortedly achieved under Soviet socialism is achievable in the free politics of Central and Eastern Europe in the areas of inclusion, school desegregation, and public housing solutions.97 In making this assertion, Mizsei argues that government authorities must improve their technical capabilities to allocate funds; that the Romani poverty issue must be approached from different governance levels; Romani inclusion should be part of the national discussion in countries; and Roma should be provided with appropriate state education which would, in turn, be beneficial for future overall employment rates.98

*Roma Rights: Race, Justice, and Struggles for Equality* is a collection of essays compiled and edited by Claude Cahn that addresses five issues critical to activists and policymakers in the ongoing debate on Roma Rights. These issues include the problem of hate speech and whether or

---


not it is a criminal act; education for a multicultural society that ensures dignity, inclusion, and equal education to children of groups burdened by racism; the role of the media in fighting racism; racism in the criminal justice system; and political participation. 99 Cahn, however, fails to tackle one of the key issues Roma face inside and outside the EU – the question of mobility. Julija Sardelić points out that while Directive 2004/38/EC granted all EU citizens the right to move and reside in other EU member states, the position of EU Romani migrants has consistently been challenged. She traces the mobility of Romani minorities between the old EU member states and the non-EU post-Yugoslavia space. Instead of focusing on motivations for mobility, she investigates the treatment of those mobilities by different states and the legal statuses these ascribe to those they label as Romani migrants. 100 By using what she refers to as circular mobilities, Sardelić maintains that Roma were subjected to migration control that manifested itself in the form of deportation and prevented them from settling permanently in their host states. 101

For Roma, even in their home countries, the rights of citizenship have been ambiguous. The denial of citizenship to Roma in the Czech Republic after the breakup of Czechoslovakia served as a case study for Erika Schlager. She points out that when the newly independent Czech Republic crafted its citizenship law, it tied Czech Republic citizenship to earlier “Czech republic” citizenship, that was created with the 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, as a means of excluding Roma whose parents and grandparents had moved from the Slovak region of


101 Sardelić, "In and Out," 501.
Czechoslovakia to the Czech lands.\textsuperscript{102} She argues that while, on the surface, Czech law was neutral on matters of race or ethnicity, tens of thousands of former Czechoslovakia citizens, who were permanent residents of the Czech Republic, were now stateless and, while not all of the Czech Roma were excluded citizenship, all that were excluded were Roma.\textsuperscript{103} Schlager further points out that the denial of citizenship was symptomatic of the many prejudices Roma faced in the Czech Republic and, while the membership law was amended in 1999 and allowed for tens of thousands of Roma to secure citizenship, those who sought asylum in other countries during the ongoing controversy were not allowed to be eligible.\textsuperscript{104} While the denial of citizenship was emphasized in Schlager’s case study, the primary focus was the influence the U.S. government has over foreign policy and the ways this influence was leveraged in the creation of the 1990 Copenhagen Document which included the first reference to Roma in an international human rights agreement.\textsuperscript{105}

Ingi Iusmen examines how the EU has addressed the socio-economic situation and structural discrimination of Roma in Europe. Iusmen argues that while the EU addressed the plight of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe as part of the EU accession negotiations, it did not seriously look at the issue until it was a Europe-wide issue or European problem. She further asserts that the EU only adopted the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies in 2011 because it was believed that the Framework was linked to the European Structural


\textsuperscript{103} Schlager, “Policy and Practice,” 59-75.

\textsuperscript{104} Schlager, “Policy and Practice,” 59-75.

\textsuperscript{105} Schlager, "Policy and Practice," 62.
Investment Funds. In essence, Iusmen is asserting that the EU adopted this policy because it was in its best interest economically and not so much the interest of Roma. She makes her case by pointing out that the EU Roma Policy does nothing to target discrimination against Roma.

Iusmen’s argument is in consonance with the comparison Chang and Rucker-Chang make between Roma Rights and Civil Rights while asserting Derrick Bell’s inherent convergence theory which maintains that the majority conveys rights to minorities only when doing so furthers the majority’s interests. Interviews conducted with Greek Roma reveal other comparisons that can be made with regard to the Greek government and the dispensing of COVID-19 relief funds in Romani communities as well as land tenure rights.

Greek Roma

While a plethora of research has been conducted on Romani marginalization in former Communist countries and in other parts of the EU, there is limited research that focuses, in particular, on the marginalization of Greek Roma. Some of the most significant research on access to land and housing of Greek Roma was conducted by Potsiou and Dimopoulou. The researchers examine the situation of Roma in Europe, including the attempted classification of Romani land and tenure system and the policies adopted by the UN and the EU to improve the legality of land tenure and infrastructure of Roma settlements. Most relevant, however, is their case study conducted on two municipalities in western Attica (greater Athens). This research


provides in-depth information about Roma living conditions, their land and tenure rights, and progress made in neighborhood regeneration. Although the focus of the case study is the settlements of Zefyri and Vlyhos, there is spatial distribution information provided on five other Romani settlements, one of which is Nomismatiokopio, a settlement included in this dissertation research.\textsuperscript{110} The Roma settlement in Nomismatiokopio is currently facing issues regarding land tenure rights. In addition to providing considerable statistical data and general information regarding Greek Roma, Zefyri and Vlyhos provide quantifiable information on marginalization differences between Greek Roma and other Roma across Europe. On a much smaller scale, Zefyri and Vlyhos’ research localizes the groundbreaking work of Picker’s \textit{Racial Cities}, which examines the genesis and persistence of the segregation of Roma in contemporary Europe as well as the mechanics of race and how segregation signifies race.\textsuperscript{111}

Two studies by Stiliani Kotrotsiou et al. and Petraki et al. research the mental and physical health, respectively, of Greek Roma. The recent research of Kotrotsiou et al. examines the psychological health of 361 Roma and focuses specifically on gender disparities in the community and evolution of psychopathology and shame.\textsuperscript{112} Although the study was well organized, the results were unrevealing. In fact, they were exactly what was expected. A substantial number of Romani live in substandard housing and, therefore, have insufficient access to cooking facilities; the majority do not complete primary school; women have an inferior employment profile compared to men; the majority of respondents belong to a family

\begin{itemize}
\item[]\textsuperscript{110} Potsiou and Dimopoulou, "Access to Land," 37–49.
\item[]\textsuperscript{111} Picker, \textit{Racial Cities}.
\item[]\textsuperscript{112} Stiliani Kotrotsiou et al., "Age and Gender as Determinants of Psychological Health for Roma People in Greece," \textit{International Journal of Caring Sciences} 7, no. 3 (September 2014): 873–81,
\end{itemize}
where at least one member suffers from a chronic psychosomatic illness; and education is the key to increasing self-esteem.\textsuperscript{113}

Petraki et al., however, assessed the self-perceived health status and the prevalence of self-reported chronic diseases among adult Roma living in different types of Roma settlements in Greece and explored their association with social determinants of health.\textsuperscript{114} There were 534 participants in the study and they represented twelve Roma settlements in four prefectures – Peloponnese (Western Greece), Thessaly (Central Greece), Central Macedonia (Northern Greece), and Attica (greater Athens).\textsuperscript{115} Like the Kotrotsiou study, the results were less than extraordinary. Overall, participants experienced difficulties providing for their needs and obtaining health insurance, but large numbers perceived themselves to have good/very good health. There was also a worse self-perception of health status and higher percentage of chronic diseases, anxiety, and depression symptoms of Roma women in comparison to Roma men.\textsuperscript{116} The open-ended interviews conducted for this dissertation yielded information regarding aspects of Romani culture and how these cultural nuances could contribute to gender disparity in the self-perception of health status.

Roma face marginalization in all aspects of their lives but one of the most researched areas is education. While examining the shortfall of educational opportunities for disadvantaged groups in the United States and Europe, James A. Goldston highlights six legal challenges to

\textsuperscript{113} Kotrotsiou et al., “Age and Gender,” 873-81.


\textsuperscript{115} Petraki et al., “Living in Roma Settlements.”

\textsuperscript{116} Petraki et al., “Living in Roma Settlements.”
Romani educational segregation. He points out that The European Court of Human Rights has condemned six cases, of which three are from Greece.\textsuperscript{117} In \textit{Lavida and Others v. Greece}, for example, it was found that Greece was in breach of the non-discrimination guarantee of the European Convention for Human Rights where there was awareness of racial discrimination and the need to correct it but the decision was made “against effective anti-segregation measures.”\textsuperscript{118}

Goldston asserts that although Roma rights advocates have altered the jurisprudential landscape around racial discrimination in schools, they have yet to form a movement that can change government policies and shift public attitudes.\textsuperscript{119}

Based on research in the Peloponnese region of Greece, Pandelis Kiprianos, Ivi Daskalaki, and Georgios B. Stamélós highlight the contradictions and ambiguities involved in the process of incorporating Roma children in formal education.\textsuperscript{120} By examining Roma children between the ages of six and fifteen years in primary school education, the attempt was made to determine why very few continue to secondary school. The analysis of quantitative and qualitative data determined that most Roma parents and children acknowledge the importance of acquiring a formal education but are not committed to the long-term investment in a formal


\textsuperscript{118} Goldston, “The Unfulfilled Promise,” 171.

\textsuperscript{119} Goldston, “The Unfulfilled Promise,” 183-184.

This level of noncommitment is even more prevalent regarding the education of females. The researchers assert that their analysis demonstrates that the marginal integration of Roma children in the Peloponnese in schooling is ultimately connected with culturally constructed perceptions of age and gender.122

Although there is the stereotype of nomadic Roma, the Roma communities in Ano Liosia and Nomismatiokopio are sedentary communities. Dimitrios Zachos highlights the sedentary lifestyle of Roma. His research on the history of Roma communities in the Serres district of Greece contradicts much of the mythology about the Romani nomadic way of life in that Roma in this district have been permanently settled since the nineteenth century.123 While the roots of Roma in Ano Liosia and Nomismatiokopio do not date back that far, these communities are multi-generational.

Conclusion

It has been the goal of this researcher to be respectful of Romani culture and the diligent work of Roma activist scholars. While, as Chang and Rucker-Chang point out, there are similarities between the discrimination and marginalization of African Americans and Roma, there are also distinct differences. As an African American and, therefore, a non-Romani activist scholar, it was evident that there would be cultural differences and nuances experienced while conducting this research. In those instances, the deference was always to Roma activist scholars and study participants. Margareta Matache points out that for far too long non-Romani scholars

122 Kiprianos, Daskalaki, and Stamelos, "Culture and the School," 596.
have expressed the paternalistic intent to “help” or “rescue” Roma and, through their preconceptions and biases, they have colonized Romani scholarship in terms of terminology, content, and representation.\textsuperscript{124} Matache further points out that it is going to take the joint effort of Roma and non-Romani scholar activists to advance more accurate Roma representations through unbiased research and cultural work.\textsuperscript{125}

Michael Stewart also argues that there is a need for inclusiveness. While recognizing that forty years ago Romani Studies scholarship was not in the hands of Roma scholars, he disagrees with the new breed of Roma activist scholars who march under the banner of “nothing about us without us” and are often more concerned with who is presenting the message than the message.\textsuperscript{126} He further asserts that new Romani researchers have the opportunity to tap into realms of experience that have been previously ignored by ethnographers and policy makers but can only do so if their scholarship is genuinely dedicated to the production of knowledge and not the politics of representation and other agendas.\textsuperscript{127} With the work that needs to be done in the field, there is room for everyone because “no one ends up working with Romani communities or persons unless they are moved by an element of outrage at the treatment of Romani persons in our societies and a hope that their work will reduce the hostility with which such people are treated.”\textsuperscript{128}


\textsuperscript{125} Matache, “Dear Gadjo.”


\textsuperscript{127} Stewart, “Nothing About Us,” 125-146.

\textsuperscript{128} Stewart, “Nothing About Us,” 131.
Chapter 3
Methodology
The battle of life is, in most cases, fought uphill; and to win it without a struggle were perhaps to win it without honor. If there were no difficulties, there would be no success. If there were nothing to struggle for, there would be nothing to be achieved.

— Samuel Smiles

Most of the three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand Roma residing in Greece are recognized as Greek citizens and, according to the government, have been since 1955. But the marginalization they face, like the approximately twelve million other Roma throughout the EU, is not indicative of the expectations of citizenship.129 The Roma experience more severe poverty and social exclusion than almost any other minority groups in the countries where they live and this is compounded by deep-seated prejudice, racism, and discrimination.130 The primary objective of this research is to determine the types and degrees of discrimination and marginalization the Roma in modern Athens experience as well as the priorities of need that exist from one area to another. This research also adopts a comparative analysis examination of the status of Roma in modern Athens, other parts of Greece, and of Roma throughout the EU. In doing so, this bottom-up examination of marginalization, discrimination, and criminalization crosses multiple academic disciplines, including history, anthropology, sociology, journalism, social work, political science, and nutrition.

The foundation of this research is a qualitative study of two communities of Roma in greater Athens residing in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio. The field research for this study

129 Joanna Petraki et al., “Living in Roma Settlements.”
was conducted during the summer of 2021 and its confines were, therefore, dictated by restrictions associated with the global COVID-19 pandemic. One of the early challenges faced was that the overwhelming majority of EU countries were not open to residents from outside their countries. Field research was originally slated to take place in Budapest, Hungary and in conjunction with the Central European University (CEU) Romani Studies Program, but Hungary remained closed to outside visitors during the summer of 2021. Greece opened its borders to vaccinated and tested visitors from across the globe on May 14. This research commenced two weeks later on June 3. With that in mind, mask mandates were in full effect as well as social distancing measures that impacted but did not impede data collection.

The change of location presented an immediate challenge in that arrangements had previously been made with CEU to identify research participants and translators as well as office space. No such arrangements were in place at the time of arrival in Greece. Ano Liosia was chosen as the target community because of its Romani population of more than ten thousand and its easy accessibility. After meeting with Ellan Passe president Vasileios Pantzos, it was determined that the Nomismatokopeio at Chalandri community should be added to the research study because it would provide a fuller representation of the marginalization Roma face in Greece, particularly in the area of housing. Ellan Passe is the confederation of Roma in Greece and includes eight federations that represent more than sixty-five Roma groups spread throughout Greece.

A large component of the primary data in this research was collected from semi-structured interviews, conducted by the researcher, with Romani families and Roma rights

131 Vasileios Pantzos, interviewed by author, Athens, June 11, 2021.

132 Pantzos Interview.
advocates. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions and conversational communication. They were conducted implementing a variation of Nancy Krieger’s Experiences of Discrimination instrument (See Appendix A).\textsuperscript{133} The semi-structured interview was chosen, as it was estimated that through personal contact the researcher can comprehend the participants’ perception of life, their experiences, or how they express certain circumstances.\textsuperscript{134}

Interviews were first conducted in Ano Liosia and included participants from three families, which accounted for data on eight individuals, consisting of two men, three women, and three female children. Interviews were conducted the following week with participants from seven of the seventy-two families residing in Nomismatokopeio. These seven families accounted for data on sixty-seven individuals, consisting of twelve men, twelve women, and forty-three children. Of the forty-three children, twenty were male and twenty-three were female.

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Demographics of Data Collection}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Adult Males & 14 \\
Adult Females & 15 \\
Minor Males & 20 \\
Minor Females & 26 \\
Total Number Represented & 75 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

The Ano Liosia interviews were initially delayed for a week due to the death of a Roma in the community and the risk of COVID-19 infection because Romani funerals are large,


\textsuperscript{134} Steven Taylor and Robert Bogdan, Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (New York: John Wiles and Sons, 1998).
community-wide events. The Ano Liosia interviews were conducted with the assistance of two paid translators – one who translated from English to Greek and another from Greek to Romani. The interviews were recorded in audio and video, then later transcribed by the researcher. The researcher, a videographer, and the Greek translator met the Romani translator in Ano Liosia. Participants were identified by Romani rights activist Panayiotis Kampieris and the interviews took place in an open-air setting outside his home and later outside a Romani-owned convenience store in the community.

For the Nomismatokopeio interviews, the researcher was accompanied by Pantzos, a videographer, and an Ellan Passe staff member who served as an in-kind Greek-English translator. These interviews were also conducted in an open-air setting outside the home of a participant. In addition to providing translating services, Ellan Passe staff members provided in-kind transcribing assistance.

In Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio, participants signed a University of Memphis Institutional Review Board statement of consent. It was explained to each participant that the purpose of the study was to gain insight into their day-to-day lives and the types, if any, of marginalization and discrimination they experience. Participants were also advised that their participation was voluntary and they could ask to be excluded from the study at any time. In addition to consenting to participate in the research study, participants agreed to the use of audio and video recording instruments and were guaranteed anonymity in the research. In multiple incidences, participants waived the condition of anonymity. The researcher, however, chose to keep the anonymity of participants intact with the exception of the two Roma activists.

A series of questions was posed to the participants regarding the names, ages, and sexes of the family members living in their households as well as the number of years they had resided
at their current location and the location of their prior residence. Participants were then asked open-ended questions regarding their experiences with discrimination in housing, employment, healthcare, education, government assistance, and the criminal justice system as well as one question about their culture. Interviews varied from thirty minutes to one hour and ended only when the topic had been fully saturated.

**Table 2**

**Description of Research Participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Age and Gender</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant A1</td>
<td>52-year-old male</td>
<td>Ano Liosia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant A2</td>
<td>47-year-old female</td>
<td>Ano Liosia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant A3</td>
<td>28-year-old female</td>
<td>Ano Liosia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N1</td>
<td>60-year-old male</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N2</td>
<td>39-year-old male</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N3</td>
<td>27-year-old male</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N4</td>
<td>65-year-old female</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N5</td>
<td>26-year-old male</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N6</td>
<td>32-year-old female</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant N7</td>
<td>21-year-old male</td>
<td>Nomismatokopeio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the participants, activists Pantzos and Kamperis were interviewed. Those interviews were approximately ninety minutes to 120 minutes in length. Elements of the information provided by participants were later corroborated through the Pantzos and Kamperis interviews. Interviews with the activists also provided information contrary to what is presented by the Greek government with regard to the number of Roma in Greece as well as the allocation and distribution of funds to Greek Roma during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, while the Greek government acknowledges there are possibly three hundred thousand Roma in Greece, Ellan Passe records indicate the number of Roma in Greece at approximately five hundred
thousand and that the last census taken of Roma by the Greek government was done so by helicopter in 2017.\textsuperscript{135}

The participation of local leaders was also critical to this research because the Romani community is, by nature, very closed to non-Romani and generally skeptical of outsiders. This is due to the fact that Roma struggle against a host of biased and patronizing attitudes even in their dealings with those who are supposedly entrusted with helping them improve their people’s situation and support their social inclusion.\textsuperscript{136} The researcher was able to establish a climate of confidence with the participants because the Roma activists vouched for the credibility of the researcher and introduced her to the communities. Participants and activists also expressed confidence in the researcher due to her African American heritage and expressed that the researcher, participants, and activists share a common history of discrimination and marginalization.\textsuperscript{137}

The primary purpose of the interviews was to identify and describe the marginalization of Roma in modern Athens and incorporate it into the broader framework of research and studies on Roma marginalization. Given that the Roma communities in this study are sedentary, the beginning point of comparison was Dimitrios Zachos’ study on sedentary Roma in the Serres region of Greece. The focus of Zachos’ research, however, is the social history of Roma and, therefore, the history behind their marginalization and not the current status of Roma in Greece.\textsuperscript{138} The research of Chryssy Potsiou and Efi Dimopoulou focuses on access to land and

\textsuperscript{135} Pantzos Interview.

\textsuperscript{136} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 266.

