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Belonging, Stigma and the Art of Getting By

The Case of a Roma Community in Romania

Author: Camelia Petriu

ABSTRACT

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Examiner:

The aim of this thesis is to understand the subjective experiences of the people living in a Roma community in Romania, in the context of ethnic-based stigmatization and exclusion. Research themes include ethnic identity patterns, experiences of discrimination and racism, coping strategies and outlook on life. I first describe how the general label of "țigani" (gypsies) overlooks more complex affiliation patterns that the Roma themselves practice. However, the problem is not with the ethnic label in itself, but with the negative stereotypes attached to it. I argue that their experiences of discrimination and racism should be analyzed through an intersectional framework, where not just ethnicity, but also gender, class and age play important parts. The Roma cope with the stigma in different ways, from "cutting ties" with the outside and finding refuge inside the community, to trying to distance themselves from the ethnic group. The young construct their hopes for the future in relation to what their parents did not have, and have common resolutions: a house and family, a steady job, being respected and moving away.

I rely on data gathered through one month's fieldwork in a Roma community in Romania, and discuss it in relation to theories of identity, power and stigma, with focus on gender and ethnicity.

Keywords: Roma people, Romanian Roma, ethnicity, intersectionality, exclusion

Contents

Introduction

The subjects of my paper are the people living in a Romani community on the Romanian countryside. The Roma people – pejoratively called *țigani* by most Romanians – live on the margins of the society, both in a literal and metaphorical sense. Literally - because they most often live on the outskirts of cities or villages, in fairly isolated Roma communities and neighborhoods. And metaphorically – because they are the poorest of people, have the lowest access to education, are largely excluded from the job market, and have the least human contact outside their own ethnic group.

My initial interest in the Roma people was shaped by growing up in Romania. As a child, I pictured a *țigan* in my head before I ever saw one: first, from thrilling stories about the *țigani* taking away naughty children in their sacks, and then from songs and legends about gypsy wanderers, witches and fortune-tellers. While I was growing up, the Roma were both a very present and a very distant reality. They were an important part of both the discourse about Romanianness and the constant nagging about "what is wrong with this country". They were also present in my neighborhood. However, I do not have any memory of a conversation with a Roma. Only in exceptional circumstances do most non-Roma have any close contact with the Roma. Later on, I became interested in reading up on research about this social gap. The recent years have seen a surge in sociological research uncovering the stereotypes and exclusion practices against the Roma in Romania. But the Roma themselves are usually silent. This is, in short, what got me here: a search for missing pieces, for explanations and narratives from the Roma themselves.

The village where I conducted my study lies in southwestern Romania, very close to the Serbian border. Before arriving to the field, I had planned to focus on the system of symbols, myths and beliefs that shaped the Roma way of living. I was also interested in the artistic part of their lives, such as music, dancing and jewelry-making. But after having spent some time in the field, I felt that these questions were not very important to the people living there. I decided switch focus to what seemed most relevant to them: namely, their perception of their stigmatized identity, how their lives were shaped by exclusion and racism, and their hopes and dreams for the future.

In the first part of this thesis, I will present my themes and objectives, a short overview of the literature about Romanian Roma, and my methodological approach. The second part is a theoretical discussion about identity, power and stigma, with special focus on ethnicity and gender. The last part consists of an analysis of my empirical material through this theoretical framework.

Themes and objectives

The theme of this study is the Roma's self-perception of their ethnic identity and their outlook on life. As part of this general theme, I have four research objectives. The first one is identity patterns, ethnic affiliation and solidarity to the ethnic group. Secondly, I will look at people's subjective experiences of discrimination and exclusion, using intersectionality as my framework. The third one is related to strategies of coping with the stigma of being a *ţigan* in Romania. The last and final one concerns the Roma's outlook on life and their hopes and dreams for the future. My focus for this last discussion will be on Roma children, who are in many ways the embodiment of hope for the community.

Literature review

The Roma people, in Romania and elsewhere, are widely represented in literature, cinematography and music. Serbian film-maker Emir Kusturica, for example, is famous for his picturesque portrayals of the Roma in movies such as *Time of the Gypsies* (1988) or *Black Cat, White Cat* (1998), in which he plays on the common stereotypes about the Roma. Romanian books, films, music and folklore usually present a romanticized image of the Roma, around themes such as their nomadic lifestyle, their passionate spirits, or the beautiful, mysterious women. These images do not represent common perceptions on the Roma of today, but are rather stories about "what the gypsies used to be".

In addition, there is also a lot of scientific literature about the Roma. Zoltan Barany's *Eastern European* Gypsies (2001), and George Potra's *Contributions to the history of the Romanian gypsies* (1939), shed some light on the blurred history of the Roma in Romania. Sociological research on the Roma of today has mainly focused on exclusion/discrimination questions. One

research study of particular use is *Come Closer: Inclusion and Exclusion of Roma in Present-day Romanian Society* (2008), coordinated by Gábor Fleck and Cosima Rughiniş. The study relies on both quantitative data (survey research), and qualitative material collected through fieldwork studies in 36 communities.

Isabel Fonseca, an American journalist, spent prolonged periods of time among Roma families, including some Romanian ones. Her book, *Bury Me Standing: The Gypsies and Their Journey* (1995), presents an outsider's experience of Roma practices and lifestyles. Catalina Tesar, doctoral student at UCL Anthropology, is conducting her PhD research on Romanian Roma. As part of her fieldwork, she joined some Roma families in their migration to Italy, where they take up begging. Her research is not yet published, but some information about it is available through editorial interviews and a presentation she made at the 8th conference of the Society for Cultural Anthropology from Romania, in 2011.

Where did the Roma come from?

The history of the Roma people is unclear, but they are believed to have fled from India about 800 years ago, due to extreme persecution from emperor Manu (Potra, 2001, *apud* Surdu, 2010). The label of fugitives, which they assumed right from the start, stuck with them throughout the years. The peoples they encountered are likely to have perceived them as such – fugitives, victims, rejected by their own society. They were said to set camp outside the towns, in forests, caves and ruins, as if they were afraid to go in. Indeed, Romanian folklore always localizes them at the periphery, on the outskirts of a village or a town.

Originally, their religion used to be different from the locals'. This might have been yet another reason why they were perceived as different, with deviant traditions and hard to assimilate. Wherever they tried to settle, they were persecuted, deported and even enslaved. On the territory of present-day Romania, they were enslaved for at least 500 years (Barany, 2001, 3-4). It is difficult to say for sure when the slavery began, but the first mention of "gypsy" slaves dates from 1348. By the end of the 14th century, gypsy slavery became common practice in the two Romanian principalities, Moldavia and Walachia, perhaps to secure their labor at a minimal cost. At that time, "*ţigan* (gypsy) and *rob* (slave) became legally and culturally synonymous terms in the Romanian principalities" (Gheorghe, 1991, *apud* Barany, 2001, 3). How they were treated

was up to the family they belonged to, but the owners have the right to even kill them. It was under the governance of Mihail Kogalniceanu (1855-1866) when slavery was finally abolished.

In an effort by the political regime to "bring the country back to an ethnic Romanian base", the Roma were again persecuted during World War II (Kelso, 2010). Between 1942 and 1943, Jews and Roma were deported to Transnistria, a territory that Romania had received from Russia during the war. The Roma that were targeted at that time were the ones living a nomadic lifestyle, and those who had been convicted for previous crimes. In total, about 25 000 Roma were deported. More than 10 000 of them were killed or died from starvation and diseases. The persecution of the Roma is most often overlooked in discussions about the Holocaust, and the Roma themselves rarely speak about it.

Conceptual differences: Roma, Romani, *țigani* and *neamuri*

The terminology around the Roma, as an ethnic group, is somewhat blurry. The people belonging to this group are referred to in different ways. Perhaps the most universal one is *gypsy*/ *gipsy*, which comes from *Egyptian*, illustrating the misguided idea that the Romani come from Egypt. In contrast to the common spelling of ethnicity names with capital initial letters, the word *gypsy* is most commonly spelled with lower-case. Ian Hancock (2002, xxi), a Roma author, considers that this has further reinforced the idea that "we are a people defined by behavior rather than by ethnicity". Although theoretically *gipsy/gypsy* can be used to refer to any nomad people, it is most commonly used for the Romani.

Țigan is the colloquial term for a Roma person in Romania, which both Roma and non-Roma use. In the Romanian language dictionary, it has the following explanations:

> ȚIGAN,-Ă, țigani,-e, m.n., adj. I. m.n. 1. Person who belongs to a population originating in India and spread within the majority of European countries, living in some areas in semi-nomadic style. […] 2. Epithet for a dark-skinned person. 3. Epithet for someone with bad habits. II. Adj. (Rarely) = Gypsy-like. from sl. ciganinŭ. Cf. rus. țâgan. (The Romanian Language Dictionary, 1998)

What is peculiar about this definition is that the same term is used both as an ethnic name, and as an adjective with negative connotations (to refer to someone with bad habits). Variants of the word exist in other languages as well: *Cigány* (Hungarian), *Çingene* (Turkish), *Zingaro* (Italian), *Cigano* (Portuguese), *Zigeuner* (German), *Zigenare* (Swedish) etc. (Dosoftei, 2007).

The Romanian Roma themselves differentiate between different ethnic subgroups, or *neamuri*. They call themselves *rudari, cărămizari, lăieşi, căldărari, ursari, argintari* etc. These names come from traditional occupations they used to have, such as prelucrating silver (*argintari*), making metal buckets (*căldărari),* making bricks (*cărămizari)* or playing the bear on holiday celebrations (*ursari*). In most cases, these occupations have been abandoned, but the people still stick to the names as they help them differentiate from 'the other' Roma. The different subgroups vary in terms of dialect, clothing, traditions and laws. Furthermore, there is no common agreement on whether or not the different subgroups belong to the larger Roma ethnie. Some of the *rudari* might identify themselves as Roma, and some might not. The other Roma are also in disagreement whether the *rudari* are Roma or not, since they no longer speak the Romani language. This leads to further difficulties when trying to get data on the number of Roma in the country.

One other term that I will be using throughout this text is *gadjo* (feminine: *gadji*). It is a Romani word which denotes someone who is not of Roma ethnie, or does not follow the Roma laws and traditions. Being called a *gadjo* is a marker that you are on the outside, that you do not belong to the Roma "community".

Ethnic labels and ethnic identity

Although *Roma* is the official term, a lot of people still prefer to use *ţigan*. According to a 2009 survey by S.P.E.R., as much as 91% of the non-Roma respondents usually use the term *ţigan*. However, this is not the real problem, as the same survey shows that most of the Roma (66%) use *ţigan* themselves, and that they do not find it offensive. The problem is the connotation this word has for most of the non-Roma, and the stereotypes associated with it. A fieldwork study in Fleck & Rughiniş's (2008) research cites a Romanian state employee of Hungarian ethnie, describing the "characteristic" Roma behavior: irresponsibility, carelessness and a messy lifestyle.

> The biggest problem in our town is that community (of *ţigani*), which has about 350 people. Their attitude towards work and life is pretty bad. Already yesterday have they bought liquor with the money they will earn today. They don't think about anything [...] They take on this messy lifestyle from one another, they are born this way and they continue to live this way. (Nuşfălău, Toma 2007 in Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008, 59)

The same research report tells the story of a Roma girl looking to rent a room in a nearby city, together with her mother. Apparently, they did not look as Roma at all, but the mother decided to be upfront about their ethnicity in order to avoid problems later. After talking to the mother, the host pulled the girl to the side and told her: "Your mother is crazy to just say that you are a *țigană* like that. As if she was proud! Don't ever tell it to anyone else!" (Veseuş, Silan 2007 in Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008, 60)

The 2009 research report by S.P.E.R. shows that 53% of the Roma themselves believe that the label *Roma*, *țigan,* or various sub-ethnic categories (*căldărar, ursar* etc.), best describe their identity, while 33% of them best identified themselves with the label *Romanian*. Most respondents (81%) said that they are proud to be Roma, and only 15% had a feeling of shame about their ethnic identity. More than 80% believed that birth into the ethnic group is a sufficient credential for membership, and that it is, in fact, impossible to be born from Roma parents and not be a Roma yourself. Contrary to the non-Roma beliefs, the most common Roma attributes according to the Roma themselves are: pleasant, welcoming, hard-working and solidary.

