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Does the canonical theory of assimilation explain the Roma case? Some evidence from Central and Eastern Europe

Abstract

This article focuses on the relation between mobility and assimilation among the Roma. Quantitative results from UNDP research in four Central and Eastern Europe countries provide new data and show the need for a new conceptualization of the evidence. These results demonstrate that there are no significant data to confirm the existence of a straight-line process of assimilation in the Roma case. Thus, they question the canonical theory of assimilation by demonstrating that middle-class Roma tend not to leave their identity behind. I propose the need for a segmented theory of the different upward mobility paths that Roma people tend to follow. In a complementary way, the observed results also point out the need to take into account some variations in Roma ethnic identity depending on the source of ethnic data, how they are collected and the implications for research in the different national contexts explored.

Keywords: Ethnicity, Segmented assimilation, Social mobility, Roma, Ethnic boundaries, Acculturation.

Introduction

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‘Roma culture is often identified with marginality. It seems that the more marginalised one is, the more slang and bad manners are evident, the more Roma one is. This is a phenomenon that is present not only in society but also within the Roma culture itself. It seems that this view has crossed borders. But this changes when other ways of being Roma that question this definition become evident. I feel deeply Roma and yet I have a college degree and a liberal job’ (Romani woman).

According to Violca – a Romani woman who left suburbia when she was an adolescent and now lives in a middle class neighbourhood – the image that mainstream society has of Romani people is frequently associated with marginality and low levels of education. This image has influenced and continues to influence not only the image that society has of Roma, but also the image individual Roma have of themselves, the formation of their identity and the establishment of ethnic boundaries.

Such a view may be partly conditioned by the high rates of unemployment and poverty found among Roma people throughout Europe. In some areas of the European continent the unemployment figures come close to 100 per cent (Fraser 1995; Emigh and Szelényi 2001; Revenga, Ringold and Martin Tracy 2002). This situation is largely due to Roma being excluded from education and from the labour market, especially when racist attitudes and behaviours increase within mainstream society (Vargas and Gómez 2003; Csepeli and

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2
3 Simon 2004; Ladányi and Szelényi 2006). In fact, like Black Americans in the
4 US (Zubrinisky and Bobo 1996), Roma people are the least wanted neighbours
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6 in Europe (European Values Survey 2001).
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10 A significant part of the scientific literature analysing the relationship
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12 between social mobility and Romani identity maintains that it tends to be weak
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14 and is closely related to degrees of upward social mobility. According to some
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16 theories, middle class Roma who have university degrees and/or liberal
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18 professions tend to drop their Romani identity and often enter into a rapid
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20 process of cultural assimilation, a consequence of the formerly mentioned
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22 stereotypes associated with an image of marginality.
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27 During the last few decades some interesting changes have occurred among
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29 the Roma population. In some contexts, in both Western and Eastern Europe,
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31 some Roma people have gained admission to university studies and entered
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33 liberal professions. This article aims to describe the relationship between ethnic
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35 identification and social status. The circumstances of these people – as we will
36
37 see in the case of Viola – do not usually fit the stereotypical image projected
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39 abroad.
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44 This article presents a number of findings related to Romani identity that
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46 challenge the canonical theory of assimilation assumed in part by the literature
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48 on the Roma. After situating the article within the theoretical debate and
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50 describing its methodology, the results will be structured in the following way.
51
52 First, I will identify findings on ethnic identification which diverge from the
53
54 ethnic assignment of the census – a source used in the theories that argue for
55
56 the existence of the canonical path of assimilation in the Roma case. Then, I
57
58 will present findings that indicate the existing relationship between ethnic
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3 identification and socioeconomic status (SES) in a general way as well as in
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5 some specific contexts such as those of Slovakia and Romania.
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10 11 **Theoretical background**