\textsuperscript{137} Panayiotis Kampieris, interviewed by the author, Athens, June 7, 2021; Pantzos Interview.

\textsuperscript{138} Dimitrios Zachos, “Sedentary Roma,” 3-56.
housing for Greek Roma and one of the six communities they reference is Nomismatokopeio. Their research confirms the information obtained in this study’s interviews that the settlement was created in the 1970s by an arbitrary land seizure by the Roma. This is significant to this research in that it validates a conversation with an elder Roma who was one of the original settlers. The other Roma communities referenced by Potsiou and Dimopoulou – Spata, Votanikos, Zefyri, Nea Zoi, and Aspopyrgos – provide key comparative study data. In addition, data collected in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio illustrates the vast differences that exist between Roma communities in Greece, particularly in the area of housing, where of the more than four hundred Roma communities, 240 need housing solutions.

Another significant source for this research is the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) in that it provides current information on legislation and other matters pertaining to the marginalization of Roma in Greece and throughout the EU. ERRC points out that the Greek government has emphatically stated, “Greek Roma constitute an integral part of the Greek population. They are Greek citizens and enjoy full citizenship rights as well as all civil and political, economic, social, and cultural rights.” But, the Roma rights organization has published, from 2003 to the present, case after case on the ongoing ethnic cleansing of Roma in Greece. Notably, Nea Zoi - one of the communities studied by Potsiou and Dimopoulou – was the target of unlawful eviction by the Greek government in 2003. Information obtained from


141 Pantzos Interview.


research interviews illustrates the belief by Roma that the Greek government is using the land as a means of extortion in Nomismatokopeio.\textsuperscript{144} Interviews with Roma activists also contradict claims of the Greek government that citizenship was acknowledged for all Greek Roma in 1955 by pointing out that Greek Roma were not provided state identification cards until 1979 and that was limited to 100,000 Roma.\textsuperscript{145}

Significant to this research is the work of Chang and Rucker-Chang in that it examines Roma marginalization and argues that the foundation of the marginalization is the racialization of the Romani people.\textsuperscript{146} Equally significant to the understanding of Roma marginalization and the role of activist scholars in challenging and raising awareness about this marginalization is \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle}, which examines how unemployment, inadequate housing, and lack of education contribute to the cycle of poverty, and \textit{Realizing Roma Rights}, which examines, among other topics, educational segregation, fund appropriation, and Roma policy in Greece.\textsuperscript{147} These works are among the many utilized in this research for comparative and analytical purposes.

Interviews with participants revealed the areas of marginalization they perceived to be most critical to them and their culture. Although this research endeavors to identify, analyze, and compare the areas of marginalization deemed most significant by study participants, it also examines other areas of marginalization and the impact they have on the lives of Roma in

\textsuperscript{144} Pantzos Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{145} Pantzos Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{146} Chang and Rucker-Chang, \textit{Roma Rights and Civil Rights}. \\
\textsuperscript{147} Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe}; Bhabha, Mirga, and Matache, \textit{Realizing Roma Rights}. 

45
modern Athens. In addition, this research examines how the marginalization faced by Roma in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio compares to that of other Romani communities in Greece and throughout the EU. The results will reveal that there are aspects of marginalization that are explicitly unique to Greek Roma.
Chapter 4
Romani Marginalization in the European Union

Collective fear stimulates herd instinct and tends to produce ferocity toward those who are not regarded as members of the herd.

— Bertrand Russell

Introduction

In *Racism: A Short History*, George Fredrickson asserted that history has witnessed three overtly racist regimes. He argued that the first took place in the American South with the establishment and enforcement of Jim Crow laws that were designed to reduce African Americans to lower-caste status and guarantee racial purity. Fredrickson identified the second overtly racist regime as the Nazi persecution and extermination of Jews. Finally, he argued that only one overtly racist regime survived World War II and the Cold War. That was apartheid in South Africa.\(^{148}\)

Fredrickson did not restrict all racism to these three regimes. The historian, in fact, provided a concise, but detailed, history of racism that began with the religious and cultural persecution of Jews in the Middle Ages and concluded with the dawn of the twenty-first century. Ironically, however, this history makes no reference to the Romani in spite of several disturbing facts that, physically or cognitively, connect the Romani to each of the so-called overtly racist regimes. While Africans and African Americans were subjected to centuries of enslavement, the Romani were also subjected to centuries of enslavement.\(^{149}\) While it was the goal of the Nazis to exterminate the Jews, it was also the goal of the Nazis to exterminate the Romani in the same


\(^{149}\) Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 17-29.
camps and at the same time.\textsuperscript{150} While Black South Africans were forced to reside in separate residential areas than White South Africans, under the auspice of creating separate developments similar to those mandated by the “separate but equal” doctrine created by \textit{Plessy v Ferguson} in the American South, the Romani were relegated to GUAs in much the same manner.\textsuperscript{151} In addition, Jim Crow laws ignored the basic citizenship rights of African Americans but the Romani have faced similar discriminatory acts by being subjected to centuries of expulsion throughout the EU.\textsuperscript{152}

Although Fredrickson argued that there have been three overtly racist regimes, it is clear that the persecution and marginalization of the Romani also constitutes an overtly racist regime. There is, however, one major distinction. While Jim Crow, the Holocaust, and apartheid transpired in the past, the marginalization of the Romani has outdistanced all three and continues in the twenty-first century.

This chapter chronicles the historical discrimination and marginalization of Roma in the countries that now comprise the EU. The primary emphasis will be Roma enslavement, social diminishment, persecution by the Nazis, expulsions and exclusion, housing discrimination, forced or coerced sterilizations, healthcare discrimination, marginalization in education, denial of citizenship rights, and police harassment. This chapter also chronicles the present-day discrimination and marginalization of Roma in the EU as well as present-day activism being used to combat these injustices. When examining such a wide range of discrimination and marginalization, there is a high degree of intersectionality that exists, for example, between

\textsuperscript{150} Lewy, \textit{The Nazi Persecution}.


\textsuperscript{152} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}.
expulsions, exclusions, and housing discrimination or between forced or coerced sterilizations and healthcare discrimination. There is also the correlation that exists between educational barriers and employment discrimination that must be taken into consideration.

Portions of this chapter are based on coursework completed in the summer of 2020 under Dr. Colin Chapell and comprehensive exams in the summer of 2022 under Drs. Lorraine Meiners-Lovel and Radie Krueger. Many thanks for their reflections and comments.

**History of Enslavement**

Marginalization is not a new phenomenon, especially to Roma. Just as the religious and cultural persecution of Jews began in the Middle Ages, so did the persecution of Roma. The first registered presence of Roma in the Balkans appeared on a tax document from Constantinople dated 1283 and it referred to the “so-called Egyptians and Tsigani.”

As skilled artisans, the services of Roma were coveted. This helped facilitate the implementation of legislation to benefit landowners, the aristocracy, and the monasteries where any conquered non-Muslim people, including Roma, could be confiscated as property. As enslaved people, Roma were originally included as part of the sale of parcels of property or simply as gifts by the early 1300s. Two such gifts included forty Romani families being gifted to the Monastery of St. Anthony at Vodita in 1385 and three hundred Roma families being gifted to the Cozia Monastery in 1388.

In fact, for every orthodox monastery established during the Middle Ages, Roma were acquired as gifts and, over the centuries, this amounted to large numbers of enslaved Roma in the monasteries.

---

153 Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 15.


With this level of Roma enslavement in the monasteries as well as by landowners and aristocracy, by mid-1500s, the term “Ţigan” specifically meant “Romani slave.”

In addition, a vast number of Roma were enslaved by the state. In these instances, they often labored on road construction, for sailing on the seas, or as service staff and small civil servants.

As with other aspects of Romani existence, the numbers of enslaved Roma as well as the intricacies of their day-to-day lives continues to be vague. While most evidence of their existence in Europe is anecdotal and indirect through laws prohibiting or regulating their presence, the discovery of lists of population in the Romanian National Archive in Bucharest afforded the opportunity for David Gaunt and Julieta Rotaru to gather information on 48,508 Romani households in Wallachia in 1838, all of which were designated as enslaved people. The data showed that Roma lived in depressed economic conditions and, while some had access to land belonging to estate owners and worked as coachmen, ploughmen, and domestic servants, most had no access to land and often bartered their services as blacksmiths, musicians, and cobza players in exchange for food.

The enslavement of Roma existed primarily in Transylvania, Moldavia, and Wallachia (all part of modern-day Romania) and was completely abolished in 1790, 1855, and 1864, respectively, but none of the freed slaves ever received compensation or rights to land. Roma were also periodically enslaved in other European countries, notably England, Spain, Portugal,

156 Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 17-18.


159 Hancock, *We are the Romani People*, 24; Jan Selling, *Romani Liberation: A Northern Perspective on Emancipatory Struggles and Progress* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2022), 19.
Scotland, and Russia, simply based on their social status. In addition to literally being branded in England under King Edward VI, enslaved Roma were taken to the Americas in the fifteenth century by Columbus and on similar voyages as well as to Louisiana as late as the eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{160}

Chang and Rucker-Chang assert that the status of Roma did not improve after emancipation. The Roma were stigmatized as an itinerant people to the point that in the Ottoman Empire they were assessed taxes based on their classification and sometimes had to pay higher taxes because they were considered nomads and it was believed they were attempting to avoid taxes elsewhere. In addition, certain cities in the Ottoman Empire segregated their Roma populations while, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Roma were relegated to shanty settlements on the outskirts of town, much like the GUAs that currently exist throughout the EU.\textsuperscript{161} Chang and Rucker-Chang also point out that freed slaves faced the threat of re-enslavement, were often subjected to violence when they competed with non-Romani for jobs, and dealt with accusations of being Turkish spies in the Balkans.\textsuperscript{162}

**Social Diminishment**

Early in their arrival in Europe, the European social hierarchy began to place Roma on the bottom tier of society and condemned them to pariah status. Roma were referred to as “Atzinganoi” in the German language; “Zigeuner” in Italian; and “Zingari” in French, for which the root of all these words means “untouchable.”\textsuperscript{163} A lack of understanding of Roma culture,

\textsuperscript{160} Hancock, *We are the Roma People*, 24-27.

\textsuperscript{161} Chang and Rucker-Chang, *Roma Rights and Civil Rights*, 29.


\textsuperscript{163} “Fascination and Hatred: The Roma in European Culture,” The World War II National Museum, October 10, 2020, \url{https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/roma-european-}
such as their nomadic lifestyle in caravans and colorful dress, created an aura of mystique but also contributed to the development and perpetuation of vicious stereotypes that Roma were deceitful, dirty, too lazy to work, prone to steal, and kidnappers of children.\textsuperscript{164} This centuries-long social lynching of the Roma was very much in place when the Nazis rose to power in the twentieth century.

**Nazi Persecution**

The abuse of the Romani (inclusive of the Sinti) under the Nazi regime in World War II was among the most appalling persecutions of modern history. While much has been documented about the Jewish Holocaust, the Romani Holocaust, also known as the Porrajmos or the Devouring, has not been so well documented.\textsuperscript{165} One reason for this deficiency is that the Romani were a people who lived in the shadows and did not readily tell their stories of Nazi persecution in the death camps. It was only after Jews began to tell their stories and reference the Roma that it became known that Roma were in the death camps and were also subjected to persecution and extermination at the hands of the Nazis.\textsuperscript{166} Unlike the Jews, for which the Nazis kept meticulous records, Roma were not classified by Nazis as members of an ethnic group but were considered “others” from which the normal population needed to be protected.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{164} The World War II National Museum, “Fascination and Hatred.”

\textsuperscript{165} Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution*, 226.


In the years prior to the Nazis coming to power in Germany, citizen groups complained about Roma in their communities and placed requests that something be done for what they referred to as the Gypsy Problem or the Gypsy Plague. Under the Nazi regime, the decision was made to act on these earlier requests. One Nazi initiative was to remove Roma from public and private lands and place them in ad hoc camps where they were regularly subjected to dietary restrictions, beatings, solitary confinement, extensive manual labor, and various personal indignities.\textsuperscript{168} Prior to the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, approximately six hundred Roma were rounded up and placed in an offensive area near a sewage dump and a cemetery as a means of keeping them out of sight and avoiding international embarrassment.\textsuperscript{169}

The Nazis also turned to sterilization as a means of controlling reproduction among the Romani. The rationale for this drastic method of birth control was the work of nineteenth century scientist Sir Francis Galton who introduced the term eugenics and its assertion that some human beings were more valuable than others; that all cultural achievements had been the work of Aryans; and the best way to improve the human race was to control reproduction and limit marriage to those who were physically and mentally unfit.\textsuperscript{170} Under this auspice, the Nazis adopted the Law for the Protection of Genetically Diseased Offspring in 1933 for the primary purpose of controlling the reproduction of Roma because it was believed that they had asocial characteristics.\textsuperscript{171} The Nazis chose this particular strategy because they could not sterilize Roma based on their racial grouping since the Indian heritage of Roma meant they were of Aryan

\textsuperscript{168} Burleigh and Wippermann, \textit{The Racial State}, 122.
\textsuperscript{169} Burleigh and Wippermann, \textit{The Racial State}, 117.
\textsuperscript{170} Lewy, \textit{The Nazi Persecution}, 37.
\textsuperscript{171} Lewy, \textit{The Nazi Persecution}, 39.
descent. The asocial label was, therefore, utilized because of the nomadic and so-called criminal lifestyle Roma practiced.\textsuperscript{172}

The Nazis transported Roma to Auschwitz much later than they did the Jews and, unlike the Jews, Roma were allowed to remain in family groups.\textsuperscript{173} One such camp was the Gypsy Family Camp at Auschwitz II (Birkenau).\textsuperscript{174} In addition, the Nazis offered many Roma exemptions from deportation if they agreed to sterilization. Lewy argues that “it was not a matter of eugenics but a clear intent to eliminate the offspring of perfectly healthy men, women, and children.”\textsuperscript{175} In addition, Pogany has stated that “the policies of mass murder and forcible sterilizations were motivated by a cold-blooded intent to destroy at least a large part of the Romani people.\textsuperscript{176}

Historical evidence suggests that the Nazi persecution of Roma was almost an afterthought in that Roma were never mentioned in Adolf Hitler’s \textit{Mein Kampf}, making them peripheral to the central ideas and preoccupations.\textsuperscript{177} Lewy further argued, “Deportation to Auschwitz was not part of the plan to annihilate all Gypsies. It probably represented the lowest common denominator among various Nazi officials concerning the policy toward Gypsies.”\textsuperscript{178} Whether the original plan was to annihilate Roma or not, the truth is that the Porrajmos did take place but there are no accurate accounts of the actual numbers of Roma who died. The total death

\textsuperscript{172} Taylor, \textit{Another Darkness}.


\textsuperscript{174} Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 220.

\textsuperscript{175} Lewy, \textit{The Nazi Persecution}, 41.

\textsuperscript{176} Pogany, \textit{The Roma Café}, chap. 3, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{177} Pogany, \textit{The Roma Café}, chap. 3, Kindle.

\textsuperscript{178} Lewy, \textit{The Nazi Persecution}, 165.
toll of Roma at Auschwitz is reported to be over twenty thousand victims but many of those who were gassed were not even registered. In addition, at least five thousand Roma were imprisoned in concentration camps other than Auschwitz and five thousand Austrian Roma were sent to Litzmannstadt. They perished in the ghetto or were killed in the gas vans at Chelmno.\(^\text{179}\) Much of the challenge associated with chronicling the number of Roma who died at the hands of the Nazis is that there are no accurate statistics as to the pre-Nazi Roma population. It has, however, been estimated that the total number of Roma in Nazi-occupied Europe prior to World War II was close to one million.\(^\text{180}\) An analysis of Roma deaths between 1933 and 1945, not just by Nazis but also their allies and other states across Europe, puts the estimate of deaths at more than two hundred thousand.\(^\text{181}\) Some specific data was provided in the memoirs of Rudolf Hoss, the commander of Auschwitz who set up the special Gypsy Family Camp. He noted that there were around 22,600 Romani prisoners incarcerated in the camp and that, between 1943 and 1944, some 19,300 of them were murdered in the gas chambers. Of those Romani prisoners, 2,900 were murdered in the gas chambers on August 2-3 of the latter year to make space for incoming Hungarian Jews.\(^\text{182}\)

Long after the end of World War II, Roma continued to be victims of war-related injustices. In 1956, eleven years after the fall of the Nazi regime, the Federal Court decided that Roma had only been subjected to racial discrimination from 1943 to the end of the war. That was later backdated to 1938.\(^\text{183}\) After sustained lobbying by Sinti activists, the Federal Supreme

\(^\text{179}\) Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution*, 166-199.

\(^\text{180}\) Lewy, *The Nazi Persecution*, 222.


\(^\text{182}\) Matras, *The Romani Gypsies*, 220.

Court ruled in 1962 that the registration and examination of Roma by race scientists in the Third Reich qualified as racial persecution and, in 1963, the court ruled that the 1943 deportations of Roma to Poland were also partially motivated by race, making the victims eligible for compensation under the Federal Compensation Law.\(^{184}\) It was not until 1982 that the German government officially acknowledged that Nazi action against Roma was, in fact, genocide and it was not until 2015 that the European Parliament recognized that Roma were victims of genocide in World War II.\(^{185}\) In addition, Roma who survived the Nazis were not welcomed into European countries as asylum seekers because they were considered nomads and not refugees.\(^{186}\)

**Expulsions and Exclusions**

Julius Rostas asserts that while there is widespread belief that Roma exclusion is due to a high poverty rate that causes a dependency trap, his argument is much more nuanced than basic poverty. Rostas argues that exclusion of Roma is a power play tied to anti-gypsyism through institutional and structural forms of discrimination and racism.\(^{187}\) He makes this argument by utilizing case studies of democratic policy-making towards Roma in the Czech Republic, which will be examined on the basis of citizenship restrictions later in this chapter, as well as case studies in Hungary and Romania after the collapse of communism. Rostas further asserts that the state pushed Romani communities in Hungary, in particular, to the periphery, blamed them for social problems, and then labelled them as an antagonistic minority.\(^{188}\)

---

\(^{184}\) Donert, *The Rights of Roma*, 199.


\(^{186}\) Donert, *The Rights of Roma*, 34.


Hungary recognized the Romani as an ethnic minority and enacted a law in 2001 that provided for the establishment of self-governing institutions for national and ethnic minorities at the local and national level. This allowed Roma to establish their own kindergartens, schools, theaters, museums, and libraries, but there were no stipulations included in the law that provided for the funding of these self-governing institutions. Under those circumstances, Roma were unable to enjoy the cultural autonomy the law sanctioned. Non-Romani councils made the decisions for the supposedly self-governing institutions and blamed Roma when they did not succeed.\textsuperscript{189}

In addition, the worldwide 2008 economic and financial crisis led to substantial political gains by extreme right, racist popular groups and initiated increased attacks on Roma in the Czech Republic, Bulgaria, and Slovakia.\textsuperscript{190} Similar occurrences also took place in Hungary in 2008 and 2009 when a series of attacks were made against Roma and resulted in six Roma deaths and dozens of injuries.\textsuperscript{191}

The primary rationale for excluding and, therefore, discriminating against Roma is the racial and national perspective that Roma are inferior and should, therefore, occupy separate spaces. Exclusionary practices are then implemented to protect the majority from perceived threats and are often forcibly pursued.\textsuperscript{192} Roma in Romania have long been subjected to mob attacks that include the burning of their homes and other physical attacks such that there were

\textsuperscript{189} Rostas, \textit{A Task for Sisyphus}, 113-114.