About the ethnic names used by the Roma themselves, Fleck & Rughiniş's (2008) research claims that they usually reject the *Roma* label, and prefer the term *țigan.* In that sense, they cite a fieldwork note from the town of Cugir:

> Something else should be mentioned, namely that most of them reject or avoid using the name *Roma* when speaking about themselves, and they prefer to say: "Look, I am a *țigan...*" [...] What is interesting is that for some, group affiliation is also given by something else than just ethnie: "Roma… *țigani,* God knows what we are... unfortunate people, that's what we are." (P.R., 67 years old, of Roma ethnie) (Cugir, Stoianovici 2007, in Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008, 52)

Other Roma, especially those from the *rudari* subgroup, do not identify themselves as Roma at all, claiming that they are not Roma because they do not speak the Romani language. Another fieldwork report from the same study hinted that they are actually aware that they belong to the Roma ethnic group, but they prefer not to acknowledge that.

Research on Roma inclusion

In recent years, there has been an intensifying interest in Roma inclusion/exclusion issues. Part of this interest has come from the government, in light of the country's recent integration into the European Union (2007) and the new EU directives about Roma inclusion. For instance, in 2007,

the government launched S.P.E.R. (Stop the Prejudices against the Roma Ethnie), an anti-discrimination project implemented with PHARE funds (EU funds aimed to assist applicant and newly-accepted countries). Social studies focused on exclusion and discrimination have been conducted as part of S.P.E.R. and other similar projects (S.P.E.R., 2012).

Just how many Roma people live in Romania is hard to tell. Official data coming from censuses gives no real account of the Roma presence in the country. The 2012 census estimates the Roma minority at only 3.2% of the total population (a little over 600 000), but the numbers gathered by various research organizations and NGOs are significantly higher. Prejudices against their ethnic group, and social pressure towards cultural assimilation, determines many Roma to be secretive about their ethnicity. Social researchers (Gheţău, 1996; O'Grady and Târnovschi, 1998) believe that only about 65% of all Roma would declare their true ethnicity on occasions of self-reporting.

A 2007 World Bank report evaluated that a Roma person is 2.7 times more likely to be poor, compared to any other ethnic group in Romania. Moreover, one in every five Roma is very poor. Life quality research also identifies the Roma as the ethnic group facing the highest risk of poverty. Traveling through the country by car, one can easily recognize the Roma villages and neighborhoods, from the small, unfinished houses, the broken fences surrounding just empty lots, the street dogs, and a general feeling of chaos and poverty.

In the 2009 Interethnic Barometer by S.P.E.R., 76% of the Roma respondents said that their family income did not cover their basic needs. 75% said that their life was either worse or much worse compared to the previous year. Almost 50% blamed the lack of working opportunities in their town. Moreover, 67.3% believed that the Roma people were discriminated against based on their ethnicity when applying for a job.

The 2002 census also showed that the Roma have by far the lowest access to education. Thus, in 2002, 34.2% of the Roma adults had received no formal education whatsoever, compared to 5.5% of the majority population. This imbalance is reproduced by next generations – 19% of all Roma children aged 7-11 do not go to school, compared to just 2% within the majority group. For older children, there is an even larger gap – 39% of the Roma older than 11 are not attending school, compared to 9% of the non-Roma. The low education levels keep the poverty circle going, making it unlikely for the children to ever get a better life than their parents'.

Data from the *Social cohesion and interethnic climate surveys*, 2006 and 2008, reflects the dominant discourse about Roma people. In a few words, what is characteristic to them is that they are dirty, thieves, and lazy. More than 82% of all the respondents in 2008 believed that most Roma people disobey the law, and almost half thought that they should not be allowed to travel abroad, because they are harming the country's image. One third stated that Roma people should be forced to live outside the cities and villages, because they are impossible to integrate, and more that 40% that villains should at least be asked if they agree to have Roma people in their town/village. Social distance, defined as the acceptance of close relationships with an ethnic minority, is the largest for the Roma. Thus, although over 80% of the non-Roma are acquainted with some Roma, only 7.8% are ever visiting them and less than 4% engage in close relationships, such as asking for advice. On the other hand, 50% say that they have conflicts with the Roma.

In their study about Roma inclusion and exclusion in Romania, Fleck & Rughiniş (2008) used questionnaires to measure interethnic contact, but also qualitative data from 36 fieldwork studies in Roma communities, and in-depth interviews with both Roma and non-Roma. The fieldwork studies have shown that the social distance between the two ethnic groups is different depending on whose perspective you choose. Thus, the Roma are more familiar with the non-Roma neighborhoods than the other way around:

> The spatial positioning of the Roma community forces people to pass through the village center in order to get out, which involves exposure and interaction with the Hungarian population. The Roma greet in Hungarian and are answered in the same language. It is not unusual that they stop to ask people how they are doing. What is interesting is that the Roma are very familiar with the Hungarian neighborhood, while the Hungarians are not familiar with the Roma part of the village. (Colțău, Iorga 2007 in Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008, 72)

The research report also takes note of experiences of exclusion recounted by Roma subjects. For example, one of the fieldwork reports mentions that in the town of Babadag, the Roma are refused entrance in certain stores, because the store owners claim that they steal (some Roma had indeed been caught stealing from the store several times). They are also not allowed on buses commuting from Babadag to Tulcea or Constanța, the drivers claiming that they have poor hygiene. They are also not permitted entrance in bars and clubs, due to uncivilized and noisy behavior which disturbs other customers.

Strategies of coping with the stigma

Although I have not found any study on how the Roma are coping with stigmatization, there has been a lot of research on the coping strategies of other stigmatized minorities. Jolanda Jetten, Nyla R. Branscombe, Michael T. Schmitt and Russel Spears (2001) studied people with piercings, and found that one way of responding is by stronger identification with members of the in-group. This strategy has a positive effect on the person's well-being and self-esteem. Tracey H. Cronin *et. al* (2012) recently conducted a longitudinal study on Latino students, testing whether perceived discrimination fosters group activism. They also found that those experiencing stronger ethnic discrimination identified more with their ethnic group. In the same time, group identification contributed to their well-being and promoted activism. Many other researchers have conducted studies testing the same relationship between perceived discrimination and group identification, and found similar results (Worchel, Morales, Paez & Deschamps 1998; Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999; Abrams & Hogg, 1999 etc.).

Jennifer Crocker & Brenda Major (1989) have found that, for stigmatized individuals, group membership can sometimes act as a buffer to protect self-esteem. They have identified three mechanisms that mediate this relation. The first one is attributing negative feedback to one's group membership. When a member of a stigmatized minority does not get a job, they can either blame it on his own personal characteristics, or to prejudices about his group. This ambiguity will help protect their self-esteem, especially since the second alternative is often correct. One other strategy is to compare oneself with members of the in-group instead of with higher-status individuals from other groups, a strategy that has already been discussed earlier. Finally, members of stigmatized groups can devalue those dimensions where the group scores lower than others, and place greater value on those where the group scores better. The authors found empirical support for all of the three strategies.

Life expectations, hopes and dreams

The S.P.E.R. survey (2009) only contained closed-ended questions about life expectations, just to evaluate whether people had a positive or negative outlook on life. This showed that the Roma tend to be much more pessimistic about the future compared to other ethnies. Thus, 63% of all the Roma respondents said that they life will probably get even worse the following year.

Fleck & Rughiniş (2008) also discussed the hopes and dreams of the Roma children. Life expectations of Roma children in different communities are similar: most of them wanted to get a job and raise a family. Most of them have the life of their parents as model of indesirability, and look for role models in other relatives, especially those living and working abroad. These dreams and phantasies aree for the most part disconnected from reality. There is a large gap between what the children dreamed of and their possibilities to reach those dreams. At the same time, there is a big contrast between these hopes and the common stereotypes about the Roma. Thus, while the children dream about becoming doctors or judges, their teachers have very low expectations for their future and their capability or motivation for social mobility.

Methodology

My fieldwork consists of a one-month study of a Roma community in Romania. The empirical material comes, for the most part, from participant observation and unstructured interviews with Roma people in the community, and a few important actors on the outside (school teachers, the mayor, a City Hall employee, the prison counselor). I have also collected drawings and essays created by the children in the community.

After an introduction to the place where I conducted my fieldwork, I will present my study approach within the fieldwork tradition, and the methods I have used for collecting and analyzing the data. Then, I will describe the process of "getting in" and the difficulties I have encountered. Further, I will discuss intersectionality as a framework of analyzing social inequality and exclusion. Finally, I will reflect upon research ethics in connection to my fieldwork approach.

The place

The Roma community where I conducted my study is part of a larger village in southwestern Romania, close to the Danube and the Serbian border. The village has a population of around 3000 people, of which about half are Roma. The Roma community, made of about 250 families, occupies the west part of the village. The houses are built along one main street and on a garbage field.

I got to this village through a thread of references from my friends and family in Romania. The Roma are not concentrated to a specific area, but spread out all over the country. This makes it so that anyone you ask can refer you to a Roma community they are acquainted with. I settled upon those that were in the countryside instead of within cities, and where there was a well-shaped community of Roma. I preferred the countryside because the Roma in the cities usually live in crowded apartment blocks and are more difficult to research as a separate community. While all communities are interesting, this particular village has a Roma population that almost equals the non-Roma It is also close to my hometown, which got me hoping that I could somehow find a connection to the inside.

Figure 1. Map of Southern Romania and neighboring countries, Google Maps 2012

The village has one school for children aged 7-14, and one kindergarten. Both are located on the main street, in the "Romanian area". There are also a few food kiosks, and two café-bars. The City Hall administers a group of villages (a "commune"), and is located elsewhere. There are no other administrative buildings in the village, nor is there a hospital or any smaller health service facility. Generally, people travel to the nearest town to do their shopping, run errands or for entertainment.

As you step out of the "Romanian area" and into the Roma community, the scenery changes. The streets are unpaved and wild dogs are wandering around everywhere. Most of the houses look poor and still under construction. The deeper you go, the more chaotic it gets. The street ends in

a garbage field, which has become home to about fifteen Roma families. The houses on this field are very basic, only 2-3 rooms. Doors and windows are missing. Most of the houses do not have a toilet or running water. There are a few ecological toilets on the field, which are shared between the families living in the area.

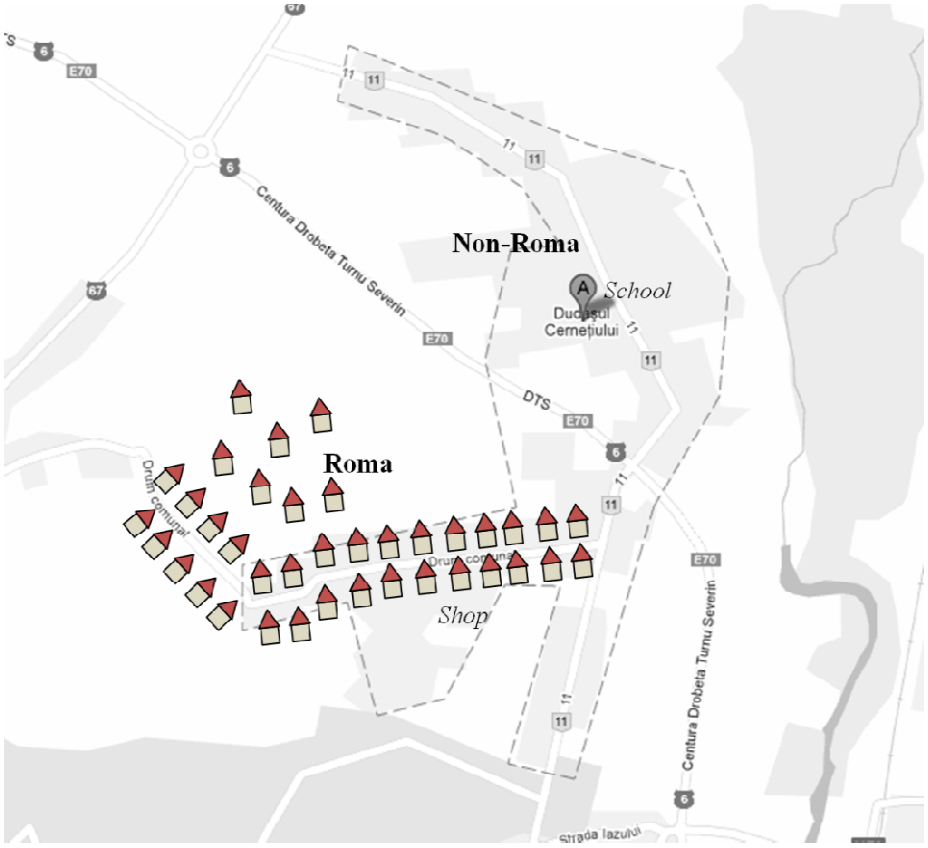

Figure 2. Map of Dudaşul Cernețiului, Google Maps 2012 and own notes

There are no streets or alleys on the field, and the houses seemed to be placed at random, creating an illusion of bohemian chaos. The wrecked dining tables and sofas lying around on the field, the improvised outdoor furniture, and the dogs, chickens and pigs moving freely indoors and outdoors, built up to the same atmosphere. Houses and fences were often painted in bright colors like purple or green.