12
13 One of the most commonly assumed facts about Romani ethnicity is that the
14
15 Roma population tends to follow a course that the immigration literature has
16
17 identified as the canonical path of assimilation (Barany 1998, 2001, 2002;
18
19 Koulis 2005). However, if there is empirical evidence to refute this thesis, the
20
21 Romani case should not be an exception to what the most recent research on
22
23 acculturation, assimilation and mobility suggests. Although the relationship
24
25 between these social processes has traditionally been studied in the field of
26
27 immigration, Herbert J. Gans (2007) emphasises the possibility of going
28
29 beyond the study of immigration, ethnicity and race, which can even be useful
30
31 for observing how people adapt to changing conditions. From this perspective
32
33 Gans points out that it can ‘open up numerous comparative research
34
35 possibilities’ (2007:161) that would benefit social research.
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42 Taking into account that Roma population are treated like immigrants by
43
44 mainstream society and that they continuously face the question of assimilation
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46 in whatever country they are in, theoretical contributions from the fields of
47
48 immigration (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001a, 2001b)
49
50 and cultural minorities (Neckerman et al 1999; Lacy 2004) could be very
51
52 useful to identify possible connections between acculturation, assimilation and
53
54 mobility in the Roma case.
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3 *Segmented assimilation and cultural minorities*
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7 Scholars who have worked on immigration and ethnicity in the United States
8
9 have extensively studied assimilation processes. One of the assumptions at the
10
11 forefront of this research is that there are other paths of mobility in American
12
13 society besides the one-way assimilation described by the authors who studied
14
15 those processes before the 1965 Immigration Act. These theories were mostly
16
17 based on immigrants who arrived in the United States from Europe during the
18
19 first half of the 20th Century (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927; Park 1928, 1950;
20
21 Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964). They were challenged when evidence
22
23 showed that different ethnic groups usually maintained their ethnicity when
24
25 upward mobility occurred (Greeley 1971, 1974; Glazer and Moynihan 1975),
26
27 as suggested by Hansen's Law (Hansen 1938; Gans [1962] 1982, 1999).
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31
32
33 In recent years, the work of Alejandro Portes and other scholars has
34
35 highlighted three different assimilation paths taken by second generation
36
37 immigrants into American society, known as the segmented assimilation theory
38
39 (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001a, 2001b). One of these
40
41 paths, selective acculturation, is an upward mobility path characterised by
42
43 bilingualism, highly supportive ethnic networks, educational attainment and/or
44
45 entrepreneurial skills. Some second generation immigrant children do not
46
47 follow a *dissonant process* of acculturation or a downward mobility path
48
49 because they keep selected traits from their parents' cultural heritage to
50
51 combine with the upward mobility path. Examples of this situation are
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53 Vietnamese Americans in San Diego or Cuban Americans who attend private
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55 schools in the Miami ethnic enclave.
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3 A similar situation has been observed by Karin Lacy (2004) in the upward
4 social mobility processes of black people in the United States. Lacy proposes a
5 variant of this selective acculturation path, which she calls *strategic*
6 *assimilation* and in which 'middle class blacks who have access to white
7 neighbourhoods and predominantly white work spaces demonstrate concerns
8 about maintaining black social ties and culture' (2004:925). On the other hand,
9 Neckerman *et al.* (1999) criticised the segmented assimilation theory for
10 viewing blacks as only poor and not taking into account the existence of what
11 they call a *minority culture of mobility* that promotes upward mobility
12 strategies in a climate of strong discrimination and inequality. Despite their
13 interesting arguments, the empirical data to support them is missing.
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32 *Roma identity, acculturation and mobility*

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36 Research on Roma has also focused more or less implicitly on the relationship
37 between acculturation, assimilation and mobility. Traditional studies have
38 closely linked Romani identity with marginality and poverty. This research
39 recognises Romani identity as one which is created and maintained in
40 opposition to mainstream society (see Sutherland 1975; Nagel 1979; Okely
41 1983; Formoso 1986; San Román 1986, 1997; Stewart 1997). Education and
42 work are considered to have been created by the *gadje* (non-Roma) culture, and
43 therefore not to be original elements of Roma culture. Immersion in these two
44 spheres would lead to the loss of this identity and assimilation into mainstream
45 society, given that the essence of Romani identity rests on the difference
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3 between the Roma and the *gadjé* (non-Roma) culture and the social distance
4 maintained by the Roma towards the other culture.
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8 More recent theories continue to reflect this tendency. According to Barany
9 (1998, 2001, 2002), Romani identity is highly vulnerable to upward mobility.
10 He describes how Roma people lose their identity and try to assimilate into the
11 mainstream when they get white-collar jobs and enter higher education. He
12 reached this conclusion based on data from Slovakia that showed that only 37
13 per cent of the Romani people identified themselves as such in the census.
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17 Barany, like other authors, adopts Gordon's straight-line theory to explain
18 the process of upward mobility among the Roma. According to it, Roma people
19 with high levels of human capital or entrepreneurial skills tend to choose the
20 path of full acculturation into the mainstream. As stated by the authors, this
21 path would be especially attractive for Roma people without ethnic markers
22 such as skin colour. The only Roma people who maintain their identity would
23 be those who form part of what Barany calls the Romani *intelligentsia*. The
24 main reason for keeping their identity is their individual political aspirations
25 and interests.
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27