\textsuperscript{191} “Violence, Promoting Immigration, Field Assessment of Violent Incidents Against Roma in Hungary: Key Developments, Findings and Recommendations,” OSCE, last modified June 15, 2010, 

\textsuperscript{192} Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe}, 15.5
thirty-five identified ethnic attacks against Roma in Romani between 1989 and 1995.\textsuperscript{193} An illustration of this is the first state-sponsored pogrom against Roma in post-Communist Romania. The government brought in miners from the countryside on June 14-15, 1990 to disband a peaceful protest in Bucharest. In this instance, the miners formed into gangs that beat, illegally arrested, and killed Roma.\textsuperscript{194} By 1996, government harassment in Romania evolved from using outside groups to attack Roma to the utilization of local police forces.\textsuperscript{195} While anti-discrimination laws and strategies were later passed, the implementations were deemed failures for a variety of reasons, including lack of consistency in tackling issues between different levels of administration; lack of institutions and a dysfunctional approach where they did exist; lack of data collection to assist in monitoring and evaluation; lack of financial allocations by the institutions; and lack of involvement by Roma.\textsuperscript{196}

Exclusion, expulsion, and harassment tactics against Roma are not limited to Europe’s former communist countries but also take place in many of the highly multicultural urban areas in Western Europe. In actuality, Roma face widespread discrimination in the Eastern European countries but are rarely evicted. Some Western European countries, however, have made the eviction and expulsion of Roma a priority.\textsuperscript{197}


\textsuperscript{194} Rostas, \textit{A Task for Sisyphus}, 125.

\textsuperscript{195} Rostas, \textit{A Task for Sisyphus}, 132.

\textsuperscript{196} Rostas, \textit{A Task for Sisyphus}, 132.

In 2010, the French government announced a bill proposed to fingerprint Roma citizens in the EU. The reported purpose of this type of biometric system was to allow the governments to detect repeated requests for repatriation assistance.\textsuperscript{198} This led to highly publicized incidences of expulsion from the summer of 2010 to late 2013. The campaign involved the dismantlement of Roma itinerant camps and the expulsion of Roma who did not have residence permits. The French also targeted Roma who did not have work permits or evidence of steady employment. In these instances, Roma were ordered to leave and provided with three hundred euros as payment for their voluntary departure.\textsuperscript{199} The European Roma Rights Centre reported that 19,300 Roma were evicted across France in 2013 and another 3,497 Roma were evicted from thirty-seven different places in France in the first half of 2015.\textsuperscript{200}

When former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi began his fourth term in 2008, he launched a reign of terror on Roma. It was not enough that the Italian government had segregated Roma into camps since the 1990s, but Berlusconi identified state-sanctioned and media-fueled violence against Roma as necessary acts of protection of “the Italian people.”\textsuperscript{201} Among the litany of systems designed to exclude Roma was the incident in 2014 when the mayor of Borgaro Torinese, Italy proposed separate buses for Roma to guarantee the security of its non-Romani

\hspace{1cm}
\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Woodcock, “Gender as a Catalyst,” 470.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
citizens. In addition, there were 214 evictions of Romani collectives in Milan in 2010 alone. During this process, 2,593 shacks were demolished. Since 2001, this type of eviction has served as Milan’s primary method of dealing with its “Gypsy Problem.”

While the concept of evictions often implies the use of force by the state to remove and relocate inhabitants, the largest eviction in post-World War II history took place in Serbia in the summer of 2009 and was executed with the help of the World Bank and European financial institutions. In this instance, 178 Romani families, consisting of approximately one thousand individuals, were evicted and relocated under the guise of clearing up unhygienic settlements. In actuality, it was a means of gaining access to the Gazela Bridge and upgrading its infrastructure.

The displacement of Roma for supposed hygienic reasons has become a commonplace practice in the EU. One of many such occurrences took place in December 2010 when fifty-six Romani families on Coastei Street in Cluj-Napoca, Romania were evicted and their homes were demolished. The given reason for the evictions was that the street, which was located in the town center, was a “breeding ground for infections.” Ironically, however, this street was a mixed ethnic neighborhood but only Roma were subjected to evictions. The families, which consisted of 270 people, were relocated to Pata Rât, a regional garbage dump where approximately 1,500

---

203 Picker, Racial Cities, 64.
204 Picker, Racial Cities, 65.
205 Picker, Racial Cities, 51-55.
Roma men, women, and children live in three settlements and eke out an existence salvaging items from the dump.\textsuperscript{206}

While Rostas’ argument that the exclusion and eviction of Roma is a power play of more recent decades, as in the case of the removal of Roma from the Gazela Bridge settlement and from Coastei Street, this assertion can also be applied to the exertion of power for the historical exclusion and expulsion of Roma. There is much evidence for this argument in that the earliest recorded expulsions of Roma date back to 1498 in the Holy Empire of Rome; 1471 in Switzerland; 1499 in Spain; and 1493 in Italy.\textsuperscript{207}

A glimpse into records pertaining to Roma in eighteenth century Salonica illustrates that Balkan Roma were pushed to the margins of Ottoman society through such acts as stigmatisation, segregation, exclusion, and punishment.\textsuperscript{208} Eyal Ginio argues that Roma in the Ottoman Balkans were the quintessential example of Ottoman people who lived on a flexible border that distinguished Muslims from non-Muslims. He asserts that the Romani, who it has already been established live behind the veil, were pushed even further into a twilight zone between Muslim and non-Muslim as a completely separate group based solely on ethnicity.\textsuperscript{209} While a person’s status in life was determined by whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim, some Roma were Muslims and others were Christians. The Romani Muslims, however, were not taxed as other Muslims but were segregated into a separate administrative unit for taxation purposes. In

\textsuperscript{206} Picker, \textit{Racial Cities}, 51-55.


\textsuperscript{209} Ginio, “Neither Muslims,” 119.
instances where it was necessary for Roma to appear in court, as defendants or plaintiffs, their ethnicity was recorded in the court documents when this was not the case for non-Romani. In addition, regulations designating other punitive measures for punishment and resistance were applied explicitly to Roma because, whether sedentary or not, they were viewed as nomads who could harass the settled population.\textsuperscript{210}

The perception of a nomadic lifestyle has always been a point of contention for non-Romani and a convoluted rationale for exclusion, expulsion, physical violence, and death. During the first half of the nineteenth century, the English enacted The Highway Act, which made it illegal for Roma to pitch tents, and Poland imposed identity cards on Roma as proof of the requirement for them to have a permanent residence.\textsuperscript{211} The reception Roma received in other European countries centuries earlier was no better. In 1504, the king of France ordered that if Roma were found to be in France they were to be “hunted, robbed, and thrown out.”\textsuperscript{212} It was England’s King Edward VI who enacted the Vagrancy Act of 1547 that prohibited begging. The act further called for the branding of vagrants and the sentencing of them to servitude. Not to be outdone, Spain and Portugal followed up in 1552 by enacting laws that called for the sentencing of beggars and foreign vagrants to the gallows.\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{210} Ginio, “Neither Muslims,” 128-132.
\textsuperscript{211} Matras, The Romani Gypsies, 206.
\textsuperscript{212} Taylor, Another Darkness, chapter 1, Kindle.
\textsuperscript{213} Taylor, Another Darkness, chapter 1, Kindle.
Housing Discrimination

Housing discrimination against Roma and Travellers has been coined “Europe’s last acceptable form of racism.” The GUAs that emerged post-1945 are the product of centuries of exclusion and/or evictions that continue to exist in all twenty-seven of the EU countries as well as throughout other European countries. Not only are GUAs partially or entirely populated by Romani households but they exist in a wide array of forms such as entire segregated neighborhoods, blocks of flats, improvised settlements, and camps. What they have in common, however, is that they are plagued with higher rates of unemployment, few or no public services, dilapidated housing, poor sanitary infrastructures, and harsh stigmatization.

The Atlas of Roma Communities, a comprehensive survey of Romani neighborhoods and settlements in Slovakia, illustrates the widespread nature of the Romani housing problem in Slovakia. It reveals that in 2013 there were more than eight hundred concentrated Romani neighborhoods, with an average household of 6.2 people, in Slovakia. The Atlas also shows that there were more than 150 neighborhoods or settlements where none of the houses were connected to a public water supply. In addition, aside from the settlements that were totally segregated with no public utility connections, there were another sixty-five settlements where the Romani households were not connected to the water system of the community although the non-Romani households all had water system connections. The discrepancies do not end there. There was no public sewer system in 453 of the neighborhoods and, in more than 260 municipalities, only the Roma households were not supplied with gas. In addition, the great majority of the


215 Picker, Racial Cities, 2.
29,406 houses inhabited by Roma were not legalized houses at all but were shacks, container houses, and caravans.\textsuperscript{216}

The housing situation has been equally as arduous for Roma in Lithuania. According to an estimate by the third police commissariat, there were 554 Roma living on municipality-owned land in the Kirtimai settlement near the Vilnius International Airport in 2002. In addition, it was reported just months earlier that there were seventy-two houses in the settlement but it resembled no other part of the municipality in that there were no paved streets or paths and the residents were, therefore, forced to wade through the mud during the rainy seasons. Since only one house in the settlement was legal, the residents of the other seventy-one houses all received their mail there. Water was only available after it was carried by buckets from water supply pumps but that water was often undrinkable after it rained because of the absence of rainwater drainage and sewer systems.\textsuperscript{217}


64
The housing conditions present in Slovakia and Lithuania are not aberrations but predictable for Romani communities across the European continent. It is also not a fortuitous occurrence. Picker argues that the emergence and perpetuation of GUAs is rooted in a European history that is built on race-based colonization ideologies as well as eugenics-driven segregation and mass sedentarization policies. She makes this argument by pointing out that colonized cities were designed to be administrative and celebratory sites of colonial domination but, in order for that to occur, cities had to be organized in a manner that showed clear delineation between the colonizer and the colonized. This ordering principle amounted to separation, isolation, or confinement. By examining the process of colonization that took place in Rabat (Morocco), New Delhi (India), and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) in the first half of the twentieth

---


219 Picker, *Racial Cities*, 20-44.
century and the social position these colonized people were relegated to, Picker asserts that the social position of Roma, including their relegation to slum-like segregated housing, bears a striking resemblance to the social position of colonized people. She writes:

The politics of keeping a homogeneously classified group of people within the boundaries of one portion of the urban space has its origins in ideologies, and disposition, according to which certain groups occupy such a low position in the social symbolic hierarchy that they have to remain constrained, both socioeconomically and spatially; they are deemed disposable, their very livelihood remains largely ignored and their behavior and spatial position are contained and disciplined.

Resettlement campaigns have always been to the detriment of Roma as they were scattered across neighborhoods and lost their traditional ties to communities.

**Forced or Coerced Sterilizations**

Forced sterilization policies were initially introduced in the first half of the twentieth century as a means of eliminating the reproduction of people with disabilities and ethnic groups as well as poor, unmarried women who were seeking abortions. This type of policy serves as a striking example of the intervention of the modern state to control populations and limit the reproduction of any group that is deemed a degenerative threat to society. Given the lack of desirability that was displayed against Roma for the previous five centuries, it was foreseeable that they would be targeted for sterilization by European governments.

---


221 Picker, *Racial Cities*, 43.

222 Chang and Rucker-Chang, *Roma Rights*, 44.

In addition to the sterilization policies implemented against Roma by the Nazis, sterilization policies were carried out, in the second half of the twentieth century, by the former Czechoslovakia and its successors the Czech Republic and Slovakia.\textsuperscript{224} Forced sterilization policies were also administered in Sweden, Norway, Austria, Denmark, Finland, France Germany, and Switzerland.\textsuperscript{225} After World War II, many of those policies in Western Europe were replaced with measures such as the forced removal of children from families as a primary mode of invasive social control of Roma. By the mid-1970s, forced removals appear to have ended as policy in key countries such as Switzerland, Norway, and Sweden.\textsuperscript{226}

The 1960 Czechoslovak Civil Code defined motherhood as an obligation that was in line with previous pro-natal measures that were implemented by the state in the 1950s.\textsuperscript{227} This pro-natal stance, however, did not apply to Roma in that it was the non-Romani belief that Roma offspring would be prone to disabilities because of alleged inbreeding and the unsubstantiated criticisms that Roma parents did not discipline their children, did not love them, promoted substance abuse to them, and sexually abused them.\textsuperscript{228} In 1982, Miroslav Dĕdič, a sympathetic Czech educator who taught Romani children, asserted that the best way to educate Romani children was to separate them from their “bad” families.\textsuperscript{229} He argued:


\textsuperscript{225} Albert and Szilvasi, “Intersectional Discrimination,” 31.


\textsuperscript{229} Sokolova, \textit{Cultural Politics}, 220.
In their family, gypsy children witness mostly negative phenomena, such as smoking and drinking of alcohol. The child listens to improper conversations and is witness to unfit scenes from the adult life. In the average gypsy family a warm feeling and word are rather exceptions. The preschool must suppress and uproot these inappropriate and premature children’s experiences and replace them with positive ones.  

This was the sentiment about Roma, including from sympathetic educators, when Communist Czechoslovakia’s sterilization law “Directive No. 01/1972 of Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of the Czech Socialist Republic” went into effect on January 1, 1972. A series of other sterilization laws passed over the years, including the 1988 decree known as the Social Security Act in the Czech Socialist Republic which stipulated compensation schemes for sterilization.

These schemes, however, began earlier than the legislation. From the late 1960s until the end of communism, authorities in Czechoslovakia strongly pressured Roma women to undergo sterilization in exchange for monetary compensation and also used explicit and actionable threats to place these women in state care. While the sterilization policies were not limited to Roma women, they constituted a disproportionately large number of the women sterilized. Although there are no decisive statistics, estimates claim that between 21.2 percent and 36.6 percent of the women sterilized from 1972 to 1990 were Roma although they constituted only 2 percent of the population.

230 Miroslav Dědič, Výchova a vzdělání cikánských dětí a mládeže (Praha: Státní pedagogické nakladatelství, 1982), 36; Sokolova, Cultural Politics, 220.


Vera Sokolova asserts that the Czechoslovak discourse was that Roma women were targeted because they embodied social deviance, not ethnic identity. She wrote:

The ethnic target of the sterilization policy was never fully enunciated from above nor fully institutionalized but was rather always implicitly understood to refer to Romani women by local practitioners who inhabited a dual world between official discourse and unofficial racial bias; the documentary record and recollections of those involved reveal that “much of the initiative to urge or even pursue Romani women to undergo sterilization came from …local offices.”

While the original sterilization decree of 1972 was, on paper, allegedly designed to increase the protection of applicants’ rights by performing sterilizations “only in cases where further pregnancy threatens the health population,” that was not the case for Roma women. Physicians circumvented the consent process and, in some instances, created their own consent forms that were completed by social workers instead of by the women. Roma women were sterilized, without their knowledge, for such reasons as having a “habitually low IQ” and a Dr. Jiří even boasted that he was sterilizing Roma women within forty-eight hours of their having given birth.

Compensation schemes were abolished in 1991 but sterilization practices continued in the Czech Republic and Slovakia after they split in 1993 and continued to take place until shortly before their entry into the EU in 2004. The primary reason for the end to these practices, however, was a series of international advocacy efforts. Since 1989, at least three hundred

---


Romani women have complained to authorities and courts that they were sterilized without their consent.\textsuperscript{239} It was not until 1992, with the ratification of European Convention for the Protection of Fundamental Rights and Human Freedoms, that Roma women were able to file complaints to the European Court of Human Rights and it was 1995 before the first lawsuits were filed.\textsuperscript{240} These cases involved evident power disparities between non-Romani health personnel and Roma women along multiple dimensions, including ethnicity, gender, social and professional status, and educational attainment. The cases also raise awareness about the lack of free and informed consent as well as how minority and other marginalized groups are protected in the medical context.\textsuperscript{241}

The coerced, forced, and involuntary sterilization of Roma women in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic are examples of the many ways systems and laws have been used for racist means. The late Czech ombudsman Otakar Motejl stated publicly in 2009 that he believed there were as many as ninety thousand victims in the countries of the former Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{242} Another detrimental law pertaining to the sterilization of Roma women was the statute of limitations that stated that a victim could only file a claim for compensation within three years of the sterilization. In 2004, the Czech health ministry reviewed fifty sterilization complaints and all of them were dismissed for procedural reasons or because they were beyond the statute of

\textsuperscript{239} Albert and Szilvasi, “Intersectional Discrimination,” 26.
\textsuperscript{240} Albert and Szilvasi, “Intersectional Discrimination,” 28.
\textsuperscript{241} Bhabha, Matache, and Martí, “Critical Role of Research,” 6.
\textsuperscript{242} Cahn, “Justice Delayed,” 10.
The coerced, forced, and involuntary sterilization of Roma women is another chapter in a longer eugenic history aimed at shrinking the size of the Roma population.

**Healthcare Disparity and Discrimination**

Coerced, forced, and involuntary sterilizations are among the most grievous forms of healthcare marginalization perpetrated against Roma but they do not stand alone. The multigenerational marginalization of any group of people will produce a plethora of profound health disparities and the health of Roma, in general, is definitely reflective of the socioeconomic living condition differences that exist between Roma and non-Romani.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions reported in 2012 that Roma have an increased risk of disability, chronic illness, and obesity as the result of living in poor quality housing. In addition, Roma households are often overcrowded, especially after forced evictions, and it is sometimes necessary for more than one Roma family to share the same flat. This type of overcrowding is also associated with health problems, psychological problems, tuberculosis, respiratory infections, increased risk of fire, and domestic accidents. Substandard living conditions have been credited with Roma communities being

---


244 Bhabha, Matache, and Martí, “Critical Role of Research,” 10.


particularly susceptible to communicable diseases, including hepatitis and tuberculosis. In addition, there are increasing indications that Roma have a higher incidence of health problems associated with unhealthy lifestyles, including drug addiction and HIV/AIDS. The World Health Organization reported a 2004-2006 outbreak of measles in Roma communities in Germany, Greece, Italy, Portugal, and Spain that involved six thousand cases and accounted for the deaths of fourteen children because of the lack of access to health care.