There are two ethnic subgroups, or *neamuri*, living in the community: *ursari* and *lăieşi.*They are somewhat separated in the sense that most of the *ursari* live along the street, and the *lăieşi* live at the end of the street and on the garbage field. However, this is not an absolute rule, but rather a tendency, and there are some households breaking this pattern.

The study approach

According to George McCall (2006, 3), what is characteristic to the fieldwork approach is *reflexiveness* – "the inclusion of the subject observer in the subject matter itself". Unlike natural sciences, where the observer cannot include him/herself in the study of plants and rocks, in social sciences, the observer is very much part of the reality being interpreted. Ruth Behar (1996) also encourages the beginning anthropologist to let the personal into the research. Instead of aiming for a false objectivity, which is artificial and impossible, you should reflect upon the way in which you are modeling your fieldwork, and the way it models you. This is what makes each fieldwork approach unique.

Being among the people of your study offers the advantage that you can verify the information you get from interviews against what is actually happening (Sjöberg, 1991). You can observe what people say and do when they are not interviewed, and if their opinions converge with their actions. Prolonged stays in the field enable you to create bonds with the people you study, refine your conversational and participatory approaches, and adjust your understanding models (*idem*, 2011).

From this perspective, mine was not a traditional fieldwork approach, because it did not involve a prolonged stay. I used open-ended interviews to try to get more information than I could have just through participant observation. Relying on interviews is not specific to the traditional ethnographic approach. However, what is important to the fieldwork tradition is to keep an emic perspective, namely to use the categories, expressions and understanding of the people you study, instead of your own (*ibidem*).

Thick description

According to Clifford Geertz (1973), doing ethnography is doing *thick descriptions* of the realities studied. He borrowed the concept from the British philosopher Gilbert Riley, and explains it by contrasting it to *thin descriptions*. Take, for instance, the event of a boy winking. A thin description would be to simply state that the person winked. A thick description is that he was "practicing a burlesque of a friend faking a wink to deceive an innocent into thinking a conspiracy is in motion" (Geertz, 1973, 7). Ethnography lies somewhere between the two: "a stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures in terms of which twitches, winks, fake-winks,

parodies, rehearsals of parodies are produced, perceived, and interpreted, and without which they would not […] in fact exist, no matter what anyone did with their eyelids." (*ibidem*)

In Geertz's terms, what I am calling "data" is in fact my constructions of the Roma's constructions of what they and their peers were up to. Analyzing it is trying to sort out all the structures of signification that are piling up over every action.

Participant observation

Wilhelm Dilthey (1914, *apud* Clifford, 1988, 130) notes that "understanding others initially arises from the mere fact of coexistence in a shared world". With this in mind, I relied a lot on participant observation, although it is questionable whether I and the people in the village could have had a "shared world". But I did spend most of my time among them, trying to get involved in their daily activities. I helped with the cooking and laundry, played with the children, attended their religious ceremonies and joined them visiting their friends.

The fact that we had a common language for communicating (Romanian) helped a lot with the 'getting in' process (although they sometimes used Romani to speak to each other, which I do not understand). It was not always me observing them, but also the other way around. They asked questions about life in Sweden and my personal situation: why did I leave, how do I manage to make a living, or when do I plan to get married. The fifteen-sixteen-year-olds treated me as a new friend: they borrowed me 'gypsy clothes', we played cards together and had small parties in the evenings. The women treated me somewhat as their daughter, worrying about my safety and giving me all sorts of advice, from how to cook a good meal to how to choose a good husband. I was definitely not one of them, but, despite my unusual presence in their life, they did find a way to fit me in.

Open-ended interviews

A large part of my empirical material comes from unstructured interviews with both Roma people in the community, and some "significant others". The way I conducted the interview varied upon the social situation. It was not always possible to create a real interview situation, follow a discussion plan, or use a tape recorder. Many people were reluctant to being recorded, and would even object to note-taking. At times, I took advantage of informal conversations to get answers to questions I had in mind.

The first interviews were with school teachers and the school counselor, a man of Roma ethnie whose main responsibility was to mediate the relationship between the school and the parents. Then, I interviewed people living in the community, most of who were of Roma ethnie. Towards the end of my stay, I had discussions with the mayor, and another City Hall employee working on Roma issues. The last interview was with a counselor working at the county's prison, which was where most of the convicted members of the community served their sentence.

Content analysis: essays and drawings

During my first week in the community, I spent time at the local school, talking to teachers and children. I asked the children to draw pictures and write short essays about how they wanted their future to be like. Small children made drawings of their families, and how they wanted their life to look life when they grew up. Older ones wrote about their dreams and plans. When writing about the life of the children, I will rely on these drawings and essays, on discussions with the adults and on the observations I have made.

Getting in: gatekeepers, informants and limitations

Communities have symbolic borders to separate between members and outsiders. John Armstrong (1982, *apud* Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993) speaks about "border guards", markers that a collectivity uses to draw the line between the *us* and the *them*. Some of their members act as gatekeepers, guarding these borders and negotiating access to the community.

The first few times I went to the village, and to some extent throughout the whole stay, I had the heavy sensation that everyone was a gatekeeper. They all knew each other and any intruder would be spotted immediately. Even small children would carefully examine me whenever I passed by. All members of the community were Roma, with the few exceptions of interethnic marriages. Appearance, clothes, manner of speaking and behaving, and the simple fact that people did not know me worked as border guards. One other "guard" keeping intruders out was the perceived danger factor: no outsider would dare to enter that part of the village once it got dark. Then, the streets were filled with wild dogs, which could be quite aggressive towards unfamiliar faces.

At first glance, it seemed almost impossible for me to gain access to the community. Yet with a little help, I slowly managed to get in. Early into the fieldwork, I met two people who acted as

'informants', getting me more acquainted to the community and facilitating my access. During my first day in the field, I did not know where to go so I decided to start with a trip to the local school. There, I met a few teachers, and a man of Roma ethnie who was working as school counselor. He was in charge of mediating the relationship between Roma parents and the school, and he spent most of his working hours taking trips to and from the community. He told me about the community, the people in general, their material situation, and the ethnic subgroups. The second day, he let me follow him on one of his trips, and introduced me to some people. He also helped me get in touch with a City Hall employee working on Roma issues, who was his cousin.

The second informant was a non-Roma man who lived in the same village, though outside of the Roma neighborhood. I met him outside the community, through a common acquaintance. People in the community knew him because he served as cook at weddings, and he had very good relations with them. He introduced me to many people, including the Roma family I stayed with. The third day of fieldwork, I went with him to the village and visited a Roma family he was friends with. They were more than welcoming and invited me to visit them whenever I wanted, and even stay there for a few nights. After that, my situation became much easier. The family had seven children, who were always happy to accompany me in my trips through the village. Everyone was less suspicious when they saw me with them.

One inherent limitation of my study is related to the language. Even though people were kind enough to speak Romanian in my presence most of the time, they sometimes spoke Romani to each other. I wish I knew what those conversations were about. Many of the difficulties I have encountered came from the fact that I was a *gadji*. There are tensions between the Roma and the non-Roma in Romania. During my first visits to the village, some people were hostile and suspicious about my intentions. Some thought that I would sell pictures and stories about them for large amounts of money. Others believed that I was going to give information to the police, or that I work for a TV channel and will make them look bad.

An intersectional framework

For a long time, racism, sexism and class relations have been analyzed separately, within the disciplinary boundaries of social stratification theory, racial and ethnic studies, or feminist studies. However, the daily realities of many people are positioned at the intersection of multiple

systems of oppression. The experiences of a black woman, for instance, cannot be understood by referring to either her gender identity or her ethnic identity.

In the introduction to her book, *And Ain't I a Woman,* bell hooks (1981), a Black feminist scholar, criticizes the common metaphor used by many feminists at that time, that women are the Blacks of the human race. "This implies", she argued, "that all women are White and all Blacks are men." (hooks, 1981, *apud* Yuval-Davis, 2006, 193). Since then, many feminists and social scientists have tried deconstructing both 'women' and 'Blacks' as analytical categories, and focus on social divisions imposed by race, gender, class and other relations. However, the methodology of such intersectional studies is still under debate.

Kimberle Crenshaw, the Black feminist scholar who first used the concept of "intersectionality" in an article from 1989, brings a strong argument against trying to analyze different system of oppressions separately. Talking about violence against women of color, she says: "[...] these experiences tend not to be represented within the discourses of either feminism or anti-racism. Because of their intersectional identity as both women *and* of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one *or* the other, women of color are marginalized within both." (Crenshaw, 1991, 1243-1244) Indeed, many people find themselves at the intersection of multiple systems of oppression (especially since some dimensions tend to be empirically associated, such as an ethnic other and being poor).

If discourses focusing on antiracism, gender or class relations are all reductionist, what would be a proper framework for analyzing the lives of these people? The first model developed to analyze what was later termed "intersectionality" was that of "triple oppression". British Black feminists adopted this term in the '80s, to express how black women suffer from three forms of discrimination/oppression: as women, as Blacks, and as working-class members. Anthias Yuval-Davis (2006) argues against this additive way of looking at the phenomenon. She claims that there is no such thing of being oppressed 'as Black', 'as a woman', and as 'working-class'. Being oppressed as a Black will always be intertwined and intermeshed with other social divisions. By essentializing racism against 'womanhood' or 'Blackness', one constructs hegemonic categories which leave out the experiences of more marginal members. Instead, the researcher should focus on the interplay between various forms of social divisions.

Which social divisions are to be included in this analysis? Gender, race and class have traditionally been the divisions embraced by most researchers, regardless of whether or not they adhered to the "triple oppression" model (Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, other researchers (Bradley, 1996; Meekosha and Doose, 1997; Lentin, 1999; Helma Lutz, 2002) have added other dimensions, included, but not limited to, age, disability, sedentarism, sexuality, culture, ability, religion and wealth. The list is possibly unlimited and, although race, gender and class may be the most relevant to the majority of people, other divisions may be crucial to some people. The answer as to which to include may lie in what Cornelius Castoriadis (1987, *apud* Yuval-Davis, 2006) calls the "creative imagination" underlying all social categories of signification. The construction of categories is, ultimately, a product of human freedom and autonomy.

For my own analytical framework, I have picked ethnicity, gender, class and age, as the most important social lines shaping the experiences of the Roma in the community. However, I am aware that the list is not exhaustive, and that in specific instances there may be other power divisions which are just as or even more relevant. The important thing is to not fall into a reductionist perspective, and to not treat the experiences of the people I have encountered as a product of their ethnicity alone.

Situated knowledge

It is, however, not only the people of my study that occupy certain positions within a web of social divisions; it is also myself. Ian Cook *et al.*(2005, 16) write that "academic and other knowledges are always *situated*, always produced by *positioned* actors working in/between all kinds of locations, working up/on/through all kinds of research relations(hips)". But academic writings are often linear, straightforward, claiming objectivity – rendering invisible this relational process of obtaining knowledge.

Donna Haraway (1988) argues against the "god trick", the view from above, and the claim for omniscience that has been prevailing western-produced knowledge. Instead, she argues for a knowing self that is always partial, "stitched together imperfectly", and thus, having the ability to join together with other selves, and see from their viewpoint, without claiming identity.

Feminist ethnographers in general emphasize the importance of stating how the researcher's social position shapes the research questions and analysis. Without a conscious reflection upon one's own situatedeness, the ethnographer will inevitably reproduce the dominant race, gender

and class discourse (Nagar, 2007). With this in mind, I would like to reflect upon my own positioning in relation to the people of my study.