28
29 Robert Koulish (2005) carried out a similar study. In his work on Romani
30 identity in Hungary he observed that the self-classification of Romani
31 interviewees decreases relative to an increase in educational and economic
32 opportunities¹. Koulish's argument is based on the fact that only 1.4 per cent of
33 the people who classified themselves as Roma in their questionnaires had
34 attended university, while this figure was 4 per cent for those who had not
35 identified themselves as such. A similar tendency occurred in relation to
36 income. The people who identified themselves as Roma earned half as much as
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3 those who did not (Koulish 2005:317). Koulish agrees with new
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5 methodological developments suggested by Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) or
6
7 Kemény (1997) in which the data from the census is not trusted and an “over-
8
9 sample” of Romani people selected with the help of a group of experts².
10
11 Finally, the research included one hundred and fifty questionnaires that
12
13 allowed for a mixed classification made by the interviewees (self-
14
15 classification) and the interviewer (interviewer classification)³. This method is
16
17 based on the supposition that there is no error in the interviewer classification,
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19 even though one hundred and fifty cases are not significant enough to estimate
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21 the results of the study of the Hungarian Romani population in the way that
22
23 Koulish does.
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30 Previous research has shown that the image of the Roma population in
31
32 mainstream society is usually associated with marginal conditions (Mirga and
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34 Gheorghe in Acton 1997; Belton 2005a, 2005b; Bhopal and Myers 2008) and
35
36 with a reactive ethnicity due to the discrimination suffered or the forced
37
38 assimilation policies created by states (Hawes and Pérez 1996; Guy 2001). At
39
40 the same time, however, scholars such as Ladányi and Szelényi (2006),
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42 Sánchez-Aroca (2005), Crea (2001-2004), Vermeersch (2003, 2006) or Gay
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44 and Blasco (1999) have indicated that Roma identity does not depend on social
45
46 exclusion or marginality, even though a large number of Roma people face
47
48 social exclusion.
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54 Some Romani researchers have pointed out that there is also a place for
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56 Roma identity beyond marginality (Gheorghe in Acton 1997; Hancock 2002).
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58 Other scholars, such as Touraine, Wieviorka and Flecha (2004), Tóth (2005),
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60 Sordé (2006) or Prieto-Flores and Puigvert (2007), describe the current

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3 situation of the Roma people and support the claim that people tend to maintain
4 their identity even when they obtain university degrees.
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8 If all this research is key to understanding the connections between social
9 mobility and Romani identity, until now there has been little consistent and
10 representative data to verify whether there is any relation between the two.
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12 This situation has generated considerable debate between researchers who
13 support the canonical theory of assimilation in the case of Roma and those who
14 refute it.
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23 **Data and method**

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25 One of the main sources for this research was the data obtained from a study
26 conducted by the United Nations Development Programme, 'The Roma in
27 Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. A Regional
28 Human Development Report' (UNDP 2004). This research was based on a
29 questionnaire given to a sample of 5034 people in five countries in Eastern and
30 Central Europe (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and
31 Romania), making it one of the largest quantitative studies of Romani
32 populations in different countries (there were around 1000 questionnaires
33 completed for each country). The survey relied on random quota sampling for
34 Roma people 18 years old and older, taking into account data from censuses in
35 the different countries and the advice of experts in ethnic relations and of
36 representatives of each national polling agency. However, one of the most
37 important aspects of the sample selection was the participation of Roma
38 organizations and NGOs to better fit the sample to the distribution of the Roma
39 population in each national context.
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3 The data were compiled from face-to-face interviews at the respondents'
4 homes during 2001 and 2002. The results presented in this work do not include
5 the data from Hungary because the people who did the field work there
6 decided, during the initial interview, to filter out those cases in which the
7 respondents did not identify themselves as Roma. In connection with this
8 situation, this statistical material is interesting because the study is not only one
9 of the few quantitative studies of this style or one of the most comprehensive,
10 but rather because it also lets us observe which elements influence self-
11 identification and the lack of self-identification among the respondents that had
12 identified themselves as Roma in the previous census.
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29 *Analytical strategy*