While data clearly indicates that Roma face a wide array of quality-of-life issues, data also shows that Roma face greater quantity-of-life issues than majority populations. Estimates from Czechoslovak census data in the 1990s showed that life expectancy for the total population was sixty-seven years for men and seventy-four years for women, while for Roma the numbers were fifty-five years for men and sixty years for women. In addition, the life expectancy gap in Hungary is estimated at ten to fifteen years. Furthermore, data shows that Roma have higher infant mortality rates than that of the majority populations and those rates differ from country to country. For example, Roma infant mortality rates in the Czech and Slovak Republics have been calculated at double that of non-Romani, while infant mortality rates for Roma in Hungary have declined faster than the total population and thus narrowed the gap. The infant mortality rate in Hungary was thirty-eight per thousand births for the total population and 118 for Roma in


1970 but this decreased to seventeen for the whole population and twenty-one for Roma in 1990.252

While it is evident that substandard living conditions have precipitated substandard quality-of-life and quantity-of-life conditions in Roma communities, Roma have been, and continue to be, subjected to blatant health discrimination practices and marginalization based solely on their ethnicity. Roma women face the stereotype that they are fertile and sexually promiscuous. For healthcare professionals, this served as justification for sterilizations as a Slovakian doctor was quoted in Body and Soul: Forced and Coerced Sterilization and Other Assaults on Roma Reproductive Freedom in Slovakia as saying that Roma women “have several partners, are promiscuous, travel a lot, and bring diseases with them from other countries.”253

The ERRC has documented a plethora of discriminatory healthcare practices against Roma women. In 2003, the Roma rights organization conducted field research that documented discrimination against Roma women in Hungarian hospitals. The research focused on Szabolcs-Szatmár Bereg, Hadjú-Bihar, and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén counties. Based on the information they received from 131 women, the ERRC documented:

- Forty-three cases of so-called “Gypsy rooms, i.e., segregated maternity wards, one of which Roma women were segregated to an unclean room that they had to clean themselves;


• Thirty cases raising concerns about negligent treatment of Roma women by medical professionals, one of which an obstetrician, instead of using sterile gloves, wrapped the sheet the Roma woman was lying on around her hand and used it to examine the woman’s womb;
• Twenty-two cases of verbal abuse, one of which a local doctor refused to treat a Roma woman and said, “I am f*cking fed up with Gypsies;”
• Sixteen cases where Roma women were provided with health care services by medical professionals whose level of qualification was lower than required by the patient’s condition, such as nurses handling deliveries instead of doctors; and
• Thirty-one cases involving the practice of “paid doctor” – extortion of supplemental fees by doctors in order to expedite care or the provision for service above the minimum standard. In one such instance, a Roma woman was told, “If you have money, you will have a baby. If you don’t have money, you won’t have a baby.” 254

The ERRC documentations of healthcare discriminations in Hungary are indicative of the discrimination Roma experience throughout the EU. Roma are disproportionately denied medical services because they are not covered by health insurance or they are excluded from citizenship and access to social services. The exclusion of Roma from health services and their subjugation to inferior services magnifies already existing inequities establishing separate independent barriers for Roma to enjoy the right to the highest attainable standard of health. 255


The COVID-19 pandemic had disproportionate and adverse impact upon national, ethnic, religious, and linguistic minority communities across the globe. It also brought with it a heightened risk of discrimination and exclusion of minority groups. While the world struggled to tackle the health, social, and economic threats of the pandemic, Roma not only faced intensified health and economic challenges but also the nightmare of widespread, pandemic-fueled anti-gypsyism.

During the pandemic, 80 percent of Roma in the EU were already living in extreme poverty, accompanied by substandard living conditions where they did not have clean water and sanitation. In addition, they had limited food and medical provisions to carry them through the pandemic. Romani families, especially those living in segregated communities, were often unable to follow the basic recommendations to contain the pandemic – wash your hands, keep a safe distance, and work from home. They were also not seen as a priority for when vaccines were available. The administering of vaccines was prioritized for the elderly and individuals with chronic diseases. There was no consideration for racial/ethnic minorities as a special high-risk group. In addition, while school systems made provisions for online learning, this was not an


option for Roma school children, especially those who lived in remote areas and had little or no access to internet or electricity.\(^{260}\)

The biggest challenge for Roma during the pandemic was not poverty, substandard living conditions, limited food and medical provisions, or vaccines but how anti-gypsyism compounded an already bad situation. Populist and racist voices – online and in the media - were blaming the Roma communities for the pandemic.\(^{261}\) In a Facebook post five weeks before lockdowns began in Romania, a former mayor expressed rage that he felt police were not enforcing COVID-19 preventative measures among the Roma. In addition, he portrayed the Roma settlements as hotbeds for the spread of the virus while a Bulgarian member of the European Parliament speculated that Romani “ghettos [could] turn out to be the real nests of contagion.”\(^{262}\)

Scapegoating and stigmatization of Roma was not limited to the internet. Many Roma reported they were attacked and discriminated against by medical staff, police, civil servants, employers, and in shops. This was often in the form of offensive language or hate speech, a refusal to address their problems in municipalities, lockdown, and discriminatory restrictions when it came to freedom of movement, racist attacks, and police violence.\(^{263}\)

\(^{260}\) Ghimisi, “Impact and Challenges,” 56.


\(^{262}\) Berescu, Alexandrescu, and Anghel, “Vulnerable Roma,” 125; Matache and Bhabha, “Anti-Roma Racism,” 379.

\(^{263}\) Ghimisi, “Impact and Challenges,” 57.
Special measures were taken to contain mostly larger Roma neighborhoods in Romania and Bulgaria. This included the patrolling of entire streets by police cars, the establishment of special checkpoints, and the construction of makeshift walls to prevent Roma from leaving the neighborhood. In Romania, several Roma neighborhoods were quarantined and patrolled by police and military forces after some residents tested positive.\textsuperscript{264} Slovakia initiated similar measures in that the prime minister ordered the mobilization of its military doctors beginning April 2020. Backed by the army, these doctors tested thirty-three Roma settlements, with nearly 1,500 individuals who had recently returned from abroad. The justification for this action was to contain the spread of the virus because of “poor hygienic standards.”\textsuperscript{265} In North Macedonia, nine Romani musicians were singled out of a group of two hundred and forced into quarantine while, in Titus, one of the largest counties in Romania, it was suggested that the infection of a school pupil had been caused not by the virus spread within the classroom but by some “other environment” as the child “belonged to a Romani family.”\textsuperscript{266}

Across Europe, and especially in Romania, media outlets broadcasted similar narratives where they blamed Roma for the spread of the COVID-19 virus and newspapers raged racist, hateful, and life-threatening campaigns of anti-Roma propaganda.\textsuperscript{267} BBC News correspondent Jean Mackenzie, however, took a different approach with the broadcast, “Europe’s Roma: ‘Even dogs can’t live like this’ Under Covid.” Roma, in a segregated settlement of 25,000 in Sliven, Bulgaria, told their stories of how it felt to be isolated and abandoned during the pandemic. The

\textsuperscript{264} Berescu, Alexandrescu, and Anghel, “Vulnerable Roma,” 125.

\textsuperscript{265} Berescu, Alexandrescu, and Anghel, “Vulnerable Roma,” 125-126.

\textsuperscript{266} Matache and Bhabha, “Anti-Roma Racism,” 379.

\textsuperscript{267} Matache and Bhabha, “Anti-Roma Racism,” 379.
streets were stacked with garbage and muddy. The gate to the only entrance that led into town was locked as a means of keeping Roma out. Children spoke on camera about the barriers they were experiencing in getting an education during the pandemic. One resident stated, “We don’t have water, usually. We don’t have electricity. We don’t have roads. We have like, dirt and mud.”

With few exceptions, like the BBC News broadcast, the central theme was that Roma were spreading the virus although there was no evidence the virus was spreading faster among Roma communities. The fears and hysteria were driven by deeply rooted stereotypes about Roma having poor hygiene or their image as irresponsible, disruptive citizens.

Marginalization in Education

While Roma children were particularly impacted by impaired or no access to education during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the lack of electricity and lack of access to computers, the overwhelming tragedy is that Roma children have historically faced marginalization in education and continue to do so today. Discrimination against Roma children is multifaceted. They are either disproportionately placed in schools designed for pupils with “mild mental disabilities,” and often called “ghetto schools,” or relegated to Roma-only classes in schools under the auspices of language barriers. Those attending mixed mainstream schools

---


often face unbearable bullying and harassment. This is such that Roma families often become so desperate that the children miss school repeatedly or discontinue attending.270

The discrimination Roma children face in the education system is particularly distressing given that education is viewed as “the primary vehicle by which economically and socially marginalized adults and children can lift themselves out of poverty and obtain the means to participate fully in their communities.”271 With that in mind, education is the primary intervention targeted by the government and civil sector to improve the living conditions of Roma.272

The right to education is supposedly protected under Article 28 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, which was ratified by all EU member states, and Article 14 of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.273 One of the more egregious acts of discrimination against Roma children in education, however, has been the segregation of Roma children into separate schools or separate classrooms. A European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) report in 2017 includes a survey of nine EU countries. This survey showed that 33 percent of Roma students were in schools where most pupils were Roma and 13 percent of those were in


272 Timmer, Educating the Hungarian Roma, 45.

Roma-only schools.274 As alarming as these numbers are, the reality is much worse in that the survey was taken in only nine of the twenty-seven countries that comprise the EU. Table 4 provides an overview of all twenty-seven countries on the matter of segregated or non-segregated schools or classrooms for Roma children. While the table shows that only six countries – Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Romania, Slovakia, and Spain – have segregated schools or classrooms for Roma children, the numbers are much higher. Although countries like Croatia, Cyprus, and Hungary assert that Roma students are not segregated from non-Romani students, these countries do have Roma children in segregated, special classrooms and schools under the guise that the schools the students attend are all-Roma because of where they reside or the students are mentally impaired. This mental impairment is often associated with the Roma students’ understanding of the majority language or their limited vocabulary.

Roma children in Croatia were placed in separate Roma-only classes because they were not fluent in Croatian.275 In Oršuš and Others v Croatia, The Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2010 that the separation of Roma children into separate classes based on language was unlawful discrimination.276 A decade later, there continues to be a disproportionate number of Roma children who are enrolled in substandard customized learning programs because of the intelligence scores they received. These scores are based on the

274 European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Second European Union.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Segregated</th>
<th>Non-Segregated</th>
<th>Clarification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Oršuš and Others v Croatia</em> ruled in 2010 that “separate but equal” was illegal.276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic of Cyprus</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Some Roma students in the Zones of Educational Priority (ZEP) initiative are placed in segregated schools for socially disadvantaged students.279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Republic</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic</em> called for an end to segregated schools but segregation continues in practice.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>School attendance is required but French authorities often refuse to enroll Roma children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Disproportionate number of Roma children relegated to schools for the mentally disabled.282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>In <em>Sampani and Others v Greece</em>, the court ruled that school segregation was unlawful. Students continue to be denied the right to register.286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>The Kuria (Supreme Court) issued a judgment in 2020 against Gyongyospata school segregating Roma.281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Habitual Residence Condition restricts some Roma children from attending schools.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Segregation is seen as a localized issue often driven by white flight.290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latvia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No data are available on approx. 300 Roma in country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malta</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Roma in Malta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bill was introduced in 2022 to end school segregation.287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>Regional Court in Presov outlawed segregation in 2012 but segregation continues in practice by placing Roma children in special needs classes.278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenia</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wechsler’s Intelligence Scale for Children, a tool some experts state is not suitable for children who are not of the dominant culture. A similar fate has befallen Roma students in Slovakia, a country where school segregation was outlawed in 2012.

In Cyprus, schools with a comparatively large number of Roma students have been included in the Zones of Educational priority (ZEP) initiative. A ZEP consists of a small deviation from the mainstream educational model and is implemented at a limited number of schools across the country in areas that are deemed socially disadvantaged. These schools receive extra assistance such as smaller class sizes, more remedial teaching, and free lunches. This, however, segregates the Turkish-speaking students, most of whom are Roma.

In 2020, the Hungarian Supreme Court confirmed a lower court verdict that Roma children from the town of Gyöngyöspata were entitled to compensation for having been segregated from non-Romani students from 2004 to 2014. The European Commission also launched an infringement procedure against Hungary in 2016 over the segregation of Roma students in schools. Despite the infringement procedure, the Gyöngyöspata case, and other legislation, a disproportionate number of Roma children remain in segregated schools due to the

---


misdiagnosis and channeling of Roma children into special education. This is a practice that is utilized throughout the EU.

Another common method for segregating Roma school children is based on housing. Many Roma in Ireland must meet the criteria of the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) that requires them to prove how long they have lived in the area and the nature of their employment. Those who are living with extended family, do not have a tenant’s agreement, or cannot prove a strong pattern of employment do not meet the criteria, therefore, the children are ineligible to attend the schools.

There are instances in other countries where Roma students are blatantly denied admission to schools. In 2013, the mayor of Ris-Orangis, France refused to enroll twenty Roma children in the local school and created a separate classroom for them in a sports centre that had no connection to the school system. Although the courts ruled in favor of the Roma families in 2017 and 2020, they are yet to receive justice. In addition, Greece was sanctioned on three separate occasions by the European Court of Human Rights for segregating Roma students by

---


284 Pavee Point, Roma and Education.

misdiagnosing them with mental disabilities, placing them in Roma ghetto schools near their settlements, or refusing to register them by claiming the students did not have the proper enrollment papers or vaccinations.286

Segregation and refusals of admissions are not the only discriminatory practices Roma have faced, and continue to face, in school systems throughout the EU. In 2019, Roma children at the Titu Maiorescu school in Eastern Romania experienced even more grievous segregation within a segregated environment when they were given a different break program so they would not interact with Romanian pupils.287 Roma children are also subjected to verbal and physical abuse from teachers; verbal abuse from non-Romani students and their parents, and a lack of educational instruction in the Romani language.

In his study of language practices of the Romani community in Serbia, J. Petrovic points out that the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities states that “members of national minorities can freely use their language and writing privately and publicly.”288 But, there are no schools in Slovakia where Romani is the language of instruction and there are very few schools that teach a written form of Romani.289 When a student speaks one language at home and then attends a school where a separate language is spoken, and there is

---


no regard for his or her mother language, the results are disastrous given that language is essential for learning.

The sense of “otherness” Roma children face in terms of discrimination and segregation in the educational system is a key contributor to their lack of attendance in schools, therefore, the education status of Roma continues to be dismal. A good example can be seen in Italy where the low estimate is that approximately twenty thousand Roma children below the age of twelve were not enrolled in school during the 2008-2009 academic year.\textsuperscript{290} In the 2012-2013 academic year, there were only 11,481 children categorized as nomads (Roma) enrolled in Italian schools although there were an estimated thirty-six thousand to thirty-nine thousand Roma children ages six to fifteen residing in Italy. Based on the numbers, “nomad” or Roma students in Italian schools decreased by 11 percent overall and by 45 percent at the secondary school level from 2008 to 2013.\textsuperscript{291} While there were gains made with enrolling Roma children in schools during the Socialist era, the gap in educational attainment was not bridged and, since the end of the Socialist era, Roma children are increasingly not starting or finishing school.\textsuperscript{292}

\textbf{Denial of Citizenship Rights}

Two of the most acclaimed achievements of the EU have been the 2000 Charter of Fundamental Rights and the 2001 EU Free Movement Directive which, together, transformed the


\textsuperscript{291} Rozzi, “Roma Children,” 18.

\textsuperscript{292} Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, \textit{Roma in an Expanding Europe}, 41.c
freedom of movement into a fundamental right for all EU citizens and their families.\textsuperscript{293} The Roma, however, are not necessarily the recipients of that fundamental right because they live in a space that Sardelić has coined the fringes of citizenship. She writes, “It is a space of an alleged paradox: marginalized minorities in this space have a number of group-specific rights yet are not equal citizens as their universal citizenship rights are continually violated. The position of these minorities seems to be at the same time visible and invisible.”\textsuperscript{294}

Living on the fringes of citizenship is not a new concept for Roma. This is evidenced by the denial of citizenship to Roma citizens after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1989 and, since the enactment of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the EU Free Movement Directive, Roma continue to occupy the fringes of citizenship. While Roma do not come from “anywhere else,” they have been relegated to the position of being considered strangers among citizens.\textsuperscript{295} The legal status of Roma is quite diverse in that some Roma are EU citizens but still have their freedom of movement hindered.\textsuperscript{296} In addition, other Roma have multiple migrant statuses in the EU, including the temporary suspension of deportation, and some are undocumented, legally invisible, or even stateless.\textsuperscript{297}

\textsuperscript{293} Julija Sardelić, \textit{The Fringes of Citizenship: Romani Minorities in Europe and Civic Marginalisation} (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2021), 57.

\textsuperscript{294} Sardelić, \textit{The Fringes}, 13.

\textsuperscript{295} Sardelić, \textit{The Fringes}, 7.


Sardelić asserts that the invisible edges of citizenship enforce the false perception of Roma as migrants rather than citizens and this positions them further on the fringes of citizenship. With this in mind, the processes of legal status irregularization apply not only to migrants in particular countries but also to citizens, like Roma, with a migrant background even though they were never migrants themselves. In 2013, approximately twenty thousand former Yugoslav citizens of Romani background became at risk of statelessness even though they had never crossed a border that was internationally recognized at the time. This case is one of many examples of how Roma citizens are supposed to have equal status with other EU citizens but governments, through acts of sovereignty, will transform Roma from “regular” citizens into “irregular” deportable citizens.

**Police Harassment**

Roma-targeted violence is pervasive in the EU as is evidenced by recent incidences in Italy, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. An intense wave of racist violence by Italians against Roma was legitimized and encouraged by the government in 2008 after unsubstantiated reports that Italian babies were being stolen by Zingari women from the nomad camps and Italian women were being raped and beaten by Roma men of Zingari ethnicity. In 2010, an unemployed army reservist in Slovakia shot and killed six members of a Roma family, including a twelve-year-old boy, only to have other non-Romani praise his actions in graffiti scrawled at

---


300 Sardelić, *The Fringes*, 70.

301 Woodcock, “Gender as a Catalyst,” 470.
A Czech man killed a Roma man looking for scrap metal with a crossbow shot to the head in 2012. The Czech man told the jury that he would have handled himself differently if he had thought the suspected thief was White. In 2008 and 2009, four Hungarians stated they felt the state was not doing enough to suppress “Gypsy crime” so they committed twenty attacks before they were apprehended. During these attacks, the Hungarians killed six Roma in their homes, including a five-year-old child, and seriously injured five others. Roma-targeted violence, however, is not limited to harassment and physical attacks from private citizens but also the police.

ERRC mapping and monitoring show that police brutality against Roma is commonplace across the EU. A 2020 report by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee states that Roma in Bulgaria are twice as likely to be victims of physical police violence than non-Romani. The findings of the report’s survey also showed that 34 percent of the respondents reported physical mistreatment by police during apprehension or detention at police stations and 66 percent of all minors interviewed reported physical violence during apprehension. A thirty-six-year-old, disabled Roma man was hospitalized and in a coma after police in Italy entered the apartment where he lived in search of his documents in July 2022. While police claimed he locked himself

---


in his room and then threw himself out a window, residents of the home stated that police beat the deaf man and threw him nine meters to the ground from his bedroom window.\footnote{Bernard Rorke, “Italy: Disabled Romani Man in a Coma After Police Raid – Victim’s Mother Demands Truth and Justice,” ERRC, September 14, 2022, \url{http://www.errc.org/news/italy-disabled-romani-man-in-a-coma-after-police-raid---victims-mother-demands-truth-and-justice}.}

Other reports show that Roma were particularly vulnerable to police brutality during the COVID-19 pandemic. One ERRC report stated, “Police officers from Slovakia to Ireland, who need little encouragement to terrorize the Roma, even during normal times, are taking advantage of the unprecedented public health emergency we are currently facing to abuse, beat, and harass vulnerable Roma men, women, and even children with complete impunity.”\footnote{Jonathan Lee, “Police are Using the COVID-19 Pandemic as an Excuse to Abuse Roma,” \textit{Aljazeera}, May 14, 2020, \url{https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2020/5/14/police-are-using-the-covid-19-pandemic-as-an-excuse-to-abuse-roma}.}

Just six days before police officer Derek Chauvin was convicted of murdering George Floyd, whose death sparked Black Lives Matter protests across the globe, Stanislav Tomáš died in the same manner – with a police officer’s knee on his neck – in the Czech Republic. After a short moment of outrage, the police were absolved of any responsibility and answered with the response that Tomáš was no “Czech Floyd.”\footnote{Conrad Landin, “Do Romani Lives Matter?” \textit{New Internationalist} (January-February 2022), \url{https://newint.org/features/2021/12/07/big-story-roma-do-romani-lives-matter}.}

The tragedy of Romani marginalization does not lie in its extensive history, but in its present, where it not only exists, but flourishes.
Current Activism

Over the last twenty-eight or so years, there has been no shortage of policy initiatives and integration strategies that focus on addressing the situation of Roma in Europe. Roma integration strategies, however, usually comprise smaller-scale targeted policy interventions and do not address the sweeping social changes affecting the lives of most Roma.\(^{310}\) Rostas points out that the most significant initiatives were created by Central and East European countries in the early 2000s as part of the candidacy criteria for membership in the EU; the Decade of Roma Inclusions 2005-2015, initiated by the World Bank and the Open Society Institute; and the EU Framework which was introduced in 2011.\(^{311}\) As dictated by the EU ascension policy, specific criteria were required of countries, including “stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and respect for and protection of minorities.”\(^{312}\) Although the countries established initiatives and were admitted to the EU, the initiatives continue to lack action and there is no comprehensive approach to policy making concerning Roma in the EU.\(^{313}\)

Recent research highlights *Romano lil/Cignaske novine*, the only Roma newspaper of interwar Yugoslavia, which was published in 1935 and consisted of only three, monthly issues.\(^{314}\) Sofiya Vahova points out that *Romano lil/Cignaske novine* editor Svetozar Simić

---


\(^{312}\) Guy, “Anti-Roma Violence,” 147.