My first identity in the eyes of the Roma in the village was that of a *gadji*. In other words, I was not a Roma, which automatically means that I belong to the *other* group. The dominant group, that shared all of those prejudices about the Roma discussed earlier, that almost never engaged into any "unnecessary" interactions with them, that pushed them to the margins of the society, and would have gladly pushed them beyond these margins if it were possible (see *Social cohesion and interethnic climate surveys*, 2006 and 2008, discussed earlier). This piece of information would inevitably linger in the background, framing people's narratives. They would tell me those things that they considered that I, as a *gadji*, should know.

What perhaps helped invert the power relation was the tacit assumption that I needed their help: I was searching for knowledge in areas where they had plenty. My female gender, seeming youth, and being there alone, further eased the power imbalance and made them temporarily assume a dominant position. The community had never had a researcher visiting them before. In lack of any other role that they could assign me to, the family I stayed with placed me in the same category as their older children.

The identity I myself assumed in relation to the Roma was in turn modeled by my upbringing in an ethnically segregated culture, the later acknowledgement of the injustices and by mixed feelings of guilt and shame. It was also shaped by my life experience in general, and my academic background. But, as Donna Haraway (1988) argues, one can maintain a partial self, which allows "borrowing" the vision of another, the subject position.

My situatedness across axes of ethnicity, gender, age and class also framed the knowledge I was able to get. It was a determinant variable in the way people spoke to me and the things they told. In the eyes of older men, I had a low, child-like status. When they spoke to me, they did it in a paternalistic way, rather than through heart-to-heart conversations. Most of the identity narratives came from women. Being placed into the child category made me spent a lot of time among children, which inspired me for the last part of the research.

Questions of research ethics

Researching human subjects comes with a lot of questions about the boundaries of your inquiries. The final purpose of all research should be the production of knowledge, but this is not to say that it should be pursued at all costs (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Most questions about the ethics of fieldwork pertain social research in general, while a few are particular. They are related to informed consent, harm, privacy, exploitation, and consequences for future research (*ibidem*). I will take up some of these questions as I find them relevant for my own research approach.

Not harming the research participants

Fieldwork can harm the people studied by provoking stress, anxiety, and embarrassment, or simply by disrupting their daily routines. Researching stigmatized groups is even more sensitive to these issues. It is also possible that the participants will form close bonds with the researcher, and experience loss once the study is completed (Cassell, 1978, 1979; Patai, 1991; Stacey, 1991 *apud* Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). Conversations recounting negative experiences can harm subjects by shifting their focus towards things that they perhaps do not want to remember.

The people of my study are very vulnerable to all of these potential harms. First of all, the existing tensions between ethnicities make it very stressful for them to have a non-Roma intruder into their lives. The negative stereotypes about the Roma, which the Roma themselves are undoubtedly aware of, is a constant source of embarrassment, stress and frustration. Adding to that are poverty and precarious living arrangements. I have tried my best to show how very happy and grateful I was for everything that they were sharing with me. In the end, I had the feeling that we created meaningful relationships, and that they were happy to have me there. However, I cannot tell if these positive feelings do counterbalance all the anxiety and stress that were so evident in the beginning.

Yet another question is how the published text will be used and by whom. Burgess (1985, *apud* Atkinson & Hammerly, 2007) notes that ethnographic studies can sometimes uncover adaptive processes that actors engage in response to structural and institutional pressure. This knowledge can provide powerful actors with tools to manipulate the people studied. The Roma in the

community shared their stories in good will, perhaps with a pale hope that, on the long run, it can contribute to improving their lives. Should I try to publish my research in a Romanian journal, I have to consider all the potential ways in which the information they revealed can be used.

Striving for anonymity

The information in the written text can be used against the people studied in more direct ways too. Some of their activities may actually be illegal, and the possibility to identify them can bring upon a lot of problems. For instance, dumpster diving is a small crime in Romania. Many of the people in the village use it as a source of income, collecting plastic bottles and then selling them. It may be exaggerated to assume that anyone would bother to dig into fieldwork studies for such minor crimes, but one should not assume risks in the name of others.

Making every effort to achieve anonymity, or at least make the subjects hard to identify, is essential. In this direction, I have used pseudonyms instead of real names, and have spared the reader of what I thought of as unnecessary details, such as the name of the village where I have conducted the study, names of institutions etc.

The experience of being written about

Being written about can be a source of distress in itself. Josselson (1996) writes:

> I worry intensely about how people will feel about what I write about them. I worry about the experience of being "writ down", fixed in print, formulated, summed up, encapsulated in language, reduced in some way to what the words contain. Language can never contain a whole person, so every act of writing a person's life is inevitably a violation.
>
> (Josselson, 1996, 60)

What you write, and what you choose to leave out, may be emotionally scarring for the people you are studying. Even when you manage to ensure anonymity, they will still recognize themselves, and each other, in the stories, so even though they are not publicly humiliated, they can still experience shame on a personal level or inside the community. Published texts, even when they are silent about individual identities, can still humiliate them as a group.

All of these questions have bothered me before and during my fieldwork, and I have still not managed to come to terms with them. Your way of de-constructing and re-constructing other

people's experiences, of fitting their realities into your research frame, of sorting out your field notes and cherry-picking your topics, can be trivializing and objectifying. The people of your study may or may not have the chance to read the material before it is published. In my case, they did not – I only finished writing long after I had left the field, directly in English, and did not have the time resources to translate it before handing it in. What I might misinterpret and misrepresent are, for the Roma in the community, sensitive and painful issues. I always tried to contrast my interpretations against their stories, and "borrow their vision" (Haraway, 1988). But in the end, the written material has many layers of interpretation and re-interpretation, filtered by my own experiences and the theories I have used.

Openness and power relations

Traditionally, discussions about openness have been focused on what the researcher tells the participants about the research *per se*. It is argued that participants should "consent to being researched in an unconstrained way, making their decision on the basis of comprehensive and accurate information about it; and they should be free to withdraw at any time" (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007, 210). Leaving covert participant observation aside, it is still difficult to get this form of consent from *everyone* you are observing. Further complications arise when research objectives change along the way, so that the terms that the participants have agreed upon are now changed. About a week into the fieldwork, my research objectives had started to blur out. I decided to be open about my confusion, and told people that I am happy with whatever they were willing to share. Later on, when new themes started getting contour, I started most conversations with an introduction about what I wanted to do. However, not everyone was interested in the details of my research, and I felt that I should not force all this information upon them. Therefore, it is questionable whether or not I respected the principle of informed consent. There is also the problem of how you obtain informed consent from children.

Recent discussions within feminist and post-colonial ethnography take up a new perspective on the openness issue (Murphy & Dingwall, 2001). Openness is not just about the research objectives, but also about what you, as a researcher, choose to disclose about yourself. Several anthropologists (Blackwood, 1995; Wolf, 1996) confessed their unease about having kept secrets about their personal lives, or even lied, while in the same time hoping for honesty and frankness

from their subjects. This establishes a power imbalance between the anthropologist and the people studied. While I tried to answer all questions honestly, I am aware that it is inevitable to employ some impression management, especially when you are striving for acceptance. I was, for instance, elliptic about my plans for the future, and certain details of my life that I feared they would disapprove of, and put an insurmountable distance between us.

Theoretical framework

This chapter is divided into four parts. In the first part, I look at some theories about ethnic identification, boundaries and solidarity. This discussion helps me analyze the tensions between the subjects' self-identification and outside labels. The distinction between ethnic affiliation and ethnic solidarity (understood as commitment to members of the same ethnic group) is also relevant. The next part discusses theories of exclusion and racism. The Roma are playing the role of 'the other' in the Romanian society: they are seen as a different breed of people, recognizable through real or made-up physical traits, and in the impossibility of undoing their ethnic belonging. Therefore, this theoretical discussion is relevant for understanding their situation as an ethnic minority, and as a basis for depicting their responses to these exclusion practices. In the third part, I look at the mirror picture: the way stigmatized and marginalized groups relate to the majority, and how they manage their "spoiled identity" (Goffman, 1963). In the fourth and final part, I discuss social theories of, which serve as a framework for analyzing the Roma outlook on life and dreams for the future.

A sense of belonging: ethnic identification, boundaries and solidarity

What does it mean to belong to a certain ethnic group? Is ethnicity something stable and unproblematic, or rather a continuous negotiation between one's own sense of belongingness and the ethnic labels one has the liberty to choose from? One can identify with a certain ethnic group, but be labeled differently by others. In addition, both one's own identification and how one is labeled are fluid and situational. Frederic Barth (1968, *apud* Nagel, 1994) was the first to bring convincing arguments that ethnic affiliation is not given, but a dialectic process of labeling, both by oneself and others. Ethnic identity is thus not stable but mutable: both self-identification and

outside labeling change upon situation and audience. Thus, an individual carries a "portfolio" of identities to choose from.

While agreeing to this view, Joane Nagel (1994, 156) further notes that this should not be read as "emphasizing agency at the expense of structure". There are, indeed, several ethnic identities to choose from; but the choices are limited, and they are not the same for everyone. For example, White Americans have a very wide selection due to their mixed heritage. The same is not true about Black Americans: while they can make intra-racial distinctions based on skin tone or ancestry, nothing will be strong enough to transcend the inter-racial black/white boundary. In other words, there are always external ascriptions which limit the choice of ethnic identities that an individual may have.

Frederic Barth (1969) argues against the common assumption dominating anthropological studies, that maintaining ethnic boundaries is unproblematic and follows from the isolation created by cultural difference, language barriers and so forth. Nor does he agree with the assumption that each ethnic group develops its culture and social organization in isolation, through local ecological adaption and only selective borrowing. This would involve some sort of historical continuity and geographical location, which may or may not be the case. In his view, an ascribed category constitutes an ethnic identity if "it classifies a person in terms of his most general, identity, presumably determined by his origin and background." (1969, 13) When actors use this ethnic identity in interaction, to classify themselves and others, then they constitute an ethnic group.

Ronald Cohen (1978) agrees with Barth in the fact that ethnicity lies in the subjective process of identifying oneself as a member of an ethnic group, and using this ethnic label when interacting with others. However, what he regards as problematic in Barth's view is that it assumes stable, continuing ethnic boundaries, when in fact they are situational. Thus, "group A can be labeled A in relation to B, C, and D. But among themselves, A people are keenly aware of subgroup differences" (Cohen, 1978, 389). The Roma are simply Roma in the eyes of most other Europeans. However, in terms of self-affiliation, there are many different subgroups, with very clear borders between them.

There has been a dominating view in sociological thought that, in modern societies which are characterized by culturally-heterogeneous populations, the importance of ethnic divisions will

decrease. Paradoxically though, many societies such as Great Britain, France, or Belgium, have seen a resurrection of ethnic solidarity (Nielsen, 1985). To explain this counter-tendency, Michael Hetcher (1975, *apud* Nielsen, 1985) proposes a reactive-ethnicity model. In this view, ethnic solidarity is a reaction from marginalized groups that are discriminated against on the basis of cultural lines. Thus, when "individuals are assigned to specific types of occupations and other social roles on the basis of observable cultural traits and markers" (Hetcher, 1974, *apud* Nielsen, 1985, 133), reactive solidarity occurs, reinforcing ethnic borders and solidarity.

But is common ethnicity enough of a requisite for real solidarity? Romanian anthropologist Liana Grancea (2010) problematizes ethnic solidarity as something not given, but achieved through interaction. Thus, her study shows that individuals may not be "willing to make commitments to other members of the group on the basis of common membership alone" (Tilly, 1973, *apud* Grancea, 2010, 163). She draws on Brubaker's (2002) approach on ethnicity that distinguishes between categories and groups, and on Weber's (1972) observation that common ethnicity may facilitate group formation, but does not constitute a group in itself. Individuals who share the same ethnicity may or may not form a group and manifest group solidarity. There are political, cultural, social and psychological factors that obstruct the way from common ethnicity to group formation.

Playing the other: theories of social exclusion

Exclusion starts with the construction of a group of people as 'the Other' of the society. The concept has been borrowed from philosophy and psychoanalysis, and has been extensively employed in feminist and post-colonial theory to explain stigmatization and exclusion. Gail Lewis' (2000), for example, borrows two key points from psychoanalysis: first, that the self is constituted relationally, in opposition to the other; second, that as the self contains in itself both sameness and difference, its integrity is dependent upon perpetual assimilation and rejection processes. This constitution and maintenance of the Self in opposition to the Other has correspondence at macro level. The image of the Other is essential to collective identity formation, "to practices of admittance and separation that sustain national boundaries and exclude the ones who are different from *us*" (Lewis, 2000, 57).