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31 In addition to single-variable descriptive statistics, binomial logistic regression
32 is used to observe the effects of the explanatory variables on the likelihood that
33 people will self-identify or not as Roma. In this respect, it was considered
34 advisable to carry out various binomial logistic regressions since this is one of
35 the best ways to observe the probability of a specific situation occurring
36 (identifying oneself as Roma) as a dependent variable based on a categorised
37 non-numeric variable, taking the completed questionnaires into account. The
38 different independent variables used for the logistic regression were
39 transformed into "dummy" variables to statistically exploit the data better and
40 thus facilitate analysis and interpretation (Morgan and Teachman 1988;
41 Kaufman 1996). Most of these variables are directly or indirectly connected to
42 the relationship of SES with race or ethnicity. They are income (those who
43 have medium or high incomes), education (those who have secondary or higher
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3 education), unemployment (those who are unemployed), discrimination when
4 attempting to access employment (if they face discrimination when trying to
5 get a job), age, gender (male). But it was also considered appropriate to
6 introduce sociocultural variables that might influence Roma identification.
7
8 These are connected with elements that might be influential in reinforcing
9 identity and making it salient both out of the home – the area of residence (if
10 the majority of the population in the area was Roma)- and at home – language
11 (if respondents used Romani at home). Finally, the results of the models tested
12 in binomial logistic regressions that were the most highly significant, taking
13 Romani identity as a dependent variable, will be presented.
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27 As well as the quantitative data used for this research, the official census
28 questionnaires from the aforementioned countries were also reviewed to find
29 out how the ethnic identity question was formulated and assess the different
30 methodologies used to do so⁴. The different methods used in the censuses to
31 record ethnicity and the way in which these different strategies can affect the
32 final results by making the said identity more or less visible were presented.
33
34 The questionnaires created for the last census by the different census offices in
35 Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania were used to collect
36 information on the census data and on the methodological approaches taken.
37
38 This first step in the analysis of the census data established a principle that
39 involved continually asking where the data originated from, what methodology
40 was used and what the institution which collected the data's ideological
41 approach was. Organisations tend not to collect the data in the way in which
42 we as social scientists would like, in other words, by responding directly to our
43 research questions instead of providing a response to latent interests (Becker
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3 1998; Nobles 2000). Taking this into account, it is possible to have a more
4
5 comprehensive overview of how the data collection was carried out and how
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7 that may affect the results obtained in the end. In this sense, the UNDP survey
8
9 also allowed the ethnic identity of individuals to be compared to the way in
10
11 which they had defined themselves in the previous census and the differences
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13 between these two questions and their meaning to be highlighted.
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17 This research aims to test the hypothesis that, in the Romani case, there is
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19 not enough significant data to confirm the existence of only one path of full
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21 acculturation into the upward social mobility processes the Romani people
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23 interviewed were experiencing. If this was the case, a segmented theoretical
24
25 framework of acculturation, assimilation and mobility would be needed in the
26
27 case of the Roma people.
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34 **Analysis and results**

35 *Some evidence observed in ethnic identification*

36
37 A statistical exploitation of the UNDP survey makes it possible to observe a
38
39 high rate of Romani self-classification in different national contexts within
40
41 which the questionnaires were carried out, contrary to what was perceived by
42
43 Ladányi and Szelényi or Barany⁵. On the other hand, there was also high
44
45 variability, depending on their country of origin, in the number of people
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47 assigning themselves the definition of Roma in the national census. Although
48
49 the sample was based on the censuses in each country, it contained an extra
50
51 element that previous studies had not taken into account, which added great
52
53 value to it. This element was the active participation of Romani organisations
54
55 in the creation of the sample. These results demonstrate that the contributions
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3 of Romani associations have a greater impact than the opinions of experts or
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5 interviewers when recording Romani identity. In this sense, as Flecha and
6
7 Gómez (2004) point out, you can trust people's interpretations as long as there
8
9 is an atmosphere of trust and equality⁶.
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11