\(^{314}\) Sofiya Zahova, “‘Improving Our Way of Life is Largely in Our Own Hands:’ Including According to the Romani Newspaper of Interwar Yugoslavia,” *Social Inclusion* 8, no. 2 (2020): 286, [https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i2.2794](https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v8i2.2794).
introduced three elements that were necessary for the inclusion of Roma. They were education and professional training as a key to a better future; the need for Roma to be more engaged and to self-organize as a community; and to fight against majority misconceptions about Roma.\(^{315}\)

Although Simić’s vision is almost ninety years old, it is in line with the arguments and actions of twenty-first-century Roma activist scholars. Another element of activism that provides an excellent accompaniment to Simić’s vision is to not just fight against majority misconceptions but also fight against majority discrimination via the courts, the media, and international influence.

Education is central to improved welfare and economic status, therefore, it is a priority focus for both governments and NGOs.\(^{316}\) The Step-by-Step Special Schools Initiative of the Open Society has been in existence since 1999 in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.\(^{317}\) Although the name includes the term “special schools,” the initiative is the polar opposite of the discriminatory special schools Roma children have been relegated to throughout the EU. The Step-by-Step initiative is patterned after the Head Start program in the United States but was created to address the practice of shunting Roma children into special schools intended for the mentally and physically handicapped.\(^{318}\) After the first two years of the pilot program, it was determined, among other things, that 64 percent of the grade two students were achieving at a level where they could be integrated into mainstream grade three classes; 62 percent of the

---

\(^{315}\) Zahova, “Improving Our Way of Life,” 286.

\(^{316}\) Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens, *Roma in an Expanding Europe*, 193.


grade two students were able to meet the language standards of the mainstream grade two curriculum; 68 percent were able to meet the math standards; and, of the grade one students in Hungary, 65 percent were meeting the mainstream curriculum standards in just one year.\textsuperscript{319}

In the 1990s, several Romanian universities implemented affirmative action policies for Roma students and similar programs were later launched in high schools.\textsuperscript{320} Between 2000 and 2006, there were 10,300 students enrolled in secondary and vocational education schools on subsidized placements for Roma and 1,420 students benefited from these placements at universities. While more placements became available, fewer Roma students applied and were unable to benefit from the programs because of obstacles such as years of limited preschool access, subjection to learning in hostile overall school environments, and living in poverty with pressure to engage in housework.\textsuperscript{321} The Roma Education Fund /Gallup studied the impact of affirmative action policies and indicated that the programs did not benefit those who needed them the most with most of the students attending the reserved spaces in high schools coming from families with a higher level of education and small households.\textsuperscript{322}

\textsuperscript{319} Rona and Lee, “School Success.”


\textsuperscript{321} Matache and Oehike, “A Critical Analysis,” 105-107.

\textsuperscript{322} Matache and Oehike, “A Critical Analysis,” 105-107.
A bill was initiated in July 2022 in Romania, a country with approximately 1.85 million Roma, by a member of the Roma Party to explicitly ban the segregation of Roma students in schools. The explanatory memorandum stated:

The prohibition of segregation by law brings benefits not only to Romanian citizens of Roma ethnicity, but to the entire Romanian and European society, one of the major benefits being the fact that the school transmits the main moral values, good coexistence promoting interethnic dialogue and, more chosen to apply the principle of equity in the education system.

In a recent examination of the exclusion of Roma children in Italy, Elena Rozzi outlined a three-pronged plan to increase the school participation and performance of Roma children where a significant portion of the Roma population live in “nomad camps” built and managed by the state institutions and, in some cases, through the mediation of NGOs. These camps hinder the social inclusion of the Roma population and negatively impact children’s education because they are usually located on the outskirts of cities and are, therefore, far from schools and other services. Roma children are then subjected to long bus rides, sometimes losing as much as three hours a day in travel time. Rozzi argues that the “nomad camps” should be immediately stopped and more funds be utilized for inclusion policies. Second, she asserts that inclusion policies should prioritize Roma youth who have finished secondary school or vocational training by supporting their search for employment. Third, she argues that the school attendance and performance of


324 Rorke, “Romania.”

Roma children can be bolstered if teachers would commit themselves to build trust among the students and their families.\footnote{Rozzi, “Roma Children,” 36-37.}

While the bulk of education-related activism in the EU takes place at the governmental and NGO levels, there are also substantial efforts at the grassroots level. One example is a group of ten mothers in Brno, Czech Republic led by Olga Polakova, a thirty-two-year-old mother who attempted to enroll her daughter in a White school outside of her district in 2016. Although her child was removed from the school and sent to an all-Roma school, Polakova garnered the support of other Roma women and started a Facebook campaign - Together in One Classroom - to raise awareness about the need to abolish segregated schools.\footnote{Renate van der Zee, “Roma Mothers in Czech Republic Fight for Better Schools,” 	extit{Aljazeera}, September 7, 2016, \url{https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2016/9/7/roma-mothers-in-czech-republic-fight-for-better-schools#%3a%20text=Together%20with%20a%20group%20of,Roma%20only%20classes%20or%20schools}.}

Like Simić pointed out in 1935 and as is represented by the work of Polakova and the other mothers in Brno, activist scholars assert that it is important for them to lead the charge on the need for Roma to be more engaged and to self-organize as a community. This is particularly important given that, until recent years, Romani scholarship was not in the hands of Roma scholars but was dominated by non-Romani, middle-class, often heterosexual, cisgender male scholars who, because of their preconceptions and biases, colonized Romani scholarship in terms of terminology, content, and representation.\footnote{Stewart, “Nothing About Us,” 125-146; Lucie Fremlova, “Non-Romani Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity: Queer(y)ing One’s Privilege,” 	extit{Critical Romani Studies} 1, no. 2 (2018): 98-123; Matache, “Dear Gadjo.”} Matache attributes this to their paternalistic intent to “help” or “rescue” Roma.\footnote{Matache, “Dear Gadjo.”} It was this increased level of awareness that led to the emerging
field of Critical Romani Studies which argues for “the importance of the cross-fertilization of Romani studies of critical race studies, gender and sexuality studies, critical policy studies, diaspora studies, colonial studies, postcolonial studies, and studies of decolonization and an increased Roma participation in shaping the discourses of the Roma inside and outside academia.”

A special edition of ERRC’s Roma Rights titled, “Nothing About Us Without Us? Roma Participation in Policy Making and Knowledge Production,” sprang from a 2014 conference of Roma and pro-Roma activists and thinkers in Budapest. In addition to reflecting on the progress and setbacks of the early Romani Movement and discussions surrounding gender and LGBT issues, the journal focused on activism and civil society as well as knowledge production, in particular, the emphasis on research “for” and “with” (not so much “on”) Roma communities so Roma have a greater say in decision-making policies about their lives as well as decisions on how Roma are represented. Michael Stewart, however, makes an excellent point that while young activist scholars propose a new paradigm of thinking, it would be a tragedy and absurdity to become so focused on who is speaking and uprooting the white man’s perspective that one does not recognize the progress that has taken place in the field over the past forty years.

---


332 Mária Bogdán et al., “Roma Participation.”

There is agreement among activist scholars that Roma should break out of what has been referred to as the “ghetto of the Gypsy Industry,” where non-Romani organizations and institutions develop missions with hidden agendas. In doing so, Roma must then play an active role in broader social, economic, and political developments as well as in local cases, but they must also recognize that Roma and pro-Roma organizations, institutions, and networks cannot be successful without establishing alliances with progressive social movements.334

Also born out of this new paradigm of thinking and activism was Critical Romani Studies in 2018. This Central European University-based journal serves as a tool to fight for social justice and provides a forum for activist scholars to critically examine different forms of exclusion, inequalities, and human rights abuses of Roma.335

While Critical Romani Studies tackles Roma marginalization at the academic level, ERRC fights Roma marginalization in the courts and through a combination of advocacy and research. The Roma-led, international, public interest law organization states, “We take the racists to court,” by taking on and supporting strategic legal cases designed to expose and eliminate discriminatory structures that violate the rights of Roma. In addition, ERRC makes certain human rights issues facing Roma in Europe are on national and international political agendas.336

The third element of Simić’s vision for the inclusion of Roma was to fight against the majority misconceptions of Roma. This is, in many ways, the most significant of the three

---


elements in that racism-fueled majority misconceptions were the driving force behind the Romani history of enslavement, persecution by the Nazis, and forced or coerced sterilizations. In addition, non-Romani misconceptions have fostered anti-gypsyism, which is the impetus for present-day healthcare discrimination, education discrimination, expulsions and exclusions, marginalization in the areas of citizenship rights, employment discrimination, police harassment, hate speech, and physical violence against Roma.

Anti-Roma sentiments and actions have greatly hindered the realization of Roma rights in the EU and created an environment where the racialized and exotic “other” status of Roma in EU countries has continued and become even more visible.\(^{337}\) Immediately following the Charlie Hebdo massacre and simultaneous attack on a Jewish grocery store in Paris in 2015, Pew Research Center conducted a survey to measure public sentiment about three minority groups - Muslims, Jews, and Roma - in six EU countries. Even though the attacks were perpetrated by radical Islamists, favorability toward Muslims improved in all but two countries and Jews were overwhelmingly viewed in a favorable light in all six countries. That was not the case, however, for Roma, who were the recipients of the most widespread anti-minority sentiment found in the survey (See Table 5). The bright side of this overwhelmingly negative sentiment regarding Roma is that it was an improvement over the previous year. The median over the six nations grew from 38 percent favorable in 2014 to 47 percent in 2015, with the greatest improvement in the UK, where positive views rose by sixteen percentage points.\(^{338}\)


In addition to the improvements noted by the Pew Research Center, there have been a limited number of positive reports and actions. For example, in January 2011, Romania passed the first law in Europe to combat hate speech against Roma. In addition, education throughout the EU has been reframed concerning Roma from a tool to “extirpate Gypsy habits” to a means to deliver “inclusion;” EU elite countries have stopped using the derogatory term “Gypsy;” and the European Commission has ensured financial contributions for the purpose of Roma inclusion.

Note: In UK, asked as “Gypsies or Roma.”
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

---

339 Stokes, “Global Attitudes and Trends.”


Research funded by the Justice Program of the European Union 2014-2020 argues that the challenge is to identify the most effective attitude change interventions considering that anti-Roma stereotypes are strong and historically rooted.\textsuperscript{342} Inclusion policies should go beyond the social and economic situation of Roma and create a process of learning, awareness, and acceptance not for the Roma, but for the Gadje; mainstream policies should take a human rights approach that takes into account the particular situations of minorities; and effective policies will require real political will in implementation that includes non-biased decision makers and people who can design policies based on conversations with and data from Roma communities.\textsuperscript{343}


\textsuperscript{343} Matache, “Biased Elites, Unfit Policies,” 603.
Chapter 5
Romani Marginalization in Greece

We have changed a lot of things but, without help and support, it is difficult. We are trying to be all over Greece and face the difficulties but they are different. But most important is for the people from the community to speak for them, for the government, and everywhere. It is a European goal — Roma for Roma.

— Vasileios Pantzos

Introduction

Although there is no existing evidence there were large numbers of Roma Holocaust victims in Greece, they did exist. Reports show that three hundred Greek Roma were recorded to have been detained by the Nazis in early 1942 and there were further mass detentions. Some were killed and others were sent to Auschwitz for termination. Because of this, Greek Roma came together on August 8, 2018, for Roma Genocide Remembrance Day. This occasion, initiated by Ellan Passe, was an expression of remembrance for Greek Roma who were killed during the Holocaust and the bond Greek Roma share with Roma across the EU and beyond.

While Greek Roma share the common bonds of discrimination and marginalization with other Roma, their experiences, like the Holocaust, are not necessarily homogenous. This chapter examines the uniqueness of Roma marginalization in Greece as well as the similarities in marginalization Greek Roma share with other Roma in the EU.

---


Most Roma in Greece can be divided into two groups—those who are traveling and those who are settled and live in Roma communities. In addition, Roma have been in Greece for almost seven hundred years. They speak Romani and Greek, and most practice the Greek Orthodox religion. The number of Roma in Greece depends on who is presenting the data. Government data states approximately 110,000 Roma are living in 371 communities in Greece, but it is estimated the numbers are closer to three hundred thousand because government data does not include Roma who reside in tents and do not register themselves or their children’s births. Ellan Passe president Vasileios Pantzos, however, states that his organization sees five hundred thousand as a more accurate accounting of Roma in Greece and that Roma are living in more than four hundred communities across the country. He further asserts that the vast discrepancy between data presented by the Greek government and that of Ellan Passe can primarily be attributed to the 2017 Roma census which the government conducted by helicopter. This unprecedented census-taking approach by the Greek government is a clear example of the type of marginalization Roma endure in Greece.

A 2016 report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) shows that, overall, 17 percent of residents of EU countries are at risk of poverty but, among Roma, that figure is 80 percent. For Greek Roma, however, the situation is even direr in that about 20

---


347 The Joshua Project, “Romani, Greek in Greece.”


349 Pantzos Interview.

350 Pantzos Interview.
percent of Greek residents are at risk of poverty but, among Greek Roma, that figure is almost 100 percent.\textsuperscript{351}

This chapter examines the recent and present-day marginalization of Greek Roma in the areas of housing and expulsions, education, employment, healthcare, hate crimes, and police brutality. This chapter also examines discriminatory practices that are unique to Greek Roma due to the government’s policy on citizenship; the lack of accurate numbers and money allocation; the 2008-2009 economic crash; and the mechanics of the Greek government, in general.

**Housing Discrimination and Expulsions**

Of the more than four hundred communities of Roma in Greece, Pantzos argues that 240 of them need housing solutions because they are living in mud.\textsuperscript{352} Many of the communities or settlements where Roma live consist of tents or shanties with no running water, no electricity and heating, and no indoor toilets.\textsuperscript{353} Roma often live in isolated settlements without basic services such as postal addresses, medical centers, schools, transportation networks, fresh water, and sewage systems.\textsuperscript{354} In addition, settled Roma live primarily in communities outside of cities, especially Athens, Thessaloniki, Katerini, Sofades, and Larissa.\textsuperscript{355} The vast majority of all Roma


\textsuperscript{352} Pantzos Interview.

\textsuperscript{353} “What to Know About the Greek Roma,” Borden Project, accessed December 30, 2021, https://borgenproject.org/greek-roma/.

\textsuperscript{354} Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 39.

\textsuperscript{355} The Joshua Project, “Romani, Greek in Greece.”
in Greece live in the unplanned peri-urban areas of Athens and Thessaloniki in industrial zones and other areas where housing is not permitted.\footnote{Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 41.}

While the majority of Greek Roma need housing solutions, the housing accommodations of the other 160 or so Roma communities in Greece traverse a wide spectrum. For example, many of the more than ten thousand Roma in Ano Liosia have the benefit of adequate housing.\footnote{Kampieris Interview; Pantzos Interview.} In addition, while some of the approximately five hundred Roma families in Aghia Varvara, a northwest suburb of Athens, continue to live in shacks, others occupy rental units and private homes. All of the Roma residences, regardless of the type of housing, comprise about 10 percent of the residences in Aghia Varvara and are interspersed among the homes of other Greek residents, churches, schools, grocery stores, shops, and civic centers.\footnote{Kathryn A. Kozaitis, “‘Foreigners Among Foreigners’: Social Organization Among the Roma of Athens, Greece,” \textit{Urban Anthropology and Studies of Cultural Systems and World Economic Development} 26, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 168.} Spyros Themelis used the pseudonym “Protopi” for a provincial town in northwest Greece as a means of providing anonymity for his research. This community is quite atypical in that the Roma there comprise approximately 15 percent of the population and, after the post-war years, began to undergo such socio-economic transformations that they were able to capitalize on emergent opportunities for education and, therefore, careers and social advancement.\footnote{Spyros Themelis, “Labour Market Restructuring and Employment Pathways: The Case of a Mixed Community (Roma and non-Roma) in North-West Greece,” \textit{Romani Studies} 18, no. 2 (2008): 123-154.} The absence of major housing issues for Roma in Ano Liosia, Aghia Varvara, and Themelis’ “Protopi” is not the norm,
however, for most Greek Roma and should not detract from the dilemma that substandard housing and/or evictions are two issues most Greek Roma face daily.

When visiting a tent-dwelling Roma settlement outside of Thessaloniki, Yannis Boukovinas of Doctors of the World - Greece stated in a 1998 television interview that it was “worse than the refugee camps I have visited with our organization in occupied Palestine or war-torn Iraq.”

The comments of Josephine Verspaget, chair of the Council of Europe Specialist Group on Roma/Gypsies, were equally as disturbing. She stated, “In Aspropyrgos, I saw one of the worst places I have ever visited in my life – and I have been to many refugee camps in Africa and Asia. It is a shame that Roma live in such conditions in the midst of a garbage dump, no water, no electricity, barefoot children with skin diseases, and no access to school.”

While it is easy to disregard the comments of Boukovinas and Verspaget as being more than twenty years old, housing conditions for the majority of Greek Roma are as dismal today as they were in 1998. While conducting field research for this dissertation in Nomismatokopeio at Chalandri in 2021, living conditions were observed that mimicked those Verspaget witnessed in Aspropyrgos – makeshift shanties, no running water, no electricity, barefoot children, an overwhelming number of pregnant dogs, and an all-encompassing stench from the mountains of trash and other debris. Even living under these conditions, the residents knew that a worst-case scenario would be the execution of the threat of eviction that was constantly looming.