The Other is, however, not a fixed category, but a dynamic one, often containing contradictory perceptions. Borders can shift to let someone in and continue to keep others on the outside,

depending on the social context. For instance, members of an ethnic minority can be Others when inside the country, but assume national identity if they immigrate. Political aims can also work to temporarily or permanently include Others in the mainstream society. In Romanian villages with a large number of Roma, these changes can be noted during election campaigns. City Hall candidates need the votes of the Roma, so they are trying to make them feel included. For a limited period of time and in a certain sense, they become part of the village community.

The Other does not always have to be a disempowered minority. There are situations when the Other is a cultural innovator, or an agent of change. From a non-westocentric perspective, the Other or the Stranger can also be the conqueror, the colonizer – in a minority position relative to the indigenous population, but by no means disempowered. The majority population can also become the Other, in the eyes of a large minority. However, the only case that will take up here is the one of ethnic minorities, constructed as Others and in a position of disempowerment relative to the majority population. This position makes them vulnerable to different forms of racism.

Defining racism is very problematic, especially given the conflicting views among social scientists in the category of "race". Thus, some scholars (Barton, 1987; Miles, 1989) reject it as an analytical category altogether. Robert Miles (1989) prefers using the term "racialization", to refer to the structuring of human relations upon perceived biological differences, on the basis of which the people possessing them are designated as belonging to a differentiated collectivity. Moreover, the concept of "racialization" is considered useful for explaining how the idea of race has been constituted and transformed. Racism occurs when these constructed racial categories are invested with negative valuation.

Robert Miles' (1989) position on exclusion and racism is a critique towards previous racism theories, which inflate the concept and oversimplify the black-white power imbalance. Firstly, most theories assume a homogeneous, empowered 'white' population, who discriminates against and equally homogeneous, subordinated 'black' population. All whites have higher social status than all blacks. Moreover, racism is a 'disease' that all whites have, and is "perpetuated by Whites through their conscious and/or unconscious support of a culture and institutions that are founded on racist policies and practices." (Katz, 1978, *apud* Miles, 1989, 56) This argument implies that every act a white person does to maintain the status-quo is inherently racist. By

simply stating that racism is the Whites' domination over Blacks, a complex system of class/race/sex variables is ignored. Moreover, groups that are not defined as Blacks, such as Asians or the European Others, are excluded from the analysis.

Although arguing that it is not all about the white-black dichotomy, Miles' conceptualization accepts that racism emerges from a made-up racial hierarchy, in which one 'race' is better than another. He does not include, as Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis (1992) point out, the experiences of migrant or ethnic groups, who are not constructed as a race. Their own view is that racism does not have to rely on processes of racialization: it can include all "undesirable" groups, be it on the basis of ethnicity, culture, or "racial" stock. I find this way of defining racism more useful for my research purposes, because the labels attributed to the Roma are mixed and confusing. People sometimes refer to them as a different "race", and other times as an inferior ethnicity or a backwards culture. The main point is that they are constructed as a distinct category of people, which they are born into and they cannot transgress. People do not know whether they are basing this construction on cultural, ethnic, or so-called racial differences. It is, therefore, artificial to draw lines where they do not exist in reality.

Although racism does not have to include 'race', it is still interesting to note that "every racist construction has at least some dimension of a mythical embodiment of the *other*" (Yuval-Davis, 1997, 59). Any body part can act as a signifier. For example, in a 1920 anti-Semitic poster in the US, titled *How Can We Identify Him?,* the body parts that are mentioned are the 'Jewish nose', but also 'Jewish elbows and knees' (*ibidem*). This naturalization of difference has led to the creation of mythical races, like 'red', 'yellow', 'white' and 'black'. The white/black dichotomy is particularly striking, as Western societies have traditionally associated white with purity, virtue and other such qualities, and black with evil. As Henri Tajfel (1965, *apud* Yuval-Davis, 1997, 49) points out, "Black and White, which represent so crudely the differences between groups of human beings – are used to symbolize distinctions between vice and virtue, hell and heaven, devils and angels, contamination and purity."

Some scholars have also addressed the relationship between nationalism and racism. Benedict R. Anderson (1983) speaks about nations as "imagined communities", in the sense that people assume a sense of communality, some kind of shared essence, but not all members can interact with each other. In fact, he says that most communities, not only nations, are imagined. Both

Miles (1989) and Yuval-Davis (1997) agree that there are many similarities between national and ethnic communities. Both are 'imagined', in Andersonian terms, because members have a sense of belongingness, but not all of them can interact with each other. The difference is that national communities also claimed sovereignty within the state's borders, while ethnic communities do not always do so.

National imagined communities can be connected to racism through rules about belongingness and how to treat the outsiders. Thus, as Yuval-Davis (1997) explains, the image of the 'others' and rules on how to treat them are to be found in cultural traditions, collective memories, and common sense. When the others are a disempowered minority, othering often turns into racism. In addition, some nationalist projects, such as the "ethnic-genealogical type" mentioned by Anthony Smith (1971, 1986, *apud* Yuval-Davis, 1997) have "ethnic purity" as a central element in the discourse against inter-racial contact. One can recognize such discursive elements in naïve theories about "tainting your blood" or "becoming less Romanian" in case of inter-ethnic marriage or even couple relations with a Roma person.

The mirror-picture: how stigmatized groups manage their "spoiled identity"

For the purposes of this research, more important than how racism emerges are the manners in which the stigmatized cope with it. On one hand, racist encounters are personal experiences – they can happen at school, when looking for a job, or when going into town. They are something one often faces alone, and has to find own ways to deal with. The fear of such encounters is also something that stigmatized individuals have to incorporate in their daily lives. On the other hand, members of ethnic minorities are discriminated on the basis of being ascribed to a certain social category, rather than on personal characteristics. They respond to these practices not only as individuals, but also as a group.

Individual coping strategies

Theories about individual responses define exposure to racism as a form of stress. Carol T. Miller and Cheryl L. Kaiser (2001) note that stigma can be especially stressful because it poses some unique demands on the individual, which non-stigmatized people do not face. Sometimes, it is not restrained to a certain domain, but spills over and becomes a "master status" – the person is being identified with the stigma. For instance, a cripple is a cripple in the eyes of others,

before anything else. Moreover, prejudice and discrimination are things that non-stigmatized people almost never have to face. Other stressors, such as unfair treatment for employers, lower access to education, or poor health, makes the lives of stigmatized people more stressful in general.

Since stigmatization was defined as a form of stress, Miller & Kaiser (2001) deduced coping strategies from coping with stress in general. They have used the model designed by Bruce E. Compas *et. al.* (2001), which synthesizes all coping dimensions from previous research about stress, and is empirically supported. They classify coping responses in voluntary and involuntary, and both types can be engaged and disengaged. These four categories (voluntary engaged, voluntary disengaged, involuntary engaged, involuntary disengaged) then have further ramifications. Without going through the whole classification, I will just note some examples which may be relevant for the case of stigmatized ethnic minorities.

One of these strategies is denial or withdrawal, which Miller & Kaiser (2001) classify as a voluntary disengaged strategy. Members of an ethnic minority could, for example, deny the fact that they are discriminated against even when it is obvious. They could also avoid comparing themselves to the unfairly advantaged groups by withdrawing socially. They can isolate themselves among people of their own kind, where they can feel normal.

More engaged strategies, but still without actually trying to change the situation, are distraction, cognitive restructuring and acceptance (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). In stress coping theory, distraction means shifting the focus away from the stressor. Imagine someone walks into a shop, and the clerk immediately starts following him around, thinking he is going to steal. He knows that this is a common prejudice against his ethnic group, but as a coping strategy, he deliberately disregards it and focuses on something else. In time, distraction can be involuntary (Miller & Kaiser, 2001). By repetitively practicing changing focus from disturbing thoughts, people can learn to screen them out before they even notice them at a conscious level. Cognitive restructuring (Miller & Kaiser, 2001), often used in psychotherapy, involves reframing the thoughts about the situation. The “Black is Beautiful” movement that began in the US in the ‘60s could be an example of such restructuring. In this case, cognitive restructuring is targeted at the stigmatizing notion that physical features of black people are inherently ugly.

Stigmatized individuals may also try to reduce stress through problem solving, emotion regulation and expression, which Miller & Kaiser (2001) classify as voluntary control strategies. A member of a stigmatized ethnic group may try to be recognized for something else other than his ethnicity. He may try to develop skills that compensate or take focus away from the stigma. Regulating emotional expression is also an important strategy. Anxiety and anger triggered by a racist encounter could paralyze an individual and make it impossible for him to act in a non-stereotypical away. He may actively try to control his emotional responses in order to avoid that.

What seems to be missing from this model is how the life of the stigmatized is affected not just by manifest racism, but also by the expectancy of such encounters. The fear of facing prejudice may determine them to narrow their lives in order to avoid it. It is what Erving Goffman (1963) talks about in his essay about stigma: the ways in which the "discredited" manage their "spoiled identity". Cripples, blind, ethnic minorities, homosexuals, have all something in common – they all wear the stigma, some in more visible ways than others. In fact, even the rest of us, the so-called "normals", are not too far off: we are all stigmatized in one way or another. The strategies that the more severely stigmatized employ to cope with the stigma, are nothing but exaggerations of everyone else's efforts to hide their flaws.

The stigma is, in Goffman's terms, the possession of a characteristic that causes an individual to be placed by others in a "discredited" social category. There are different types of stigma: some people are stigmatized on the basis of some physical characteristics, others because of something they have done, and others on belongingness to a certain ethnic group. The "normals" use hints or *stigma symbols* to recognize the stigmatized (e.g. skin color, a physical handicap, clothes, manner of speaking). Depending on how visible these are, the latter may try to conceal them or develop counter-symbols. For instance, someone with an immigrant background may not reveal this specific information to everyone, and try to be recognized for other qualities instead. This way, they can *pass* for normal. However, unlike most other people, they always have to be aware and manage the social information about the stigma.

The stigmatized, however, think of themselves as normal people. A lot of torment comes from the inadvertency between their self-image and the way society sees them. Goffman (1963) says that they will employ various strategies to be perceived as normal. If the stigma symbols are impossible to conceal, they may try to find refuge in groups of equally stigmatized persons, or

sometimes even more stigmatized. For example, someone with very poor vision may feel normal among blind people.

Group responses

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) states that, when acting in group situations, people define themselves in terms of group membership rather than personal identity. Therefore, they want their group identity to be positively valued.

Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner (1986), the authors of the social identity theory, claim that all interactions occur on a continuum between two extremes: the first one is when two people interact based solely on their pure personal characteristics; the second is when they interact only as members of groups. These situations are probably never present in their purest form, but when the interaction takes place closer to the second, it is group identity that is prevalent. What happens, then, to members of those groups who are devalued, such as Blacks and Latinos in the US, or Jews in some European countries?

The main strategy groups identified by the social identity theory include: (a) individual mobility; (b) social creativity; and (c) social competition. The first one is a strictly individualistic approach, where the person tries to detach their own identity from the group identity. Tajfel & Turner (1986) claim that individuals are likely to employ this strategy if they perceive "high permeability" into some higher status group. Other authors, such as Nyla R. Branscome & Naomi Ellemers (1998), note that a history of strong identification with the group also plays an important part. In other words, people may be loyal to a disadvantaged group regardless of whether or not they believe they can integrate in a higher status one. At the other end, social competition is pursued by high identifiers (people who identify strongly with the group), and is directed at improving social identity – gaining a better status for the group.

Social creativity can be both individualistic and group-oriented. Several researchers (cf. Lemaine, 1974; Mummendey & Schreiber, 1983; 1984; Mummendey & Simon, 1989; Spears & Manstead, 1989; Van Knippenberg, 1989, *apud* Branscome & Ellemers, 1998) have found that members of devalued groups, while acknowledging the superior performance of comparably higher-status groups on given dimensions, they simultaneously favor their own group on other dimensions. By focusing on the latter, they maintain the belief that their group is different from others in a valuable way. This would be a type of social creativity focused on group identity, and

not personal. One other strategy is to compare oneself with more disadvantaged members of the in-group and avoid out-group comparisons. This way, the individual can maintain high self-esteem by focusing on the fact that he performs better than his in-group peers. This is a rather individualistic approach.