12 The results can be seen in Table 1. On average, only 10.5 per cent of the
13
14 interviewees do not identify themselves as Roma. The differences between a
15
16 sample produced by experts and interviewers and a sample chosen with the
17
18 collaboration of Romani organisations cannot go unnoticed. For example, in
19
20 Romania, in the study carried out by Ladányi and Szelényi, only 31 per cent of
21
22 the people interviewed classified themselves as being Roma; in the UNDP
23
24 research –see table 1- the figure reached 95 per cent.
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33 [Table 1 about here]
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41 Another element demonstrated by the results is the large variability when
42
43 people classify themselves as Roma in the census. This variability in the data
44
45 can be attributed to methodological issues and racist attitudes in the region and
46
47 not to the highly variable identity of the people interviewed. In the Czech
48
49 Republic and Slovakia the percentage of people who classify themselves as
50
51 Roma is lower due to the approach taken in the census questionnaires. In both
52
53 cases, the category of *nationality* is based on an exclusionary idea and does not
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55 allow people to designate more than one option for themselves. As a result, the
56
57 majority of the Romani people who responded to those census questionnaires
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faced a dilemma when they had to choose between two identities (Roma or the majority identity); in other words they either feel “Slovakian” or they feel “Romani”. This methodology demonstrates, both in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, that the high percentage of Roma who had previously identified themselves as being part of the mainstream society in their national census (44 and 50 per cent respectively) is considerably less. In both contexts the data show that affiliation with Romani identity remains high (90.6 per cent in the first case and 86.5 per cent in the second). This indicates that the data on ethnic definition in the census, especially in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, leads to specific interpretations of Romani identity, as Zoltan Barany has already observed.

Results from other countries that use different methodologies are highly revealing. Both in Romania and in Bulgaria a higher percentage of people classify themselves as having a Romani identity and a lower percentage classify themselves as belonging to mainstream society. While in Bulgaria 58 per cent of the people registered in the census classify themselves as Roma, in Romania the same percentage was ten points above that (68 per cent). If classification as belonging to mainstream society is considered, the figures are very low, 9 and 9.7 per cent respectively.

Observing the impact of the methods used to collect data on ethnic identity is fundamental to dealing with the main aim of this article: ascertain whether there is any relationship between the SES and Romani identity. A series of interesting outcomes with regard to this relationship and that question the canonical assimilation theory in the Romani case are presented.

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3 *Examining the relationship between ethnic identification and socioeconomic*
4 *status*
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8 The data provided by the UNDP research was very useful for the purpose of
9
10 observing which factors can have a marked influence on a person's decision to
11
12 identify him or herself as Roma. Is it true that education or social class
13
14 influence whether people identify themselves as such? What are the main
15
16 factors that positively or negatively affect said identification? The logistic
17
18 regression in table 2 shows some of the factors that had a significant influence
19
20 on self-classification as Roma in the Eastern European countries where the
21
22 research was carried.
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26 Some independent variables that are more significant in the relationship,
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28 ordered by priority, include having defined themselves as Roma in the previous
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30 census and the use of the Romani language at home. Income and
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32 unemployment are also influential, but to a lesser extent. On the one hand,
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34 those who tend to identified themselves as Roma in the previous census tend to
35
36 maintain that identification in subsequent consultations. Even so, the
37
38 probability of β (identification in the previous census as Roma) is not very high
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40 (0.27). If a person who has classified him or herself as Roma is chosen
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42 randomly, there is a one in three probability that that person will also have
43
44 defined himself or herself in the previous census as Roma. This low probability
45
46 is due to censuses not correctly recording the said identity – as observed
47
48 previously. Another factor that has a certain degree of influence on
49
50 identification is the use of the Romani language, an element that also appears
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52 to be highly significant in the research carried out by Ladányi and Szelényi
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3 (2006). It is important to point out that logistic regression produces two new
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5 elements which also have a certain degree of influence, and attract attention.
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8 In contrast to the canonical hypothesis of assimilation defended by certain
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10 North American authors at the middle of the last century (i.e. Warner and Srole
11
12 1945; Gordon 1964), as well as by other more contemporary authors who have
13
14 specifically studied the Romani case (Barany 1998, 2001, 2002; Koulis 2005),
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16 interviewees who have a higher income tend to identify themselves as Roma
17
18 more readily than those who have lower incomes. This situation is interesting
19
20 because it is normally believed that the opposite is true. In other words, it is
21
22 believed that those who have lower incomes tend to identify themselves as
23
24 being Roma to a greater extent. As many other authors have indicated, a
25
26 situation similar to the American one is also occurring in Central and Eastern
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28 Europe, in the Romani case, prompting the need to identify different upward
29
30 mobility paths among the Roma. In this respect, it seems that the construction
31
32 of the Roman identity is not only tied to an oppositional culture of the minority
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34 underclass, but that an ethnicity affirmation process is also taking place among
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36 middle class Roma. Finally, it should be mentioned that gender can also
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38 influence this identification process. That is to say that men are marginally
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40 more likely than women to define themselves as Roma.
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48 Another relevant factor is that there seems to be no connection with
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50 education. Having completed secondary school or being university educated
51
52 does not affect whether people identify themselves as being Roma or not.
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[Table 2 about here]