In 2000, the Greek Helsinki Monitor, an Athens-based NGO, documented the eviction of approximately three thousand Roma tent dwellers in the municipalities of Ano Liosia and


361 Alexandridis, “Not Enough Action.”
Aspropyrgos, both of which are suburbs of Athens, to make way for sports facilities for the upcoming 2004 Olympics. As part of their so-called “cleaning operations,” the mayor of Aspropyrgos, in violation of Article 241 (violation of the security of home) and Article 331 (taking the law into one’s own hands) of the Greek Criminal Code, personally supervised police evicting Roma and bulldozing their residences.362 A few days before the Aspropyrgos evictions, the mayor of Ano Liosia paid each family of Roma tent dwellers the equivalent of €300 to leave the area and then bulldozed their residences.363

There has been a history of ongoing eviction problems in the municipality of Aspropyrgos. In April 2003, the police attempted to evict a community of Roma in the Zoi area of Aspropyrgos although the community was awaiting the provisions of water and electricity that had been promised by Greek authorities and formally announced to the Council of Europe the previous September.364 In February 2009, two deputy mayors and police entered the Nea Zoe area of Aspropyrgos and used bulldozers to destroy twelve buildings that housed approximately one hundred Roma. In Nea Zoe, many Roma occupants were not at home when their homes were destroyed and, if they were, they were often not given the opportunity to retrieve their personal items.365

---


363 ERRC, “Greek Authorities Evict Roma.”


365 OMCT, “Threat of Unlawful Eviction of Roma Community.”
In April 2004, just after the Easter holiday visitors departed, police on the island of Mykonos indulged in “ethnic spring cleaning” when they set up roadblocks and arrested any Roma, on foot or in a vehicle, who did not have identification papers and put them on the first ship to the mainland. This was even though the Roma were Greek citizens and, under Article 5 of the Greek Constitution, had the right to move freely around Greek territory without a residence permit.366

Similar incidents took place in the city of Patras in August 2006; on the island of Lefkada in August 2009; Votanikos in greater Athens in 2005; and Patras in 2006.367 While these incidences took place prior to 2010, eviction issues continue. As recent as 2020, Ellan Passe went to the European Court of Human Rights to fight the eviction of Roma in Nomismatokopeio.368

Evictions are often precipitated by land use changes, eminent domain for infrastructure construction, and land value increases.369 In addition, the ability of Greek Roma to own houses is hampered by a lack of planning and difficulties in obtaining building permission; non-existent or


368 Pantzos Interview.

369 Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 44.
incompatible identity documents; ownership of non-buildable land plots; affordability issues; lack of awareness of their rights and legal provisions; and difficulties dealing with the market.\textsuperscript{370}

**Marginalization in Education**

Much of the blame for the widespread cycle of poverty Roma experience has been attributed to the lack of education within Romani communities. This is an understandable assessment when one examines the numbers. More than 90 percent of Roma children in Greece do not attend preschool or kindergarten and slightly less than 50 percent of Roma children never receive formal schooling.\textsuperscript{371}

Field research conducted in the Peloponnese region of Greece during the 2006-07 school year showed that, despite government incentives for families to enroll their school-aged children in school, attendance for Roma children was found to decline from primary year one to primary year six, with hardly any of the children entering secondary school.\textsuperscript{372}

Roma children in Greece who do attend school are consistently among the lowest academic achievers and experience high dropout rates.\textsuperscript{373} Research in the Peloponnese region further showed that the ratio of children with very basic skills was low and only about one-third of the Roma children in the intervention schools knew how to read, write, and count at the very basic level. The findings concluded that the learning outcome for these children was extremely

\textsuperscript{370} Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 39

\textsuperscript{371} Borden Project, “What to Know About the Greek Roma.”

\textsuperscript{372} Kiprianos, Daskalaki, and Stamelos, “Culture and the School,” 675.

poor. In the case of Roma girls in Greece, most are unable to continue school. Because of the patriarchal Romani society, girls are expected to take care of their siblings and preserve their virginity. The girls are usually married as teenagers and are then relegated to running households. Unfortunately, the low achievement of Roma children in schools is often understood based on a deficit view of Roma culture because schooling and Roma traditions are widely seen as incompatible. A counterargument to the deficit viewpoint is that Roma children in Greek schools are also often subjected to marginalization based on prejudice, stereotypes, perceptions of cultural confrontation, superiority, or discrimination.

The segregation of children based on race, ethnicity, and other protected grounds violates the Greek Constitution’s guarantees of equality but Greece, as previously stated, has been repeatedly sanctioned by the European Court of Human Rights for discriminating against Roma children by segregating them and depriving them of their right to education.

In Simpanis and Others v. Greece, school authorities in Aspropyrgos refused to enroll Roma children in primary school. The children were instead placed in a segregated Roma-only


376 Borden Project, “What to Know About the Greek Roma.”

377 Panagiota Gkofa, “Being Roma – Being Greek: Academically Successful Greek Romas’ Identity Constructions,”


annex five kilometers from the school. The court found that the segregation of Roma children into the annex was the product of a system of assessment that considered ethnicity when placing children in special education classes.\textsuperscript{380} Greek schools have also refused to enroll Roma children in local schools citing the lack of appropriate enrollment papers or vaccinations. In addition, there is a recent history of Roma children being misdiagnosed with mental disabilities and placed in separate classes or being placed in ghetto schools, comprised solely of Roma children, near Roma communities.\textsuperscript{381}

**Employment Discrimination**

In addition to facing educational discrimination, relational discrimination in the form of social and residential segregation, and symbolic discrimination in the form of language and culture denigration, Greek Roma also face instrumental discrimination in the form of employment and wages.\textsuperscript{382}

Roma are not recognized as a national minority in Greece and the concept of a national minority is not accepted by the state. Because of this, there is a void in disaggregated data on Greek Roma poverty but, according to the Greek National Commission for Human Rights, only an estimated 40 percent of Greek Roma held a job from which they could make a living in 2005.\textsuperscript{383} The argument is that the high level of unemployment among Greek Roma is due to the intersectionality of education and employment. While Roma are often discriminated against

\textsuperscript{380} FBX Center, “Strategies and Tactics.”

\textsuperscript{381} FBX Center, “Strategies and Tactics.”

\textsuperscript{382} Rozzi, “Roma Children,” 30.

based solely on their ethnicity, low levels of education and illiteracy are the primary reasons behind high unemployment levels. Also, keeping in mind that Roma women have even higher illiteracy rates than Roma men, they are, essentially, completely absent from the labor market and, most likely, not even included in the 60 percent unemployment rate.\textsuperscript{384} Roma women face an increased vulnerability, especially those who lose the support and acceptance of their community, being thus exposed to illegal employment, trafficking in human beings, or delinquency.\textsuperscript{385}

An employment query of Roma in Nomismatokopeio at Chalandri provides a clearer understanding of the unemployment challenges faced by Greek Roma. A thirty-nine-year-old man works in cleaning services for the municipality but cannot get employment beyond that because of his lack of education and racism. He stated, “Apart from the municipality, they do not hire us for other jobs. I went to gas stations to ask for a job and they did not hire me because I am Roma.”\textsuperscript{386} Another Roma man grows and sells flowers in the center of Chalandri but that work is illegal because the municipality will not renew his permit.\textsuperscript{387} A twenty-six-year-old Roma man works as a dyer in the Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE).\textsuperscript{388} SCEs were introduced in Greece by Law 4019/2011 as a particular form of civil cooperative with an explicit social purpose.\textsuperscript{389} He

\textsuperscript{384} Abdikeeva and MRG Partners, \textit{Roma Poverty}, 6.


\textsuperscript{386} Participant N2, Interview by the author, Athens, June 17, 2021.

\textsuperscript{387} Participant N1, Interview by the author, Athens, June 17, 2021.

\textsuperscript{388} Participant N5, Interview by the author, Athens, June 17, 2021.

\textsuperscript{389} Pantzos Interview.
stated that discrimination, not money, is his biggest issue. Because of discrimination, he cannot rent an apartment.\textsuperscript{390}

The main occupation of most Roma living in urban settlements around Greece is collecting and selling scrap metal and other wares in the markets while Roma in rural settings can occasionally earn a living by seasonal agricultural work. All of this work is informal which means they do not have health or social insurance. In addition, many claim it is difficult and expensive to obtain necessary permits, which then leads to problems with the authorities. The households with income are primarily one-income households and this presents additional problems for the children. Boys and girls often work to help earn a living for their families.\textsuperscript{391}

**Healthcare Marginalization**

Studies on Roma health in Greece are scarce and have essential methodological limitations such as the lack of valid records of Roma settlements in Greece and the absence of accurate estimates of population size.\textsuperscript{392} The studies, however, that have taken place substantiate arguments that the mental and physical health of Greek Roma are impaired due to high levels of poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, substandard housing, and social exclusion. This acute marginalization manifests itself in shorter life expectancies, poorer health, and more barriers to healthcare.\textsuperscript{393}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{390} N5 Interview.
\item \textsuperscript{391} Abdikeeva and MRG Partners, “Roma Poverty,” 7.
\item \textsuperscript{393} Papamichail et al., “Low Vaccination,” 319.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In the area of mental health, the negative attitudes health professionals have toward Roma often influence how they make their diagnoses. This, in turn, makes treatment more difficult. Because of the marginalization and prejudice experienced by Roma, psychiatric conditions for Roma present themselves in considerably different ways than for patients many mental health professionals are used to treating.394 Recent research conducted about Greek Roma in the East Macedonia and Thrace region showed that Roma have increased stress complaints, somatization, conversion symptoms, and agitation when they are suffering from depression and anxiety disorders. In addition, Roma patients, in general, tend to relapse more and discontinue outpatient treatment while Roma women experience greater levels of stress because virginity and endogamy are the two main pillars of Roma society.395 Another 2014 study about Greek Roma shows that shame is also crucial for Roma. The level of shame is greater for women due to cultural restrictions on sexual behavior. This research further documented that having a child out of wedlock was considered a matter of great shame for 48.8 percent of people asked with only 15.6 percent showing tolerance.396

Inadequate vaccination coverage is also among the health disparities experienced by Greek Roma children. A 2017 national vaccination coverage survey, involving thirty Roma settlements and 251 children between the ages of twenty-four and seventy-seven months, showed


very little vaccination coverage for all vaccines for Roma children in Greece. The disparity was attributed to poor living conditions and lack of access to primary care services.\footnote{Papamichail et al., “Low Vaccination,” 318.}

While the few available health studies about Greek Roma show they experience a higher prevalence of communicable diseases, greater levels of psychiatric symptoms, and higher limitations in their daily lives, even less research has been conducted regarding the impact of socio-economic characteristics that may impair the lives of Greek Roma. A recent three-year study on the health-related quality of life (HRQL) of Greek Roma, however, revealed that non-access to basic amenities, a lack of access to education, and a prevalence of preventable diseases are the background causes of HRQL.\footnote{Evelina Pappa et al., “Health-Related Quality of Life of the Roma in Greece: The Role of Socio-Economic Characteristics and Housing Conditions,” \textit{International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health} 12 (2015): 6679.} In essence, Roma health issues, in Greece and throughout the EU, are directly connected to educational and economic issues. Andrei, Martinidis, and Tkadlooeova argue that a lack of education can create a lack of awareness of health issues and an unwillingness to see doctors and, even if the awareness is present, the lack of financial resources is seen as the main reason for not obtaining medical care when needed.\footnote{Andrei et al., “Challenges Faced by Roma Women,” 338.}

**Hate Crimes and Police Brutality**

The 2015 Pew Research Center survey, represented in Table 6 of Chapter 5, illustrated that Roma were the recipients of the most anti-minority sentiment in six European countries, but the outlook was deemed optimistic because this negative sentiment was an improvement over the previous year. A more expansive 2019 Pew Research Center survey, however, showed that while there has been an improvement in some countries, negative sentiment against Roma has
escalated in others and, of the sixteen countries surveyed, Greece placed third with 72 percent of Greeks having unfavorable viewpoints of Roma (Table 6). In addition, a 2019 Eurobarometer survey stated that 60 percent of people in Greece would feel uncomfortable if their child fell in love with a Roma person. That figure is double the EU average of 30 percent.

The level of Greek anti-Roma sentiment expressed in the Pew Research Center and Eurobarometer surveys clearly manifests itself in the amount of violence and police brutality experienced by Greek Roma. Since 2018, the Greek government has regularly reported hate crime data to the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and, in 2021, submitted data on five hate crimes against Roma (Table 7).

---


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Unfavorable</th>
<th>Favorable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuania</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bulgaria</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czech Rep.</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hungary</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Don’t know responses not shown. Question not asked in U.S.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER
Table 7

Greek Government Reports to ODIHR of Hate Crime Against Roma in 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Incident Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2021</td>
<td>Several inhabitants of a Roma settlement, including children, were physically assaulted and threatened with guns by police officers during house raids. The perpetrators also damaged or destroyed the front doors, furniture, cars, and CCTV cameras belonging to Roma people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2021</td>
<td>A Roma man and other men were threatened with death and shot at with a gun by a man on the street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2021</td>
<td>A Roma man felt threatened when forced to take off his trousers before entering a bus by the driver due to his ethnicity. At the time of the incident, the victim was traveling to a hospital for treatment with his wife and child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 2021</td>
<td>A Roma woman was subjected to insults and harassed when forced to clean the cell toilets by police officers while detained in police custody.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2021</td>
<td>A Roma woman and her children were subjected to insults and forced to leave a public building by an employee due to their ethnicity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negative sentiment toward Roma in Greece is overwhelming. The October 2013 story about Maria, a blonde four-year-old girl found in a Roma camp in Greece and taken from the family, “opened an entire Pandora’s box of prejudice” where newspaper headlines and texts competed to dissect the relationship between skin color, hair, culture, and primitivism among the alleged Roma child abductors.403 DNA tests later confirmed that Maria was of Roma descent and the family raising her was doing so at the request of the Bulgarian Roma mother.404 As in the case of Maria, children are not immune to hate attacks. A nine-year-old Roma girl was shot in the head by a Greek butcher in 2018 when he went to a Roma camp in Amfissa searching for


people he believed had broken into his butchery. At his trial, crowds gathered outside the courthouse to show support for the butcher.  

Three recent incidences of violence against Roma have created a plethora of protests and outrage from the Roma community in Greece as well as Roma rights organizations throughout the EU. The first was the police killing of eighteen-year-old Nikos Sabanis on October 23, 2021, in the Aspropyrgos region of Athens. The police fired thirty-eight shots at three unarmed Roma during a car chase, although the officer in charge ordered the officers seven times to stop the chase, and later falsely stated in their report that Sabanis was twenty years old and had a criminal record. A second incident took place on December 5, 2022, when sixteen-year-old Kostas Fragoulis, from the Roma village of Agia Sofia near Thessaloniki, was shot in the head by a police motorcyclist during a chase that ensued after police stated he drove away from a gas pump without paying. Pantzos pointed out to news outlets that this was the fourth incident of this kind in a year in the community. He cited that a forty-four-year-old from the Roma community in Menidi, western Athens, was beaten to death, earlier in the year by two men, including an off-duty police officer, for allegedly trying to steal an air conditioner. Pantzos also stated that a police officer in Valos, central Greece, shot at a group of Roma teenagers in a car without a


license plate in January 2022. A most recent event took place on the final day of 2022 in Patra and involved a mentally impaired, thirty-five-year-old Roma man who asked if he could kneel and sing Christmas carols. He was set on fire “for fun” and one of the perpetrators even took a video of the assault and uploaded it to social media.

This level of violence is evidence of the deep-rooted structural and societal racism against Roma in Greece. This was especially evident in the killing of Sabanis when, immediately following the incident, the Greek minister of development and investment congratulated the police on a job well done; the Greek minister of civil protection visited the police officers in jail to offer them moral support; and the hashtag #withthepolice began to trend throughout Greece.

The Uniqueness of Living Roma in Greece

When comparing the lives, challenges, and culture of Greek Roma to other Roma throughout the EU, there are many similarities. But some differences exist based solely on the uniqueness of living Roma in Greece. These differences are particularly evident in the areas of citizenship, the economy, and how the Greek government operates, in general.

The citizenship of Roma, according to the Greek government, is not questioned. Still, the fundamental problem for a significant portion of the Greek Roma population is the lack of access

---

408 TRT World, “Roma Leader.”


410 Varvantakis, “Systemic Discrimination.”
to citizen status and the enjoyment of similar rights and obligations.\textsuperscript{411} This raises the question of how citizenship is unquestioned but Roma still lack access to citizen status.

In 1955, Roma living in Greece were allowed by Legislative Decree 3370/55 to become Greek nationals. This law was further amended in 1978 and 1979 and then replaced by the Greek Nationality Code in 2004.\textsuperscript{412} Under Greek law, Roma are citizens and, therefore, eligible for all rights of citizenship and are not recognized as a national minority. Even the concept of a national minority is foreign in Greece and creates challenges with the acquisition of Roma-specific data. Although the law states that Roma are citizens, when factoring in high literacy rates, heavily bureaucratic and costly procedures, and the government’s indifference, many Greek Roma still do not have official documents.\textsuperscript{413} Furthermore, Roma activists contradict claims by the Greek government that citizenship was acknowledged for all Greek Roma in 1955. They claim that Greek Roma were not provided state identification cards until 1979 and that was limited to 100,000 Roma, only a fraction of the Roma living in Greece.\textsuperscript{414} Pantzos asserts:

Everyone was not accounted for. Many of them aren’t anywhere. They don’t have any papers. They don’t exist. They are an invisible people. I ask if they are Greek citizens and not refugees, how do they not have papers? The people are all over Greece right now and they did not have the knowledge. They did not know all of the words. They did not understand. When they gave birth, there were no records. No birth certificates. No death certificates. They did not know how to go about that whole process. There are also mixed populations of Roma and mixed marriages. Roma from Greece mixed with Roma from Bulgaria. There is a gap. Many of the Greek Roma have papers but the other Roma from other areas do not. They are immigrants. How can they have papers if they are moving constantly? They are in a very difficult position.\textsuperscript{415}

\textsuperscript{411} Krithari, "Roma in Greece."

\textsuperscript{412} Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 42.

\textsuperscript{413} Abdikeeva and MRG Partners, “Roma Poverty,” 6.

\textsuperscript{414} Pantzos Interview.

\textsuperscript{415} Pantzos Interview.
In actuality, the Greek government is ignorant of how many Roma reside in Greece and that creates an even greater dilemma when it comes to the allocation of funds. Estimates of the number of Roma in Greece are across the gambit and, while many Roma have assimilated and consider themselves primarily Greek, others identify as Muslim. In addition, there is a sizeable population of Roma from Albania who have been legally living in Greece for more than a decade but never obtained citizenship and are, therefore, outside the scope of government programs. Even Roma who have identification and a degree of assimilation are not immune to pervasive discrimination from the government and non-Romani Greeks.

In addition to the ambiguities that surround Greek citizenship, Roma are also heavily impacted by the Greek economy. The worldwide economic crisis that began in 2008-2009 was first triggered in Greece and, by 2010, the country was no longer able to service its huge debt. At the cost of over €270 billion, Greece was the recipient of the most expensive financial rescue of a country ever as well as the largest adjustment program implemented by the International Monetary Fund in its history. When relief funds were allocated for Greek citizens and businesses, the lack of accurate numbers was not the only issue when it came to providing subsidies to Greek Roma. The primary problem for Greek Roma was the attitudes of non-Romani Greeks toward them. While there were subsidies for Greek citizens, Roma were not treated the same as non-Romani Greeks and only received €200 here or there. This is treatment

---

419 Kampieris interview.
Roma had come to expect in that there was also no relief provided for Greek Roma prior to Greece joining the EU. 420

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Greek Roma were once again subjected to unequal treatment. The money came in but it did not make it to the Roma. Pantzos asserts that the problem is systemic when it comes to programs and everything else pertaining to the Roma.421 He argues:

The main problem is with the mayors. The government gives the money to the mayors and the mayors do not want to help. The mayors must distribute the money and there is huge discrimination. When the COVID-19 pandemic funding started, we (Ellan Passe) notified 108 mayors where there were Roma people in order for them to get help because most do not have electricity or water. The government gave them (the mayors) more than €2 million to address the problems. We asked the mayors how they distributed this money. And from 108 mayors, we have only had answers from fifteen or less. The fifteen responded but did not do anything with the money for the Roma. The relief was only for the Roma but the money did not make it to the Roma.422

Other challenges unique to Greek Roma, compared to other Roma in the EU, are the operational quirks of the Greek government. Greece has a parliamentary republic government where the president is elected every five years by Parliament and has very limited power; the prime minister is the head of the state; and the prime minister, along with ministers and deputy ministers, are the decision-making body.423 While there is nothing unusual about a parliamentary republic, which is also present in several other EU countries, the Greek system provides a vehicle through which social groups are able to gain considerable leverage over state resources by being present and active inside the parties. This results in a penetration of government, and by

420 Kampieris Interview.
421 Pantzos Interview.
422 Pantzos Interview.
extension of the state, by interest groups that are able to directly obtain group-specific goods through favorable legislation.\textsuperscript{424} For Roma activist groups, the challenge is that, regardless of the progress that has been made during a political administration, that progress is obliterated with each new election. Pantzos asserts, “Every four years, we start (initiatives) from scratch.”\textsuperscript{425} Given the attitude toward Roma in Greece and the shortcomings of the Greek government, there is no end in sight for the alleviation of Roma marginalization in Greece.