Branscome & Ellemers (1998) also note that the experience of racist acts can be quite different for low versus high identifiers. Thus, people focused on maintaining group identity will be outraged because they will believe it is unfair that their group is being devalued. Low-identifiers, who are trying to distance their identity from the group identity, will think it is unfair that they are "placed in the same pot" with everyone else from the group.

Michel Foucault talks about how stigmatized groups are being excluded through what he calls "the gaze" (Foucault, 1975). It is a system of power relations, through which groups considered dangerous, such as the mentally ill or demonized minorities, are induced the idea that they are permanently under surveillance. This makes them censor their behavior, even if they are not exactly aware of whom it is that is watching them. Perceived difference relative to the majority group, as well as awareness of one's own vulnerability, creates spatial and social boundaries. The gaze makes the people under watch seek invisibility, limit their mobility and censor their social relations.

Related to finding refuge in one's own ethnic group, Nira Yuval-Davis (1997, 48) notes that disempowered minorities "have to develop strategies of survival and boundary management". These can often include mirror constructions of exclusion and demonization of the majority group. One form of responding to racism that minorities often embrace is trying to build their own world and live in relative isolation from the majority. This is something that Erving Goffman (1963) also talks about when saying that stigmatized individuals sometimes try to find refuge in groups of equally stigmatized. In case of ethnic minorities, being exposed to the same kind of racism can work to reinforce ethnic identity. Myths of common origin and destiny, rules about who belongs and who does not, and interdiction of interethnic marriages, all play crucial roles in reinforcing boundaries.

Different kinds of hope

Hope is an essential part of human existence, without which even our most worldly actions would not find reason. Complete hopelessness would leave us paralyzed in front of death. To Thomas Meisenhehelder (1982, 202), hope is what makes it possible to "disregard the human condition of ontological insecurity, and actively meet the future". As humans, we are inherently and continuously moving towards death; yet in order for us to live, death must somehow be "forgotten". It is hope that makes it possible to push death out of our awake consciousness, and actively pursue our wants and dreams.

During the last half a century since hope started to get some attention from the social sciences, a myriad of conceptualizations and theories have been developed. According to Darren Webb (2007), each of them captures part of what it means to hope, without covering the whole. That is because people hope in different ways. He organized all of the different definitions and theories into five "modes of hoping". The first two are more diffuse and open-ended, while the last three are directed towards a certain goal.

Patient hope

Patient hope is the kind that "defies any attempt to map it" and is "devoid of images" (Webb, 2007, 69). It corresponds to Gabriel Marcel's (1962) *homo viator* and his understanding of hope as something that transcends the imagination of specific goals, which would involve an illusion open to disappointment. To Marcel (1962), hoping is the diffuse disposition that everything will be alright, and the belief in the meaningfulness of the journey itself.

This kind of hope has three characteristics. The first one is basic trust, in oneself and others, and in "the goodness of the world" (Webb, 2007, 69). Secondly, this mode of hoping involves a feeling of security. Thirdly, precisely because one feels secure, one has the patience to let the events of life unfold and not intervene in changing their course. Marcel sees hope as a "non-acceptance" of the tragedies of life, which is different from revolt in that it is characterized by silence, modesty, patience, relaxation, humility and security.

For Marcel, hope is closely connected to faith in God, and is thus reserved to the believer only. Bernard Dauenhauer (1984, *apud* Webb, 2007), however, shows that the same kind of hope can also be secular, in which case the hoper does not direct its trust towards God, but towards other

human beings. The feeling itself has the same characteristics for both believers and non-religious people: it involves patience, and it is directed towards an *other*, be it God or mankind.

Critical hope

Critical hope is similar to patient hope in that it involves an "openness of the spirit with respect to the future" (Webb, 2007, 71). But as both Jürgen Moltmann (1970) and Ernst Bloch (1995) understand it, this openness does not mean that one cannot say anything about the ultimate goal. Moltmann (1970 *apud* Webb, 2007) relates hope to the promise of a better world that one finds in the resurrection of Christ. To hope is to *demand* that promise, and revolt against the suffering of the present. To Bloch (1995 *apud* Webb, 2007) too, hope lies in the unwillingness to accept the present, and it is a restless protest against the suffering. Both see hope not in positive terms, but as the "negotiation of the negative" (Moltmann, 1970 *apud* Webb, 2007, 71)

To hope is to engage with the suffering of the present, while keeping and open eye to a better future. What emerges from this kind of hope is social criticism. Hope expresses itself through passionate suffering and restlessness. To some extent, critical hope is also other-directed, as patient hope. However, it is more active and efficacious. While critique in itself does not involve any action, it is still more than humbly and patiently waiting.

Estimative hope

Sometimes, people hope for more specific things than merely a better world. Goal-directed hope is the kind that has an objective, be it more or less specific, short- or long-term. This objective is significant to the hoper and it is future oriented. What differentiates goal-directed hope from desire is that we not only create a mental image of what we want, but we also believe that this image can come true. The discussions around the nature of this belief, the expectations, and the probability, allow differentiation between three types of goal-directed hope (Webb, 2007).

Estimative hope is a combination between the desire to pursue a certain goal, and an estimation of the probability of attaining it. False hope – that where from the fervor of the desire, the hoper estimates a higher probability than they should, is a source of disappointment and frustration. Luc Bovens (1999 *apud* Webb, 2007) argues that the estimation should be based on the available evidence. Two things are taken into account: the probability of the desired outcome, and the person's control over the situation. Thus, hope is what makes us get involved in more-than-fair

gambles – those where the probability of the outcome, and our control over the situation, are both high. Fear, on the other hand, is an antidote to risk-proneness, and prevents us from pursuing less-than-fair gambles.

Resolute hope

Charles R. Snyder's (2002, 249) hope model defines it as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways." For him, the calculative aspect of estimating probabilities is of little importance. In fact, initially he only included those goals that are perceived as difficult to attain (thus low-probability outcomes) into his conceptualization of hope. Later, he concluded that all kinds of goals, easy or difficult, can trigger hopeful thinking. The person's control over the situation is also taken for granted: hopeful people are anti-determinists, and simply take control and think of pathways between current point A and desired point B.

For Snyder (2002), hope is inherently connected to action. Hopeful people are actively moving towards their goals, and they are more likely to reach even when they are difficult. False hope is conceptualized in a different way than Bovens'. It emerges from either setting the wrong kind of goals or imagining poor pathways too attain them. When facing failure, the hoper does not have to fall into despair or frustration, but designs new pathways or seeks other goals.

Utopian hope

This mode of hoping, as understood by Richard Rorty (1998 *apud* Webb, 2007), is a kind of "social hope" that defies objective evidence and dreams up the status-quo of the society. The motivation is to be found not in the evidence, but in rather in the qualities of the goal itself, in its capacity to "astonish and exhilarate" (Rorty, 1998 *apud* Webb, 2007, 77). The object of hope is a shared utopian dream of a better organization of the society. Hope is not a combination of desire plus possibility of attainment, but a utopia plus a sense of possibility derived from confidence in human agency.

This mode of hope has some resemblance to critical hope, as well as to resolute hope. As critical hope, it emerges from a frustration with the current state of affairs. However, it places confidence into people's agency in resolving human problems, something that is alien to the concept of critical hope. With resolute hope it shares the inherent connection with action – in

both, the hoper has an anti-deterministic attitude and believes in human agency. However, the resolute hoper strives towards reaching goals within the world as it currently is, while for the utopian hoper, the goal is precisely to change the structure of the society. Resolute hope is rather private, while utopian hope is collective and built around a shared dream.

Analysis

In this part of the thesis, I discuss the data collected during my fieldwork in the Roma community. The results are analyzed in relation to the theoretical framework presented earlier. The discussion is, again, divided into four sections. In the first part, I analyze the Roma's self-identification in terms of ethnic group, their sense of belonging, and possible conflicts and tensions between self-identity and outside-labeling. The second part is about subjective experiences of racism and exclusion, through the eyes of the Roma living in the village. I analyze experiences of discrimination through the framework of intersectionality. In the third part, I look at how the Roma in the community manage their 'spoiled identity': the practices they use to cope with exclusion, and how being a Roma shapes their personal identity. The last part is about the hopes and dreams that people in the community shared, most of which are projected upon the children. I also talk about how children and young people dream up their future.

The subjects I refer to in the analysis are people in the community, whom I have had long discussions throughout my stay. Before proceeding, I want to introduce them to the reader.

Dorin was one of the first people I met in the community and helped me as an informant. He was a Roma man in his fifties, living in the community together with his family. He was one of the only three people in the village that had a formal occupation: he was working as a school counselor for Roma children, and his main responsibility was to act as a mediator between the school and the parents. He did not talk much about his family, but there were rumors in the community that, while he was an honest man, his children were some of the village's worst trouble-makers.

Tizana and Dan, and their seven children were the family I stayed with. Tizana was 38 years old, while Dan was 45. Tizana was from another town, and had met Dan while he was studying there. He abandoned school and they got married and moved to the village. Both of them were unemployed, and, while I did not get any clear answer to how they made a living, I assume they were receiving some support from a religious organization they were affiliated to, plus child benefits and dumpster diving. Six of their children – Nicoleta, Sara, Timotei, Elisei, Moise and

Nicu - were living with them. The eldest boy, Marius, was 19 years old, and was living nearby with his wife, Alisa. Her parents were working in Italy, and they had helped building a house for the two of them. They were also persuading them to move to Italy. Alisa was six-month pregnant when I arrived, and they were waiting for her to give birth, and for Marius to finish school, before thinking of relocating.

Iosif was a 60-year-old man who had been living in the community for 36 years. He was not a Roma, but was forced to move there during communism, when his house was demolished and he was compensated with land in that area. He had moved there together with his wife, and they had a son together. His wife had died a year earlier. He did not speak Romani.

Viorica and Mariana were two older Roma women. Their life stories were somewhat similar. They were both recently widowed, and all of their children had emigrated abroad. They were taking care of their grandchildren, using the child benefit and the little money they made from collecting and selling plastic bottles. At the time of my visit, Mariana was very upset, because one of her sons was in jail for trying to steal old iron.

"I know, because I am a *țigan*!": ethnic identity, ethnic labels and solidarity

Frederic Barth (1968) first noted that a person's ethnicity is not an objective fact, but constructed in interaction, through a dialectic process of self- and other-labeling. One's ethnic identity is rather fluid and mutable, because both self- and other-ascribed labels change upon the situation. Rather than a fixed ethnicity, everyone carries a "portfolio" of ethnic labels.

Inside versus outside labels

The ethnic labels most commonly associated with the Roma in Romania are "Roma" and "țigan", which are both self- and other-ascribed. In addition, non-Roma use a series of pejorative terms, such as "cioară" (crow) or "ciocolată" (chocolate), in reference to the skin color. The Roma themselves prefer the label "țigan", instead of the politically-correct "Roma". Marius, a 19-year-old Roma boy living in the village, explained to me that they call themselves "țigani" because in the Romani language, the word "rom" is not an ethnic label: it simply means "man". Previous research on ethnic identification (S.P.E.R., 2009) has also revealed that the Roma do not find the "țigan" label offensive, and that it is the one they most identify with.

Other ethnic labels that the Roma use are the names of the ethnic subgroups or *neamuri*. Every Roma knows whether they are *ursar*, *căldărar*, *cortorar* or *lăieş*. Affiliation to the various *neamuri* is very important, because the laws and traditions are different. For example the *rudari* subgroup, although Roma, do not even speak the Romani language. And it is mostly the *căldărari* who wear the colorful skirts and big hats so often associated with the Roma dressing style. The people in the community belong to two different *neamuri*: *ursari* and *lăieşi.* Affiliation to one or the other is very important to them, because each of them has its own laws and rules. For instance, the *ursari* do not have any laws around clothing, but the *lăieşi* do. Married *lăieşi* women are not allowed to wear skirts that show their legs. As Cohen (1978) points out, ethnic borders are fluid and situational. Thus, group A can be labeled A in relation to B, C and D, but inside themselves, members of group A use a series of other labels marking subgroup difference. All Roma are simply "ţigani" when interacting to non-Roma, but inside their own community, they assume the label of their *neam*.