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8 This statistical data contradicts the theory that those with more education or
9 higher incomes are more likely to assimilate into mainstream society.
10
11 Although, as Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) point out, there tends to be more
12 Roma amongst poor people, the simple fact that they are poor or socially
13 excluded does not influence whether they classify themselves as Roma or not.
14
15 So, I propose the Roma people, in addition to the possibility of following a
16 path of full acculturation, follow other upward mobility paths during which
17 their Romani identity remains important. In this respect, the data demonstrate
18 that the connection between acculturation, assimilation and mobility in the
19 Romani case would leads to a segmented assimilation process and not one that
20 follows a straight line. Furthermore, with the data from the UNDP research it is
21 not clear there are different paths since the questionnaire was not designed with
22 this objective. Even so, several works of research have provided us with some
23 clues about how segmented this process might be in the Roma case. In one of
24 them, Tóth (2005) identifies two different upward mobility processes among
25 Roma people in Hungary and in the United Kingdom. In each one Romani
26 identity is maintained. In the first, however, in Hungary, the people are caught
27 between two real worlds – the Romani and the majority culture – while in the
28 other, in the United Kingdom, they only symbolically identify themselves as
29 Roma. Although representative data of these processes are not available, it is
30 an insightful and suggestive proposal. In another study, Prieto-Flores (2009)
31 describes three different paths of assimilation among middle class Roma. Two
32 are related to the segmented assimilation theory (full acculturation and
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3 selective acculturation). The third stems from what he has identified as the
4
5 limitations of a theory that only allows for a single upward mobility path in
6
7 which ethnic identity remains. Studying the Romani case reveals at least one
8
9 more, the *outdoors acculturation path*. In this case, identity has no salience
10
11 among middle class Roma. It is only experienced on an individual and/or
12
13 family basis because of a fear of discrimination. This kind of identity is
14
15 maintained “in the background”, particularly when ethnic networks are weak
16
17 and it does not fit the stereotypical image of Roma. For outsiders, then, these
18
19 people seem fully acculturated even though they continue to think of
20
21 themselves as Roma. They experience their identity in a symbolic way (Gans
22
23 [1962] 1982; Alba 1990; Waters 1990), inhibited by the fear of being
24
25 discriminated against if it becomes public or salient.
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34 *Differences between national contexts*

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36 As can be seen in Table 3, the characteristics that influence how people
37
38 identify themselves vary according to the different countries being analysed.
39
40 We must also remember, as indicated by Csepeli and Simon (2004), that
41
42 Romani self-identification can be determined by different elements in different
43
44 national contexts, such as the nature of the encounter, existing prejudices, the
45
46 impact of the majority on the minority and the assimilation policies of the
47
48 State, which can have a bearing on people identifying themselves more or less
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50 as Roma in different national contexts. We must also consider the social
51
52 anthropological perspective, according to which the internal mechanisms of
53
54 each Roma subgroup vary from one context to another and identifying who is
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3 Roma and who is depends on the existing internal heterogeneity among the
4
5 Roma (Stewart 1997).
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8 For the analysis, two specific cases were selected: Slovakia, studied by
9
10 Barany (1998, 2001, 2002), and Romania. In the case of Slovakia, according to
11
12 the different logistic regressions carried out, there is no relationship between
13
14 socioeconomic level or education and identification as Roma. Barany probably
15
16 reached his conclusions based exclusively on reports from the Slovakian
17
18 statistics office and interviews he carried out with certain experts and Romani
19
20 representatives. The statistical data provided by the UNDP research suggest a
21
22 different reality. In the case of Slovakia, only two of the elements indicated
23
24 previously as possibly playing a role in people declaring themselves to be
25
26 Roma or not continue to persist. These are previous self-classification in the
27
28 census and the use of the Romani language at home. In this sense, it seems that
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30 some cultural bonds, such as the use of a common language, have an influence
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32 on making the Roma identification salient.
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[Table 3 about here]