\textsuperscript{424} Kalyvas, Modern Greece, 166.

\textsuperscript{425} Pantzos Interview.
Chapter 6
Qualitative Analysis of Participant Interviews

There are far too many silent sufferers. Not because they don’t yearn to reach out, but because they’ve tried and found no one cares.

— Richelle E. Goodrich

Introduction

The fact that racial disparities exist between Roma and non-Romani people in Greece, and throughout the EU, is evident and can be seen in every aspect of Romani life. Large and persistent outcome differences in housing options, poverty levels, and educational achievement do not, however, provide direct evidence of the presence or magnitude of racial discrimination in any particular area. Differential outcomes may just indicate, among other possibilities, that the historical effects of exclusion and discrimination have created a cumulative disadvantage.\(^{426}\)

This chapter utilizes inductive analysis and deductive qualitative analysis to determine the extent to which Roma in modern Athens perceive and experience discrimination and marginalization as well as whether marginalization is the result of a cumulative disadvantage, ongoing discrimination, or a combination of the two and other circumstances.

A total of ten participant interviews were conducted in two greater Athens communities – Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio. Through the ten interviews, data was accessed that represented the seventy-five Roma who comprised the families. As an element of the inductive analysis process, the Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis (CAQDAS) program ATLAS.ti was utilized for coding purposes. In addition, deductive analysis was implemented in the coding process by establishing a predetermined set of categories of discrimination while also

allowing for the inclusion of additional categories and subcategories as determined by the individual and collective narratives of participants.

**Participant Descriptions**

*Participant N1.* N1 is a sixty-year-old Roma male. Only he and his fifty-eight-year-old wife presently reside in the household but he is the parent to five adult children, twenty grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. He has lived in Nomismatokopeio for fifty-one years.

*Participant N2.* N2 is a thirty-nine-year-old Roma male. His household includes his thirty-seven-year-old wife, twenty-year-old daughter-in-law, nineteen-year-old son, and thirteen-year-old son. He has resided in Nomismatokopeio for his entire life but his wife resided in Brahami before their marriage.

*Participant N3.* N3 is a twenty-seven-year-old Roma male. His household includes his twenty-five-year-old wife and their four minor sons. He has resided in Nomismatokopeio his entire life but his wife resided in Spata before their marriage.

*Participant N4.* N4 is a sixty-five-year-old Roma female. Her household includes her forty-two-year-old daughter, a granddaughter, and four great grandchildren. She has six other great-grandchildren who do not live with her. She has resided in Nomismatokopeio for ten years but resided in Maroussi until she was ten years old. Her entire family lives in the Chalandri area.

*Participant N5.* N5 is a twenty-five-year-old Roma male. His household includes his twenty-four-year-old wife and their three minor children. He has lived in Nomismatokopeio his entire life but his wife lived in Peristeri before their marriage.
Participant N6. N6 is a thirty-two-year-old Albanian woman. She is the only participant who is not Roma. She is also the only participant who speaks English. Her household includes her thirty-two-year-old Roma husband and their five minor children.

Participant N7. N7 is a twenty-one-year-old Roma male. His household includes his twenty-seven-year-old wife and their two-year-old daughter. He has resided in Nomismatokopeio his entire life but his wife resided in Menidi before their marriage.

Participant A1. A1 is a fifty-two-year-old Roma male. His household includes his four-six-year-old wife. Although he provides financial support for his daughter and three grandchildren, they do not live with him. He has resided in Ano Liosia most of his life but previously lived on the island of Patmos.

Participant A2. A2 is a twenty-eight-year-old Roma female. She is divorced and her household includes her three minor children. She has resided in Ano Liosia since she was married at the age of twelve. It was an arranged marriage.

Participant A3. A3 is a forty-seven-year-old Roma female. Her household includes her fifty-three-year-old husband. She is also the parent of six adult children and three grandchildren. She has resided in Ano Liosia for most of her adult life.

Interview Analysis and Discussion

Participants answered questions, based on a variation of Nancy Krieger’s Experiences of Discrimination instrument in Appendix A, about their families’ perceptions of and experiences with discrimination and marginalization in the areas of housing (H), healthcare (HC), employment (E), education (ED), police harassment (PH), and access to aid (A). The additional
category of education level (EL) was added based on its prevalence throughout the interviews and its relevance to the overall marginalization experienced by Greek Roma.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In open-ended conversations, the participants expressed clear viewpoints regarding the categories where they perceive marginalization and those where they do not. For example, in the area of healthcare, each participant stated that their families have good access to healthcare and do not face marginalization in that area. “We have access whenever needed,” said N1. “We are lucky because we are in Athens, which has many health structures. For the last five years, the municipality (Chalandri), through the community center, books our appointments to doctors whenever needed.” N2 has been hospitalized multiple times due to a cancer diagnosis. She stated, “I am lucky because I found good people in the hospital who took care of me and even

---

427 The data in Table 8 comes from participants N1-N7, who live in Nomismatokopeio, and participants A1-A3, who live in Ano Liosia. All participants were interviewed June 7-17, 2021. All further references to participants N1-N7 and A1-A3 will refer to these interviews.

428 N1 Interview.
gave me money to take care of my hospital discharge.” The statements of N1 and N2 are in direct contrast to the argument by Papamichail et al. that Greek Roma experience barriers to healthcare. The primary complaint presented by participants regarding healthcare was an acknowledgment of their personal inadequacies. “Sometimes, because we are uneducated, we don’t know how to ask, communicate with the doctors, and fill out the forms,” said N1. A statement concerning an additional cost was made by N6 but she did not see it as discrimination because she is Roma. She said, “When my little girl was born, because I had a cesarean section, the doctor asked for an extra €500. But this happens all the time in Greece.” Although Andrei, Martinidis, and Tkadloecova argue that a lack of education and lack of financial resources are the primary reasons Greek Roma do not obtain medical care when needed, that is not the case for Roma in the two communities reflected in this study.

Table 8 also illustrates that participants perceive minimal marginalization in the areas of employment, aid, and police harassment. Sixty percent of the participants reported that one member of their household was employed. N5 and N7 work as dyers in a Social Cooperative Enterprise (SCE) while N2 works in cleaning services for the municipality of Chalandri. In addition, the spouses of N3 and N6 work for the municipalities of Chalandri and Spata, respectively. These are all SCE positions.

---

429 N4 Interview.
431 N1 Interview.
432 N6 Interview.
434 N5 Interview; N7 Interview; N6 Interview; N2 Interview; N3 Interview; N6 Interview.
N1 is an entrepreneur who sells flowers in Chalandri but reports he is subjected to discrimination at the hands of the municipality. Even the participants who are employed through the SCEs point out that they are subjected to discrimination. “The jobs are not stable,” said N7. “We work for fifteen days and then for two months, we do nothing. I am looking for a stable job with insurance stamps because I have a child.” Participants assert that securing employment outside the SCEs presents another level of discrimination. “We face many challenges and difficulties in terms of employment because we are uneducated and because of racism,” N2 said. A1 expressed similar concerns when he said:

Because most of the Roma are illiterate, most Roma do not get hired. You have a construction site. If there is a choice between a Roma and a non-Roma, the job goes to the non-Roma. Some Roma are getting jobs, odd jobs. Roma need to be educated in more hard skills. There are no such programs. I would get training if it were available or if we knew of the training programs. When there have been programs, it has not been disseminated to the Roma.

A1 is among the 40 percent surveyed where no member of the family is employed and the family is economically dependent on Social Solidarity Income (KEA), The Greek Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD/TEBA), or other government subsidies. The KEA (acronym in Greek letters) is a welfare program that was launched by the Ministry of Labor and Social Solidarity in January 2017 as a means of providing a safety net to households living in extreme poverty. FEAD/TEBA supports the distribution of food and basic material needs. This

---

435 N1 Interview.
436 N7 Interview.
437 N2 Interview.
438 A1 Interview.
439 A1 Interview.
is done in accordance with the support of accompanying measures that contribute to the social integration of the beneficiaries and is implemented across Greece. While 60 percent of the participants stated that a member of their family was employed, half of those families also receive FEAD/TEBA, KEA, or a combination of the two due to the low level of income provided by their existing jobs. In no instance did a participant state that more than one family member was employed, but child labor is a common problem in the Roma community due to the low standard of living and the urgent need for survival. N7, for example, is twenty-one years old but began his life of employment at the age of ten working with a trolley and collecting scrap metal.

Table 8 further illustrates that only 30 percent of the participants perceive there to be a problem with police harassment. For example, N1 stated that there is a climate of understanding with the police in Chalandri. Those who do report problems with police harassment state that they are unduly stopped by the police because they are Roma and that the police stop them, primarily outside of Chilandri, because they know they do not have driver’s licenses. The lack of driver’s licenses can be attributed to the lack of education and, therefore, the inability to pass the driving exams.


442 Pantzos Interview.

443 N7 Interview.

444 N1 Interview.

445 N2 Interview; N5 Interview.

446 N3 Interview; Pantzos Interview.
Assertions from the 30 percent who stated they have problems with police harassment go beyond profiling and driver’s license checks. N5 stated that a police officer pulled a gun on him during a check and in the presence of his son, and N2 pointed out that police will subject Roma to obscene gestures.\textsuperscript{447} A2 stated that she has a driver’s license but has been stopped for reckless driving. Her license was confiscated and she was ordered to pay a fine of €2,000. She further stated that this happens to Roma regularly in Ano Liosia and Roma often have to sell their cars to pay the fines.\textsuperscript{448} A1 stated that issues often become more intensified when Roma do not have the money to pay the fines. “They pay the fines or go to jail,” A1 said. “They have no choice. A friend of mine was fined and could not pay. He decided to ask the mayor to do work for the city and not pay the fine. The answer was ‘no.’ He went to prison for three years.” \textsuperscript{449}

Romani rights activist Panayiotis Kampieris argues that 30 percent of the people in Greek prisons are Roma although they only constitute a small portion of the population.\textsuperscript{450} Since the Greek government does not recognize Roma as a national minority, there is no official data available to support Kampieris’ assertion. That high percentage, however, is even lower than what Hancock stated when he wrote that Roma make up only 15 percent of the European population but they account for 80 percent of the people in jail in some countries.\textsuperscript{451} What is clear is that ERRC executive director Dimitrina Petrova issued a letter to the United Nations

\textsuperscript{447} N5 Interview; N2 Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{448} A2 Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{449} A1 Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{450} Kampieris Interview. \\
\textsuperscript{451} Hancock, \textit{We are the Romani People}, 95.
Committee Against Torture in 2001 where she documented multiple instances where Roma were subjected to systemic abuse by police officers. She wrote:

Ill-treatment of Roma in police custody is commonplace. ERRC has documented cases where Romani detainees have been beaten with iron bars, kicked, and threatened with asphyxiation by police officers. Cases of illegal detention of Roma are also common…Police raids are regularly carried out on entire Romani neighborhoods…Greek police officials have been reported targeting Roma because, in the words of one officer, ‘they are Gypsies; they are prone to steal.’

While the participants in this research noted minimal occurrences of police harassment when this research was conducted in June 2021, there has been an explosion of charges against police officers since that time. These include the shooting deaths of Roma teenagers Nikos Sabanis and Kostas Fragoulis; the beating death of a Roma man in western Athens; a police shooting of a group of Roma teenagers in a car; and the setting afire of a mentally impaired Roma man, all of which were broached in Chapter 5.

The remaining areas illustrated by Table 8, where participants answered questions regarding their perceptions of and experiences with discrimination and marginalization, were education and housing. It is nonviable, however, to analyze discrimination and marginalization in education when only 20 percent of the participants stated that they or their family members had experienced discrimination in the area of education. N6 stated that her youngest child was teased and insulted at a school in Chalandri and her oldest child stepped in to defend the younger one. The problem was resolved, however, after she and her husband met with the director on two or three occasions. A2 stated that she only attended school in Ano Liosia for a few months but


453 N6 Interview.
faced discrimination and was treated as a criminal. Her children have faced similar discrimination. She stated:

The truth be said, there are no separate schools for Roma in Greece. They all go to the same school. Formally, there is no segregation or special school but, in reality, when (non-Romani) parents find out my children are about to attend classes, they press the headmaster and the teachers to at least sit Roma children at the same desk and away from other children. More often than not, the teachers yield to that pressure from the other parents. We tell our children, ‘Don’t make an issue. Just do your work.’

Although N1 did not report any experience of education discrimination within his family, he relayed an incident that occurred more than ten years prior when some non-Romani citizens of Chalandri and members of parents’ associations attempted to expel Roma children from the schools. He said it was even stated that Roma children would rape their children. “They were looking for a reason to reinforce racism against many social groups, including Roma,” N1 said. Reforms in the segregation of Roma children in schools in Greece began to be implemented, however, after the 2008 ruling in Simpanis and Others v Greece.

The lack of perceived and experienced discrimination in education by participants is not reflected in the education levels of the Roma adults included in this research. Table 8 illustrates that 90 percent of the participants have no education or a low level of education. That figure is quite subjective given the education level of the remaining 10 percent is “until high school.” The result is, essentially, that 100 percent of the participants have no education or a low level of education.

---

454 A2 Interview.

455 N1 Interview.

456 FBX Center, “Strategies and Tactics.”
The Greek educational system is divided into three levels – primary, secondary, and tertiary (higher education). Primary is divided into kindergarten, which lasts one or two years, and primary school, which last six years, where children are admitted at age 6.\textsuperscript{457}

Table \textit{9}\textsuperscript{458}

Table 9 illustrates the educational levels of the adults included in this research. Not only are the participants calculated into the tally but also their spouses and any other adults who are part of the household. The table does not account for adult children who have their own households. Of the twenty-one adults residing in the households, eleven have never attended school, seven attended some primary school, two completed primary school, and one (N6) attended “until high school.”


\textsuperscript{458} The data in Table 9 comes from participants N1-N7 and A1-A3.
It is noteworthy to point out that N6 is Albanian. She did not spend her school years in Greece and, therefore, did not attend Greek schools like the other participants. Her Roma husband is also the only adult in this study who is currently attending Second Chance School (SCS). SCS operates as a European program within the framework of fighting against social exclusion and targets early school leavers and adult prisoners who have not completed compulsory secondary education.

While N7 recognizes the importance of education in obtaining adequate employment and passing driver’s license tests, he also faces the reality of his circumstances as a husband and father. “I did not go to school but would like to go,” said N7. “I have regretted it. I really want to write and learn letters. First, I have to survive though to make sure we have food at home, and then comes the rest.”

Of the participants’ cumulative eighteen school-age children and grandchildren living in the households, 100 percent of the participants stated that the children are currently attending school and expressed their desire for the children to complete their education. N4 stated that all ten of her great-grandchildren (those living in her home and those who were not) were currently in school. N1’s five children all went to primary school and three went to high school. He expects all twenty grandchildren and two great grandchildren to attend school. N7, however,

---

459 N6 Interview.


461 N7 Interview.

462 N4 Interview.

463 N1 Interview.
was the most outspoken of the young Roma when it pertained to his two-year-old daughter’s future. He said, “I understand the importance of education. I will not marry her from the age of fourteen. I want her to follow the right path and learn letters. If she does not go to school and even the university, I will not let her get married. I think the other young men my age feel the same way.”

As significant as the lack of education is to the historical and ongoing poverty in the Romani community, Table 8 illustrates that the primary concern for 70 percent of the Roma participants, all of whom were interviewed in Chalandri’s Nomismatokopeio community, is housing. There are approximately seventy-two Roma families who live in this community. It is only a brief walk from the Nomismatokopeio train station and just a few yards from a thriving McDonald’s restaurant and business-filled skyscrapers. The residents, many of whom have lived there their entire lives, reside in makeshift shanties void of basic human necessities. N3 states, “We have no electricity or sewerage. We only have water. For drains, we dig big holes.” N1 illuminates the intersectionality of the problems Greek Roma face when he states:

Regarding housing, we are facing huge difficulties. We don’t own the property but we are here more than fifty years. Greece never did anything good for Roma for two reasons: They don’t want to face and solve the problems of Roma and especially for housing and accommodations as it’s connected to education. If you don’t have a roof and all of the basics that a man needs in order to live, like lights and water, how are you going to send your kids to school? Without education, housing, and work you are not part of the society and you are forced to do illegal things to survive. State and community have responsibilities for this situation. The community is uneducated and the state takes advantage of them.

---

464 N7 Interview.

465 N1 Interview.
While participants placed criminality low on their scale of concerns, as N1 has pointed out, some Roma participate in illegal activity as a means of survival. “We often have issues because we are forced to steal electricity. I went to court for that reason,” N3 said. “We are forced. Who wants to risk his life to have electricity? It is a matter of survival.” 466

Ionna Karahaliou, a widowed mother of six children, was one of many Roma in Greece who died while attempting to steal electricity. Ellan Passe made the following eulogy:

When the conditions of extreme poverty meet the daily needs of a single-parent family with too many children, then even the most extreme scenarios are unfortunately possible. Every day people die next to us from COVID-19 and other diseases, but a death from electrocution due to electricity theft in the year 2021, in addition to mourning, anger multiplies in every human heart. Anger and rage are addressed on the one hand by the official state and the other by the local community. It is not possible to lose a fellow human being, forty years old, a widowed mother of six minor children to extreme poverty. Unfortunately, we are all jointly responsible for this tragedy, which does not end here today, since just as there are no provisions for electrification of the house (an improvised house made of wood and nylon), so no provision has yet been made for the minor children who, with the death of their father two years ago, today they also say goodbye to their unfortunate mother.467

In 2021, the Greek government allotted €9.600 per Roma family, depending on the number of people in the family, to find housing elsewhere but, according to N1, this created another issue for many of the residents of Nomismatokopeio. In 2015, the city planning commission issued collective fines of €1.5 million to sixty-three of the families for squatting on land they did not own. Today, with accumulated interest, the fines have reached €2.5 million. If the families relocate, they will still carry fines with them up to €150.000.468 “We want to leave as

466 N3 interview.


468 N1 interview.
long as the fines are erased and a suitable solution and relocation plan is provided,” said N1. “We want to leave with the key in our hands and go to our new house.”

N6 and her family were among the families not assessed fines. Because of this, they were able to purchase a plot of land. Currently, however, the family of seven is living in one room while they wait for legal permission to begin to build. Obtaining permission to build is a persistent problem for Greek Roma who have purchased land.