Joane Nagel (1994) speaks about how the black/white dichotomy in the United States transgresses all intra-racial differences. The differences in ethnic heritage that exist among Black people are deemed as unimportant; being Black is enough of an identity in itself. In the same way, the non-Roma Romanians are largely unaware of the different Roma ethnic groups. The only distinction they operate is *Romanians* vs. *Roma*. Although the Roma have been living in the country for many centuries, are Romanian citizens, and speak the language, they are not referred to as Romanians. The Roma people I met did not perceive themselves as Romanians either. When I first approached Otto, a Roma man in his forties working at the City Hall, he cheered: *Oh, how nice! A Romanian asking a Roma for help!* His voice showed no trace of irony or bitterness.

Formal ethnic categories are one of the powerful external forces to shape ethnic boundaries and influence ethnic identification patterns (Nagel, 1964). Government strategies, ethnicity-based resource allocation or political access can contribute to raising ethnic awareness. In Romania, the Roma usually live relatively isolated, in own communities or neighborhoods. This is not just the result of their own tendency to stick together, but has also been encouraged by government policies to "group" the Roma in their own areas as an oversimplified way of managing ethnic conflicts. Even when they are designed to help disempowered minorities, certain social policies can work on emphasizing ethnic borders. For example, the free admission of Roma students into

universities creates the perception of unfair advantage, and intensifies the hatred between the Roma and the non-Roma.

References to the idea of a "Roma nation"

As an ethnie, the Roma bare some resemblance with Benedict Anderson's notion of *imagined communities*. Although he uses it in reference to nations, its specificity lies in the fact that its members "will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." (Anderson, 1983, 6) The Roma I met often expressed such a sense of communality. For example, Tizana opened up a discussion about Roma laws with the following statement: "*We, the ţigani*, are different. Romanians are not like this." This feeling of shared identity stretched beyond the country borders. Many of the people I met wanted to know about the Roma in Sweden: how many they were, how they were treated and whether they lived a good life.

Identity narratives sometimes related to the myth of common origin and common fate. In their stories, people often referred back to the shared suffering and life struggles that the Roma have been facing. I was first introduced to the community by Dorin. At school, and during our walk through the village, he spoke a lot about the Roma history. The issue is somewhat blurry, as historians disagree upon whether all the people now labeled as Roma even have a common origin (Surdu, 2010). However, Dorin's perspective was that they originated from India, and settled in Romania much later:

> We were placed at the borders of the cities, and this is why it was difficult to get access to education. The *rudari* were placed in the center of the country, among the majority population. This is the reason why they forgot their language, and now they do not even admit that they are Roma. Life was hard, we were slaves for noblemen who sold us individually, separating us from our families.[1]

Affiliation to the ethnic subgroups ("neamuri")

While in these general, introductory discussion, Dorin referred to the Roma identity as a whole, in real life, people were very much aware of sub-group differences. As Cohen (1978) noted, whether one assumed the identity of Roma or, for instance, *lăieş*, depended on the social situation and who the interlocutor was. During my first visit, when I was a complete stranger, they spoke as if all of them shared the same ethnic identity. Similarly, when they told stories

[1] See Appendixes, Note 1, for the original quote in Romanian

about their journeys through Europe, they spoke about Roma in general. In more personal contexts, sub-group differences were very important. The different ethnic subgroups have entirely different traditions, laws and ways of life. Dorina, who was herself *ursar*, spoke in despise about *rudari*, who, in her opinion, were not real Roma because they had forgotten their language. Many of them also talked about the *căldărari* as something alien, and almost scorned their "eccentric" traditions of wearing coins in their hair, marrying children and using body mutilation as punishment for infidelity.

As I mentionned earlier, most of the people in the community were either *ursari* or *lăieşi.* Although they did have a lot of contact with each other, and no one knew of any conflict based on ethnie, there were many "markers" that they were indeed two different groups. The *ursari* lived in the downside of the community, closer to the Romanian neighborhood, in houses built along the main road. Some of the houses looked decent, and a few families were even running small local businesses such as a food shop or a café. Most of their children were enrolled in school. They did not have any specific rules about clothing. The *lăieşi* occupied the upper part of the community, and many of the houses were built on a garbage field. They dressed differently, were comparatively poorer and many of the children did not attend school. Mixed marriages between *ursari* and *lăieşi* are allowed, in which case the girl gets the husband's ethnie.

Ethnic solidarity

When it comes to emotional attachment to their ethnic identity, there are of course a lot of personal differences. Alisa is a *lăieş* who married Marius, himself *ursar*. She is 17 and her parents immigrated to Italy for work. According to the laws of the community, she is no longer obliged to follow the laws of the *lăieşi,* because she married into a different ethnie. However, she continues to wear long skirts, as all *lăieşi* married women should, and follow the rules she grew up with. Dan, Marius' father, told me he was proud to be a *ţigan*. However, there are also people who try to build their own lives, and separate themselves from the association with the ethnic group. Simona, the Romani language teacher, was such an example. Although she did not actually hide the fact that she was of Roma ethnie, she avoided mentioning it in conversations. She was 27 years old and lived with her parents just at the border between the Roma community and the Romanian neighborhood. She was not married, and dreamed about moving to another country someday. Nothing of her appearance or behavior betrayed her true ethnicity. She was

very helpful and pleasant, gave me a lot of information about the children in school, let me be present during her classes with them, and offered me a lot of material such as photo albums, books and cassettes with Roma fairy-tales. However, when I asked her about some contacts in the community, she said she no longer knew anyone there.

We should also consider the difference between emotional attachment to the ethnic group, and attachment to the label of 'Roma'. For many people, the community is where their whole life unfolds. They rarely leave the village and they have very close bonds with their neighbors. But even people with such deep roots into the Roma community may, in other situations, deny their ethnic origins. Social researchers (O'Grady & Târnovski, 1998; Gheţău, 1996) claim that about 35% of the Roma lie about their ethnic identity in situations of self-reporting, such as the population census. This is one reason why it is so hard to get reliable data about the number of Roma living in the country.

The rules of belonging

Belonging is also about "the dirty work of boundary maintenance" (Crowley, 1999, *apud* Yuval-Davis, 2006, 204), or the "specific attitudes and ideologies concerning where and how identity and categorical boundaries are being/should be drawn, in more or less exclusionary ways, in more or less permeable ways." (Yuval-Davis, 2006, 203) Ethnic categories are one of the least permeable, as belongingness is determined by birth. The Roma in the village called me, and everyone else who did not belong, *gadjo* or *gadji*, which means *stranger*. However, being a Roma is not the only credential for being a member of the community. As Tizana explained, the community laws are very strict and can decide to ban you from the village:

> This law is stronger than juridical laws. The law can kick you out of the village. Your house can be set on fire. The gypsy law, I mean. […] Our judges make a vow… When there is a trial, they make a vow, that even if you are my son, my daughter, I will make justice, because this is what the law requires me to do. The judges are old people from the village, who judge what is the truth and what is lie.[2]

You can also be excluded in less formal ways, if people feel that your behavior betrays the interests of the community. While there, I heard a lot of bad talk about a man called Răzvan, whom I never met. He was a Roma living in the village, but he was now working for the City

[2] See Appendixes, note 2, for original quote in Romanian

Hall. People in the community shared a feeling of mistrust for the local politicians, because they felt that they had been manipulated to give their votes, through a web of lies and empty promises. They also believed that the system was corrupt and only helped the ones who had social connections inside the local government. Răzvan was now on "their" side and therefore he had been informally excluded from the community.

The relation between ethnicity and solidarity

Behaving in a socially accepted way is even more important than sharing the same ethnic heritage. Non-Roma can be, in some situations, partially accepted in the community. For example, Iosif spoke warmly about how people in the community had accepted him almost immediately. He never cared to learn the language when he was young, something that he regretted now. However, people were making an effort to speak Romanian in his presence, so as to not make him feel excluded. He was, of course, not "one of them" in every sense, both because of the language barriers, and because he did not share the same traditions nor followed their laws. But he took part in social gatherings, attended the religious service with everyone else, and had friends in the village. His son, who had been born there, could speak the language and, as Iosif said, no one could tell that he was not a Roma.

Does ethnic affiliation also imply a sense of relatedness to others who share the same ethnicity? Of the three theories on ethnic solidarity presented in the theoretical chapter (Hetcher, 1974; Hannan, 1979 and Nielsen, 1985), the one by Hetcher seems to be the most suitable to explain the kind of solidarity manifested by the Roma in the community. Hetcher (1979) believes that increased ethnic solidarity is a counter-reaction to exclusion based on cultural/ethnic lines. People sympathized with other Roma, from the community and even from other parts of the world, because they perceived they were excluded in the same way, based on their ethnicity. They believed, for instance, that exclusion from the job market, or the unfair treatment that their children received in school, was directly related to their ethnic identity. As many of them had some experience of working abroad, they were aware that these discrimination patterns are maintained in other countries as well. This made them manifest a certain degree of solidarity with the Roma everywhere.

The way people in the community related to one another seemed to match Liana Grancea's (2006) observations that ethnic solidarity is not something given, but achieved through

interaction. Thus, common ethnicity set the grounds for group formation. The shared language and culture, the feeling that they had some common origins and were touched by the same fate, and even the stigma they all bared, certainly brought people together. But it was the day-to-day interactions that maintained this sense of communion. There was some kind of solidarity with the Roma in general – the questions they asked about the Roma in Sweden can serve as a proof. However, the real solidarity was based less on common ethnicity and more on pure friendship. Not caring for maintaining good relationships with your neighbors could easily exclude you from the group. This is why Iosif, who was not a Roma, was more part of the community than Răzvan.

Roma perceptions of exclusion and racism

As mentioned in the previous chapter, a lot of studies have focused on the backlash against Roma, and have identified the dominant anti-Roma attitudes and discourse. These studies have shown that, in the eyes of the majority, the Roma are the embodiment of all sorts of evil: they are dirty, thieves, lazy, anti-social, disobeying the law and making our country look bad (Lazăr *et. al*, 2008). According to the majority group, the Roma differ from the "good" Romanians not just in behavior, but are also easily recognizable by appearance, especially skin color (Bădescu *et. al*., 2007). This construction of the Roma as an essentialized category, along with the obsession to tell the world that "Romanians are not gypsies!", fit into Gail Lewis' (2000) understanding of the *Other* and the important part it plays in national identity formation. Being Romanian is, in many ways, not being a Roma.

In order to *feel* Romanian, one must also feel what it is to not be a Romanian. Moreover, this image of the non-Romanian, the one who does not belong within the national community, must be always at hand. Nira Yuval-Davis (1997) says that the image of the Others and rules about how to treat them are to be found in cultural traditions, collective memory and "common sense". The Other is constructed as a group of people coming from a different stock, and can take the form of any "odd" group of people, from immigrants to sexual minorities. A black person, a homosexual, a Muslim in a Western-European country, or just someone who speaks with a different accent, can all be Others. The Roma play this role in the Romanian society. They are, in Georg Simmel's (1908, 143) terms, "a union of closeness and remoteness" – close, because they are physically present, and remote, because they are a peculiar appearance. The way they look, dress, and behave is always constructed in opposition to the Romanian way.

As disempowered others, the Roma are victims of different forms of racism, in Anthias' Yuval-Davis' (1992) understanding of the term. Thus, while agreeing with Miles that racism is more than the black-white dichotomy, they take the concept even further and disconnect it from the idea of "race" altogether. All kinds of "undesirable" others, be it on the grounds of ethnicity, culture or "racial" stock, are victims of the same racist practices. The Romanian Roma are sometimes labeled as a different "race" of people. Non-Roma often explain negative Roma behaviors by saying that "this is their *race*". Other times, they are just referred to as a different, backwards ethnicity or culture. But regardless of whether they are constructed as a separate race or not, exclusion practices stay the same.

Experiences of "the gaze"

Michel Foucault (1975) talks about how members of stigmatized minorities censor their behavior and seek invisibility in order to escape the permanent feeling of being watched. Nomad Roma used to set camp outside town, in woods and ruins, as though afraid to go in (Barany, 2001). Indeed, traditional Romanian songs and myths also localize them at the periphery, on the outskirts of towns and villages.

On several occasions, people mentioned that they felt under surveillance all the time. They thought the police always kept an eye on them, and suspect them of crimes they did not commit. A young man told me that this happens not only in Romania, but also abroad. If there is a theft in the area, Roma people are the first suspects. Aware of their vulnerability, they had built their safe space within the borders of their community, and only left it when they were forced to. When travelling abroad for work, they also stuck together and tried to create a private, familiar space where they could escape this feeling of permanent surveillance.