51 In the case of Romania (see Table 4) the two elements indicated above
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53 (identification in the previous census and the use of the language) are
54
55 maintained but the appearance of two new elements can also be observed:
56
57 having suffered from discrimination when seeking employment and the area of
58
59 residence (if it is an area inhabited mainly by Romani people). In such cases,
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1
2
3 the existence of previous discrimination and geographical concentration have a
4
5 certain influence over the dependent variable. This situation is similar to that
6
7 described in the study by Csepele and Simon (2004), whose results highlight
8
9 that Romani identification in Romania might be stronger in environments
10
11 where the ties with other Roma people are important. It should be added that
12
13 this may be reinforced if people have suffered discrimination in their search for
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15 either qualified or unqualified employment.
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23 [Table 4 about here]
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28 **Conclusions**

29
30 This article has attempted to reorient current thinking about the relationship
31
32 between assimilation and mobility, particularly in the Roma case. The
33
34 assumption that Roma people, when they prosper economically or acquire high
35
36 levels of education, tend to enter a path of complete acculturation and therefore
37
38 drop their Romani identity is widespread in the scientific literature. However,
39
40 until now there has been little representative quantitative data to either
41
42 demonstrate or question this assumption.
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47
48 This research aims to go beyond this theoretical framework, taking into
49
50 account new representative data about the relationship between Romani
51
52 identity and SES. It also demonstrates that the straight-line process of
53
54 assimilation is not a useful way to explain this relationship in the Roma case.
55
56 What is more, as has recently become evident, upward social mobility does not
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1
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3 always have to go hand in hand with full acculturation, although there are some
4
5 connections between the two factors (Gans 2007).
6
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8 The implications of these results are various. First of all, the findings
9
10 presented in this article clearly support the idea of viewing Roma upward
11
12 social mobility as a segmented process since education and income do not
13
14 usually affect the ethnic identification of Roma people negatively. One new
15
16 observation is that interviewees who have higher incomes tend to identify
17
18 themselves as being Roma more than those who have smaller incomes.
19
20 Secondly, further research is needed to explore what kind of symbolic
21
22 connections exist between acculturation, assimilation and mobility among the
23
24 Roma. Széleny and Ládanyi (2006) and Vermeersch (2003, 2006) have clearly
25
26 explained what happens in the lower class, but little work has been done to
27
28 explain what happens in the middle class (Tóth 2005; Sordé; 2006; Prieto-
29
30 Flores 2009). Future research should examine how important these different
31
32 paths of assimilation are among Roma and what types of social determinants
33
34 contribute to them. Answers to these questions will give us a better
35
36 understanding of this topic.
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60

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12
13 several anonymous reviewers for helpful comments and advice.
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22 Notes

23
24 ¹ The interviewers for the Koulish study were trained in how to differentiate those people who
25
26 consider themselves to be Roma and those who do not through the recognition of people based
27
28 on their surnames, the way they dress, their lifestyle or their language.

29
30 ² The sample chosen by Ladányi and Szelényi was not based on census data since the authors
31
32 did not trust its reliability. In this case, the survey which was eventually carried out was based
33
34 on the development of an over-sample decided upon by experts who identified residential areas
35
36 and/or estates which were registered under traditionally Romani surnames. Out of this
37
38 information, a random selection of cases was chosen. A team of experts including social
39
40 workers, teachers, policemen/women and doctors carried out an identification process of areas
41
42 in which the Romani population and people from that ethnic group were highly concentrated.

43
44 ³ Aliya Saperstein (2006) recently pointed out the need to differentiate classification by the
45
46 interviewer or observer (interviewer classification) and self-classification in, since they do not
47
48 measure ethnicity or race in the same way. The differences between the two strategies are so
49
50 significant that they have a decisive effect on the conclusions of the research. In that sense, the
51
52 two distinct methods respond better to different research questions on ethnicity.