The 30 percent of participants who did not report housing concerns for their immediate families are all residents of Ano Liosia and were able to purchase homes utilizing €60,000 loans from an EU program designed to provide financial support for minorities. According to A1, although this program provided support, Roma struggled to find homes within the price range and now they struggle to financially maintain the homes they purchased. A1 does have adequate housing but states that he has trouble affording utility bills and has not paid his electric bill in a year. While most of the Roma in Greece are stationary, there are still those who are nomadic. A1 expresses concern that there is nothing in between towns for those Roma. “There is no place for them to stop and spend the night with amenities like running water,” he said. “They camp wherever they can. Every Roma has been given a number but, if you want to find them, it is a labyrinth.”

\[\text{\textsuperscript{469}}\text{N1 Interview.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{470}}\text{N6 Interview.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{471}}\text{Potsiou and Dimopoulou, “Access to Land,” 39.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{472}}\text{A1 Interview.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{473}}\text{A1 Interview.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{474}}\text{A1 Interview.}\]
Table 10 illustrates references made by participants but also areas, such as culture and frustration, which were observed during the individual interviews. As is further emphasized by

Table 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police Harassment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10, Romani culture is woven through every aspect of their lives. Participants state they are proud of the bonds and relationships they share with each other. They are a proud people who cherish their culture, including their language and talent for music and dance, and their ability to compete well in sports. Although the participants are Roma, they are just as proud to be Greek and, although they were not considered Greek citizens at the time, they express pride in the role Roma played in the national resistance to the Nazis in 1944. As the only participant who is not Roma, N6 provided an endearing insight into Romani culture when she spoke of how her

---

475 The data in Table 10 comes from participants N1-N7 and A1-A3.

476 N4 Interview.

477 N1 Interview; N2 Interview.

Albanian family was opposed to her marrying a Roma man. She stated, “At first, my family and my brother did not talk to us because they did not know him. Now, they have an excellent relationship. That’s because the Roma have more fun than anyone. They are more tied together and do not discriminate. If they fight, they do not hold a grudge. They will speak again after two or three days.”

One aspect of Romani culture that should be viewed as beneficial to the children, but has sometimes been used to alienate them, is that they are bilingual. They speak Romani and Greek. While they speak Greek in the classrooms, they will speak Romani among themselves. The teachers and other students often do not realize they are Roma until they hear them speaking with each other. This opens the door to discrimination.

A more controversial aspect of the Romani culture that has had a distinctly negative impact on Roma, including the participants, is the commonplace practice of early and arranged marriages. Early marriages (where parties are under the age of eighteen) can create devastating consequences for Greek Roma girls in that it prevents them from obtaining an education and bonding with others their age as well as reaping the benefits of maturing and choosing their life partners. Although the Greek Constitution does not provide specific language that prohibits early marriages, it does provide fertile ground for the establishment of specific policies and

---

479 N6 Interview.

480 A2 Interview.


legislative measures against early marriages. Greek Civil Code 4.2.1, however, specifically requires that persons who are to marry must be over the age of eighteen or they must obtain specific permission from the court based on the existence of a serious reason.\footnote{Froxylia, “Child Bride.”}

While it is not clear the various measures Roma utilize to usurp the Greek Civil Code, early and arranged marriages are an integral part of Romani culture in Greece. This is primarily because it is required that Roma be virgins at the time of their marriage. An early marriage ensures that virginity is intact.\footnote{Nikolova, “Parents, Children, Marriage,” 157.} According to Matras, the protection of premarital virginity among girls is perhaps one of the strictest expressions of gender role divisions within the Romani community and it may also be regarded as the most obvious manifestation of gender inequality.\footnote{Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 59-60.}

As previously stated, A2 married at the age of twelve in an arranged marriage. She said, “It is very customary for Roma to marry at an early age and it is customary for the father to arrange the marriage. They don’t want to risk elopement and they don’t want people to steal their daughters, so the father makes the introduction and the arrangement of the marriage to preserve virginity until the time of marriage.”\footnote{A2 Interview.}

While A2’s marriage ended in divorce, which is also frowned upon in the Roma community, the marriage of N1 and his wife was arranged and they had been married for forty-three years at the time of the interview.\footnote{N1 Interview.} As previously stated, early marriages force the end of
formal education, especially for the females. This is the primary reason N7 has vowed to not arrange a marriage for his daughter and to keep her in school.\footnote{N7 Interview.}

Matras has also pointed out that Roma, in every locality, rely on mutual respect and solidarity among families as well as on cooperation and mutual respect among members of the extended families. Since the head of the family is the most important unit in Romani society, it is the head of the household who is the immediate and most relevant leadership figure for many Roma. By default, this role falls to the eldest man in the extended household.\footnote{Matras, \textit{The Romani Gypsies}, 112-113.}

The Roma communities of Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio each function as extended households and under an informal hierarchy where participants A1 and N1, respectively, serve as the general spokespersons and ambassadors for their communities. For the individual interviews, makeshift settings were established outside the homes of A1 and N1. In addition, these two participants were instrumental in assembling other research participants. In Ano Liosia, A1 is referred to as “the mayor” by the residents because, in many ways, he is the diplomat who speaks to government officials on their behalf. In addition, A1 is the one who keeps residents abreast of government aid opportunities, assists with completing necessary forms, and assists with criminal justice matters. N1 serves a similar role in Nomismatokopeio and works closely with Ellan Passe to keep the community’s residents informed on matters of importance to them. N1 is sixty years old and the second oldest male in his community. The eldest male member of Nomismatokopeio is N1’s eighty-year-old father. It is apparent that N1 and fifty-two-year-old A1 are viewed as
their communities’ elders, especially given the patriarchal nature of Romani society and the lower life expectancy of Roma, in general, in relation to non-Romani populations.

The final key aspect taken from the narratives is the level of frustration experienced by all of the research participants. This frustration permeates every aspect of their lives. There is frustration that, because of their lack of education, they cannot obtain jobs not associated with the municipalities. There is frustration that they are discriminated against when applying for other jobs, for which they are qualified, and being denied solely because they are Roma. There is frustration, in the case of N5, that he feels he earns enough income to provide adequate housing for his family but Gadje will not rent to him because he is Roma.\footnote{N5 Interview.} There is also frustration on the part of A3 that she feels discriminated against even in the supermarket and, on the part of A2, that people immediately treat her as a criminal.\footnote{A3 Interview; A2 Interview.}

Roma are especially frustrated about how they are being forced to live. “There is only one road to the camp,” N5 said. “We have no (house) numbers. The postman comes because he knows our names.”\footnote{N5 Interview.} The lack of postal addresses is a widespread complaint by Roma throughout Greece.\footnote{The Joshua Project, “Romani, Greek in Greece.”} While N3 laments that they have water but no electricity or sewerage, research observation reveals that the water source is one outside faucet with water hoses running like tangled networks throughout the community’s muddy pathways.\footnote{N3 Interview.} And for those in Ano

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{N5 Interview.}
\item \footnote{A3 Interview; A2 Interview.}
\item \footnote{N5 Interview.}
\item \footnote{The Joshua Project, “Romani, Greek in Greece.”}
\item \footnote{N3 Interview.}
\end{itemize}
Liosia who have adequate housing, as well as the residents of Nomismatokopeio and other Roma communications throughout Greece, there is frustration that the Greek government has allocated funds for Roma but the funds never reach them. An example is the COVID-19 relief funds that did not make it past local mayors.⁴⁹⁵

**Implications**

The implications of this research are wide-ranging, especially as they relate to individual and group perceptions of discrimination and marginalization versus the realizations of discrimination and marginalization. While participants minimized the degree of discrimination and marginalization they currently experience in the areas of employment, education, and police harassment, evidence points to continued widespread discrimination and marginalization in those areas.

Although there is a working adult in the majority of the Roma households in Nomismatokopeio, these adults are unable to obtain work outside of the SCE positions in the municipalities and these positions do not provide consistent employment. The income they receive is so inadequate that, in many instances, they continue to qualify for some form of government assistance. In addition, Roma who work as entrepreneurs are doing so illegally because the municipalities refuse to renew their licenses.

As Roma in other EU countries, such as Slovakia, Italy, and the Czech Republic, continue to grapple with education discrimination through methods such as segregation by designation as mentally impaired, Greek Roma students learn in the same classrooms as non-Romani students. While Greek Roma students are no longer subjected to institutionalized racism,

---

⁴⁹⁵ N1 Interview; A2 Interview; Pantzos Interview.
they are subjected to one-on-one racism when teachers acquiesce to the requests of non-Romani parents that Roma students be seated separately in the classroom. In addition, it is difficult for students to compete academically when their living conditions do not include electricity or indoor plumbing.

Although the majority of the participants state they have minimal issues with police harassment, aside from profiling, obscene gestures, and being stopped for not having driver’s licenses, Greece exploded with a rash of publicized accounts of Roma being killed by police officers in 2021, 2022, and, most recently, in 2023. In fact, Roma in Ano Liosia have been among those who have taken their protests against police harassment, brutality, and murder to the streets.496

In the area of healthcare, Greek Roma appear to fare better than Roma in some of the other EU countries. While the ERRC has documented case after case of segregated, unclean maternity wards for Roma women, negligent treatment, and verbal abuse in Hungary, participants in this study state they have easy access to healthcare and are treated well when they go to medical facilities. While there is access to routine healthcare such as cancer treatment or services for women giving birth, there is no accountability for the cumulative mental and physical health damages associated with generations of subjection to hate crimes, hate speech, and other forms of microaggressions as well as the frustrations of inadequate employment, housing, and other basic human needs.

Governmental aid is available for settled Roma through SCE-based employment, KEA income, and food and other assistance provided by FEAD/TEBA. There were no working adults

496 TRT World, “Roma Leader Sees Growing Racism.”

144
in the Roma households included in this research in Ano Liosia, making them dependent upon government aid. But there is no aid for Roma who activists say are not accounted for. Pantzos pointed out the discrepancy in the numbers of Roma believed to reside in Greece. Between the government’s helicopter census numbers and the numbers stated by activists and NGOs, there can be as many as 390,000 Roma who are unaccounted for in Greece and, therefore, lacking in needed access to government aid. In addition to not having access to SCE, KEA, and FEAD/TEBA programs, unaccounted-for Roma also do not have access to education or healthcare, including vaccinations for children.

The category that 70 percent of the Roma in this study perceive as their greatest area of marginalization is housing. This presents no surprise given the conditions under which Roma in Nomismatokopeio are forced to live. Even in Ano Liosia, where those surveyed have adequate housing but struggle to pay utilities and maintain that housing, concern was expressed regarding Roma in nearby areas who are residing in tents. Inhumane housing runs to the core of the marginalization Greek Roma face and that conundrum is enhanced when nefarious mayors levy inordinate and unnecessary fines on Roma for inhabiting the land, force evictions, and steal funds distributed by the Greek government to assist Roma.

The most substantial implication of this research is how the extensive lack of education within Greek Roma communities is the binding agent in all aspects of Roma marginalization. As previously stated, 100 percent of the research participants have no education or a low level of education. Of the participants, only one stated that he is continuing his education through SCS. The consensus is that education is no longer an option for them, as adults, but they see it as the best option for a good future for their children. While all participants stated that their children and grandchildren attend school, the Borgen Project reports that 90 percent of Roma children in
Greece do not attend preschool or kindergarten and slightly less than 50 percent of Roma children never receive formal schooling. And one of the biggest obstacles to Roma children completing school is the Romani practice of arranging marriages for their teenage, and sometimes younger, children to ensure intact virginity.

While stereotype-fueled discrimination has been a prominent contributor to the lack of education in the Romani community and, therefore, the overall cumulative marginalization of Greek Roma, the progress of Greek Roma now lies in their hands and not those of Gadje. It is the lack of education that now keeps Roma from completing job applications and being qualified for skilled jobs, completing medical forms, and obtaining such basics as driver’s licenses. It is also education that will gradually remove them from the list of perpetual aid recipients and reduce the frustrations they experience in their day-to-day lives.

---

497 Borgen Project, “What to Know About the Greek Roma.”
Chapter 7
Conclusion

Freedom is acquired by conquest, not by gift. It must be pursued constantly and responsibly. Freedom is not an ideal located outside of man; nor is it an idea which becomes myth. It is rather the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion.

— Paulo Freire

Introduction

Chapter 4 of this research opened with an expression of dissatisfaction that historian George M. Frederickson did not include the Romani people in his argument that society has only experienced three overtly racist regimes. In addition, while including the Nazis and their perpetration of the Holocaust as one of those regimes, Frederickson did not include, or even mention, the Nazis’ perpetration of the Porrajmos. I do, however, agree wholeheartedly with Frederickson’s assessment that “once color-coded racism joined hands with deterministic cultural particularism” and selected other components, the full force of modern racism took hold.498

Once racism takes over, it manifests itself in the form of discrimination and, over time, marginalization. The Romani have been subjected to racism and its manifestations since the Middle Ages and their extensive suffering validates Frederickson’s latter assessment. It also gives credence to Derrick Bell’s assertion that “racism is an integral, permanent, and indestructible component” of society.499 In essence, it has been here. It is here now. And it is not going anywhere.

498 Frederickson, Racism, xv-xvi.

Roma are not delusional about the permanence of racism. Its manifestations are seen in the inhumanity of the slums where they are forced to reside as well as their high illiteracy rates, low life expectancies, and overwhelming poverty. Their concern is not the existence of discrimination and racism but, as with any oppressed people, how to prosper despite it.

This qualitative methods case study examined the day-to-day experiences of Roma with discrimination and marginalization in two Greek Roma communities. In doing so, this research was able to determine the areas where Greek Roma perceive experiences with discrimination and marginalization as well as the areas where actual discrimination and marginalization take place. In addition, this research was able to compare the discrimination and marginalization experiences of Greek Roma in greater Athens to those of Roma throughout the EU.

The results revealed, to no surprise, the universality of Roma discrimination and marginalization across the EU. They also revealed the areas of marginalization that are specific to Greek Roma and the challenges Roma and their advocates face in overcoming them as well as the gap that exists between perception and reality in the examination of marginalization.

While Greek Roma actually fare better than many other Roma across the EU when it pertains to educational access, healthcare access, and access to aid, they continue to be marginalized in those areas as the result of cumulative disadvantage and/or ongoing discrimination. This marginalization is particularly evident when examining the low levels of education that exist among Roma adults and the snowball effect this has on their lives and the lives of their children.

While Greek Roma are subjected to discrimination in the area of employment, their lack of education has contributed to such a disparity in employment that they are unable to acquire
adequate employment and are often required to rely on government aid. In some Roma communities, as the one researched in Ano Liosia, Roma are totally dependent upon government aid and have, in some ways, developed a mentality of expectation where they are resigned to their dependent status. Roma participants in Nomismatokopeio, however, do not want to be dependent on government aid. One family member of the majority of the households in Nomismatokopeio holds an SCE-based job and, collectively, they express the desire to hold more lucrative positions outside of the SCE-based employment. Ironically, when comparing Roma in Ano Liosia to Roma in Nomismatokopeio, it is the Roma who endure inhumane housing in Nomismatokopeio who have the greater desire to be more independent.

The differences between Roma in the two communities are a glaring clarification of the diversity that exists among Roma throughout the EU and Matras’ assertion that Romani are heterogeneous groups that are only viewed as a unit by outsiders.500

While Greek Roma express frustration regarding all areas of marginalization, their most pressing concerns are housing and the blatant theft of funds their communities face at the hands of Greece’s mayors. These matters, along with police brutality, are the matters also most pressing for Roma rights organizations like Ellan Passe. “We don’t want to make waves,” Pantzos said. “We are very peaceful. Don’t want to fight. Maybe that’s why they are still in that place because they believe nobody cares.”501 In their roles as advocates, however, Greek Roma Rights organizations are now implementing knowledge gained from the Civil Rights Movement by utilizing the Greek legal system to fight injustices. In addition, advocates have adapted Critical Race Theory as a means of telling their stories and, most recently, have followed the lead


501 Pantzos Interview.
of the Black Lives Matter movement to take their protests about police brutality to the streets of Athens. As Civil Rights activist Fannie Lou Hamer so eloquently stated, “We are sick and tired of being sick and tired.” For Greek Roma, the time for action is now and they are the ones to lead the fight.

Limitations of Study

This study has two main limitations, one of which was created by the other. The first was the size of the study which included participants from ten families and represented a total of seventy-five family members. Given the Roma community in Nomismatokopeio only consists of approximately seventy-two families and interviews were conducted with seven of those families, a 9.7 percent sampling rate is sufficient. The same cannot be said for the Roma community in Ano Liosia where three participants were interviewed out of massive communities of approximately ten thousand Roma. In addition, there were no interviews conducted with any tent-dwelling Roma in Ano Liosia. The two primary reasons for this disparity were the language barrier and the lack of trust exhibited by tent-dwelling Roma for non-Romani and other Roma whom they do not know. The other limitation of this study, which is also what drove the sampling limitation, was the COVID-19 pandemic. The Greek government only opened to outside visitors two weeks before the arrival of researchers and there was still a wide array of precautionary restrictions in place.

---

Contribution of Research to the field of Romani Studies

While there has been extensive research conducted on Roma history and marginalization throughout the EU, especially in countries like Romania, Hungary, and the Czech Republic, there has been minimal research conducted in Greece. Of the research that has been conducted in Greece, there has again been minimal, if any, emphasis placed on Roma in Ano Liosia and Nomismatokopeio. The only exception has been in Potsiou and Dimopoulou’s research on land access where they included a reference to spatial distribution in Nomismatokopeio.503

This research is particularly significant given the degree of diversity that exists among Roma across the EU. It provides researchers a foundation for conducting additional research on Greek Roma and the opportunity to further examine the implications of the Greek political system on the plight of Greek Roma. In addition, this research will hopefully raise awareness in the United States about the economic and educational struggles of Greek Roma and, therefore, Roma, in general. While there is widespread knowledge within the EU about Roma marginalization, historical and present day, this type of knowledge is almost nonexistent in the United States. What makes this lack of knowledge even more distressing is the parallel nature of historical discrimination and marginalization between Roma and African Americans.

Implications for Future Research

The implications for future research are plentiful. With the COVID-19 virus out of the world pandemic stage, possibilities exist for expanding research to include a wider spectrum of Greek Roma, including tent dwellers. Additional research can also be conducted regarding educational opportunities for adult Greek Roma and for tracking the matriculation of Roma

children in the school systems. To conduct this type of research, relationships must be strengthened and expanded to form Roma-driven partnerships with local activists and organizations. It will also be invaluable for future non-Romani researchers to work toward fluency (or some resemblance of it) in the Greek and Romani languages. In my case, the language of necessity is Portuguese in that my post-doctorate research and, hopefully, publications will center around Roma advocacy in Portugal.
Bibliography


—. “Greece Criticised by the UN for its Treatment of Roma.” August 15, 2001.


—. “Written Comments of the European Roma Rights Centre Concerning Hungary: For Consideration of the Human Rights Committee.” 122nd Session (12 March – 6 April 2018),


Gkofa, Panagiota. “Being Roma – Being Greek: Academically Successful Greek Romas’ Identity Constructions.” *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 20, no. 5: 624-635.


Schlager, Erika. “Policy and Practice: A Case Study of U.S. Foreign Policy Regarding the Situation of Roma in Europe.” In *Realizing Roma Rights*, edited by Jacqueline Bhabha,


Zahova, Sofiva. “‘Improving Our Way of Life is Largely in Our Own Hands:’ Including According to the Romani Newspaper of Interwar Yugoslavia.” *Social Inclusion* 8, no. 2 (2020): 286-295.
Appendix A

Questions based on Experiences of Discrimination Instrument

• How many people live in your household?

• What are the names, ages, and sexes of the people who live in your household?

• How long have you lived where you do? Where did you live previously?

• What are the challenges, if any, your family faces with housing?

• Are you employed? What challenges, if any, do you face with employment?

• Do you have access to healthcare? Have you experienced discrimination when seeking healthcare? Can you give an example?

• What is the education level of the people living in your household?

• Have you or your children experienced discrimination from an educational institution? Can you give an example?

• Have you or a family member experienced discrimination from the police? Can you explain?

• Do you have access to aid from social services? If so, what access do you have?

• What aspects of your culture are you especially proud of?