53
54 ⁴ Various Romani associations declared in an international meeting organised by the *Project*
55
56 *for Ethnic Relations* in 2000 that the preferred methodology to recollect Roma identity of those
57
58 attending the meeting was self-classification, accompanied by the active participation of
59
60 organisations and Romani people in the collection of the data used such as the research
developed by the UNDP.

1
2
3 ⁵ Although there are high rates of self-classification amongst the Romani population, this does
4 not mean that there can be no variability in the ethnic identification of a person.
5
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7 ⁶ Although it is difficult to make the position of the researcher disappear, some mechanisms
8 may be introduced to try to avoid this gap (McCorkel and Myers 2003). In this case, one of the
9 cornerstones of the research carried out by the UNDP was the participation of Romani
10 organisations in its elaboration and execution.
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Tables

Table 1. Questions in relation to Romani identity

Country	Percentage of people who feel they are Roma	Percentage ascribed in the census as a Roma	Percentage ascribed in the census as being members of the majority society
Bulgaria	86	58	9
Czech Republic	86.5	24	50
Romania	95	68	9.7
Slovakia	90.6	41	44
Arithmetic mean	89.5	47.8	28.2

Source: Own table based on data from the UNDP. 2004. *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency trap. A Regional Human Development Report*. Data available on the following website: <http://roma.undp.sk> N=5100.

Table 2. Binomial logistic regression of the determinants of self-classification as Roma

Nationalities: Bulgarian, Slovakian, Czech and Romanian.

The person identifies him or herself as a Roma	Coefficient	Typical error	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.310*	.301	1.363
Age	-.102	.091	.903
Identification in the previous census as Roma	3.304***	.301	27.224
Education (secondary or university)	.049	.141	1.051
Use of the Romani language at home	1.659***	.152	5.254
Income (medium-high)	.421**	.140	1.523
Unemployment	.299*	.132	1.349
Discrimination when attempting to access employment	.102	.132	1.107
Area of residence (high presence of the Romani population)	.239	.131	1.269
Constant	.359	.254	1.431
-2 Log-Likelihood = 1608.523			
Nagelkerke R ² = .330			
D.F. = 9			
N = 4100			

Source: Own table based on data from the UNDP. 2004. *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency trap. A Regional Human Development Report*. Data available on the following website: <http://roma.undp.sk>

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 3. Binomial logistic regression of the determinants of self-classification as Roma.

Nationality: Slovakian

The person identifies him or herself as a Roma	Coefficient	Typical error	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.224	.249	1.251
Age	-.264	.176	.768
Identification in the previous census as a Roma	2.877***	.596	17.755
Education (secondary or university)	-.119	.253	.888
Use of the Romani language in the home	.784**	.268	2.191
Income (medium-high)	.201	.261	1.222
Unemployment	.250	.250	1.284
Discrimination when attempting to access employment	-.092	.251	.912
Area of residence (high presence of the Romani population)	.302	.262	1.353
Constant	1.536**	.455	4.645
-2 Log-Likelihood = 486.354			
Nagelkerke R ² = .199			
D.F. = 9			
N = 1030			

Source: Own table based on data from the UNDP, 2004. *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency trap. A Regional Human Development Report*. Data available on the following website: <http://roma.undp.sk>

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4. Binomial logistic regression of the determinants of self-classification as Roma.

Nationality: Romanian

The person identifies him or herself as a Roma	Coefficient	Typical error	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.445	.376	1.560
Age	-.067	.407	.936
Identification in the previous census as a Roma	2.905***	.548	18.251
Education (secondary or university)	-.067	.407	.936
Use of the Romani language in the home	2.665***	.546	14.367
Income (medium-high)	1.508	1.098	4.519
Unemployment	.342	.463	1.408
Discrimination when attempting to access employment	.980**	.375	2.666
Area of residence (high presence of the Romani population)	.909*	.399	2.483
Constant	.268	.733	1.307

-2 Log-Likelihood = 213.944
 Nagelkerke R² = .457
 D.F. = 8
 N = 980

Source: Own table based on data from the UNDP. 2004. *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency trap. A Regional Human Development Report*. Data available on the following website: <http://roma.undp.sk>

* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001