Experiences of exclusion

Research studies have also shown that there is rarely any close contact between the non-Roma and the Roma. The structure of the village itself was enough of a proof. The non-Roma houses occupied one part of the village, and the Roma community another. The Roma sometimes needed to go to the other part of the village, to pick up children from school or take the bus to town. But it was very rare for a non-Roma to step into the Roma community. In fact, I have been told that even cab drivers refused to go there out of fear. The next sign of this segregation between was the local school. The school was located in the non-Roma side, and it was where all

the children aged 7-14 were automatically enrolled. There were around 50 students in the school at that time, and only one was non-Roma. Simona, the Romani language teacher, explained that the non-Roma had moved their children to other schools further away, because they did not want to mix. Recounting the story to a friend who works as a teacher in Romania, she said: "In my school, all applications from Roma children are rejected."

Anthias Yuval-Davis (1996) argued that the different systems of oppression cannot be understood in an additive way, but are always intertwined and intermeshed. The Roma people I am talking about in this paper were at the intersection of different social divisions. We cannot make sense of their subjective experiences just by looking at racism against the Roma, but also to class, gender, status and age divisions. Mariana, an old Roma woman, talked about her experience with sending the children to school:

> If I send my child to school, and another child is cleaner, and mine is dirtier, what would the other one say? Grandma, I don't want to sit next to that one anymore, he is dirty! Isn't that true? Even you would say that you no longer want to send your child to school, because Roma children are dirty and so on… And anyone would do the same when it comes to their child. So I'm not sending my child to school to have other children laugh at him. These people have no idea; they say we don't want to send them. But how could I?[3]

The school was perceived as one of the spaces where exclusion was at its best. People did not really comment upon the fact that all of the non-Roma had moved to other schools. However, parents believed that the teachers were unengaged and the children were not learning enough. When questioned, the teachers were saying that the children were impossible to work with, that they were slow and did not want to learn. All of the information I have on the matter comes from the parents and my own observations; I did not dare to ask the teachers. The truth was that, indeed, a lot of children aged 9 or 10 still did not know how to write. Whether this was because the teachers were uninterested, the children were not attending school enough, or both, I do not know.

Viorica M. also explained how it is not just about being a Roma, but also about being the poorest of the poor. She said she had seen examples of Roma children who did well in school, and you looked at them and "could not even tell that they were Roma". But these children's parents had money and could afford to dress them well and invest in their education.

[3] See Appendixes, note 3, for the original quote in Romanian

One other area of exclusion was the job market. A lot of people said they used to work during communism, when unemployment was low and "Ceauşescu would pick you up from the streets and send you to work." However, they had lost their jobs after 1990, and especially in the later years of the financial crisis. Dan, for example, said that he had been working for 27 years in constructions, but had been unemployed for several years now. He believed that his old age, along with being a Roma, hindered his chances of finding a job.

The financial crisis had made the situation even more difficult, and almost everyone in the village was jobless. Many of the young had immigrated to France or Italy to look for work, leaving the children in the care of the grandparents. However, most of them could not find a job even there, and did not send any money home. This put a lot of pressure on old people, who had to take care of five-six children, with a total income of less than 70 euro/month. This income came from the social benefit that the state gives to children younger than 16 who are enrolled in school. If the children stopped going to school, they no longer received the money.

In their study about the daily lives of elderly people in South Africa, Doris M. Bohman *et. al.* (2007) show how, due to the many holes in the country's welfare system, the old, and old women in particular, bare all the burden of caring for the children and the sick. At the same time, they deal with their own health problems, which they do not have the money to treat, as well as poverty, lack of basic resources and an unsafe living environment. The lives of old Roma women in the community had many similarities to what was described in this study. Many of them were the only providers of childcare in a numerous family, and had to find ways to survive with very little resources. Despite being old and suffering from sometimes serious health problems, these women walked to town almost every day to look for PET bottles in the garbage. They would then sell the bottles and use the money to buy food for the day. Mariana also had a son in jail, and was sending him food once a week. In addition to straining their bodies, they also risked being caught by the police, as what they do is illegal in Romania. In fact, at the time of our discussion, Viorica M. had just been fined for searching through the garbage.

Ageing was a different experience for the women than it was for the men. For men, getting old could bring along an improvement to their social status inside the community. They gained more respect, were considered wiser, and could even be appointed as local judges. This was nothing a

woman could do. For women, life just got harder and harder, as their families were losing their income, their bodies were weakening, and they got more grandchildren to care for.

Being a woman was, in fact, more difficult in general. Community laws were much stricter to women than they were to men. Tizana explained to me that adultery was severely punished in the community. If a woman was adulterous, her family had to pay the husband compensation and the marriage was dissolved. When I asked her what happened if a man cheated on his wife, she said:

> Well, that's not good either. But you know what they say, when a man drops his hat on the floor, he can pick it up, shake off the dust, and put it back on his head.[4]

It was also more difficult for women to get outside of the community. As Dan told me, most parents only send their daughters to school up until the age of 10, so they barely know how to read or write. If men can sometimes find jobs in construction, for women who are uneducated it is almost impossible. This makes them very dependable on their men. If the husband leaves, no other Roma man would consider marrying them. Alina, a woman in her early twenties, used to live with her husband and their three children in another village, until they had a fight and he kicked her out. Having no income, she was forced to move back in with her parents, and could not take the children with her because the parents had other grandchildren in their care and were not able provide for all of them.

What is specific about this intertwining of different social divisions is that it gets people stuck in vicious circles. These people I met were not just coincidentally both Roma *and* poor. The Roma are the ethnic group with the highest risk of poverty in Romania (Badescu *et. al.,* 2007). Being uneducated, jobless, poor and a *ţigan* dampens your social status and social capital. Also, without a job to go to, people have few reasons to leave the village and build any contacts on the outside. Their world shrinks to the borders of their community, and it becomes almost impossible to get out. Getting a job is difficult for someone who is uneducated and has no social connections, and who is also expected to cheat and steal (Even looking for a job may seem alien when one's whole life is limited to a small neighborhood with no running water, Internet or even a newspaper stand). The Romanian education system fails to integrate Roma children, who often drop out or perform very poorly, and thus gives very little hope for the future.

[4] See Appendixes, note 4, for the original quote in Romanian

Managing "spoiled" identities

As other devalued groups, the Roma have to bare their stigma in their everyday life. The majority has ways of identifying someone who is a *ţigan* that never fail. If one can change dressing style and adjust behavior patterns to match what is perceived as "normal" in the society, physical characteristics such as skin color, eyes and hair are difficult to conceal. Even if it was possible, as soon as someone finds out there will always be rumors. The only situation when the stigma becomes invisible is among members of one's own ethnic group.

Finding refuge inside the community

Erving Goffman (1963) talked about how the stigmatized find it easier to bare their "spoiled" identity by associating with people who are in the same situation. For the Roma in the village, finding refuge in their own ethnic group is natural as they live together, in a community that is fairly isolated from the rest. This separation of the Roma in their own communities is usually taken for granted. However, it is clear that it did not "just happen" that they all built their houses in the same neighborhood, and that it never occurred to any non-Roma to move there.

It was difficult to get a clear picture of how exactly that neighborhood was created. Local governments sometimes have peculiar ways of dealing with "the Roma situation". For example, in one town nearby, there were a lot of complaints about the Roma people living in a specific neighborhood. People claimed that they did not pay their water and electricity bills, which caused problems to the whole building. In addition, they were quarrelsome and caused a lot of scandals. To deal with these complaints, the mayor decided to build houses for them just outside town, and move them all there. However, from discussions with both people from the community and the mayor, I found out that it was not what had happened here, except maybe for just a few isolated cases. The mayor told me that the people did not own the land, and that they had just built their houses on pieces of land that no one was using. Just outside the village there is a field that is used for garbage disposal. In time, people started building their houses there, and the community expanded. At the time of my visit, there were still some houses under construction in that area.

The Roma people who chose to move there probably did so from both financial reasons, and because it was a friendly place. At the same time, it would never be an option for someone who

is not of Roma ethnie to do the same, because of fear and the social stigma associated with living in a preponderantly Roma neighborhood. Even in Bucharest, where it is a lot more difficult to be so selective about where you buy an apartment, people living in such neighborhoods are mocked and teased. I did, however, meet one non-Roma person who was living there with his family. He was in his late fifties, and had been living there for thirty-six years. He was forced to move during communism, after his house in town had been demolished, and, as compensation, he received some land there. About his experience, he said:

> At the beginning, I must confess that I was scared. I had heard a lot of bad things about these people and I was thinking: "God, how can I live there? I will not be able to keep anything in the courtyard, because they will steal from me.[5]

Although it is a consequence of the exclusion they are suffering, the Roma have grown to incorporate this separatism into their lives and, in some ways, enjoy their invisibility. They are contempt that no one bothers them inside their community – it gives them some space to breathe. They know that the majority sees them as dangerous and as something to fear. As I mentioned earlier, this makes them very uncomfortable in face-to-face interactions. However, it also gives them the perceived advantage of being left alone.

For people in the community, the most common way of responding to racism, or rather fear of racism, was to avoid contact with the outside. They built their lives inside that small neighborhood, and everything that was important happened there. How the non-Roma living just a few blocks away lived their lives was irrelevant to them. They seemed to base their self-perception only on relationships and comparisons with members of the in-group. Even when talking about the children's performance in school, they only compared them with other Roma.

Of course, most people had to go outside the community at least a few times a week. Some of them had horses and carts, and they would go around town trying to collect old metal items that people no longer used. They passed through residential areas in their carts and yelled: "Old metal! We collect old metal!", and stopped for a while. People who wanted to dispose of household items that they no longer used, such as broken pans or buckets, handed them over. At the end of the day, the Roma sold all the metal they had collected for about 20 eurocents/kg. This activity involved some contact with the outside world. However, they were apparently using a certain "shield" when going into town. They never went alone, but in small groups of 2-4 people.

[5] See Appendixes, note 5, for the original quote in Romanian

They never spoke about the people they got the metal from, or the ones they sold it to. These interactions were just a way of making some money, and had apparently no personal importance at all.

Creating counter-symbols

My presence in their community was a source of stress and triggered different types of responses than they usually employed. Suddenly, they could no longer avoid relating to members of the out-group in a significant way. For a short while, they had to find a way to include a non-Roma in their daily lives. The way they responded does not seem to fit any of the coping theories that I talked about in the previous chapter. Both Goffman (1963) and Miller & Kaiser (2001) wrote about how stigmatized individuals try to develop counter-symbols in order to shift focus away from the stigma. They can try to be recognized for other qualities than those stereotypically associated with their group. The way people in the community responded was had some resemblance to this strategy, with one specificity: when they tried to develop counter-symbols, they worked against what they knew the stereotypical image about the Roma was. They did not try to shift focus away from the stigma, but rather prove that they were the exact opposite of what was being said about them. The most apparent manifestation was trying to prove that they were not thieves, which I already talked about earlier. One other common stereotype about Roma people is that they are lazy. To overcome this misconception, many of them were talking about how they tried to be good in school, or how hard they were working now. Here is, for instance, an excerpt from Dorina's recount of her childhood:

> I grew up in wilderness, in the woods. Foxes and bears were sometimes coming to my window. When I went to school, I had to walk 7 kilometers by foot. [..] And I was the best in my class. After I finished the 8th grade, I wanted to go to high school. I took the exam and I got an A in math, but an F in Romanian. Because I had to analyze "Sleepy birds" (Romanian poem), and I did not know. I had learned more complicated stuff, but that I did not know. And I got an F. So I went to the headmaster, who knew I was good, he had been watching me for a long time. So he told me to go to an Arts & Crafts school, in Craiova.

Dan also talked about how he always liked to study, and put a lot of emphasize on the importance of education in general. He also talked about how good his children were in school.

Mariana did not speak much about school, but she talked about how hard she worked from morning to dawn, looking for plastic PETs in garbage cans, and then carrying kilograms of plastic to the recycling facility.

One other prejudice against the Roma is that they are dishonest and cheaters. In opposition to that, most of the people I talked to spoke about how important it is to earn your bread in an honest way, and how they would never give in to stealing or cheating, no matter how hard life was. Here is Dan's comment on the topic:

> Some people go abroad and steal or beg. It's not right. It feels much better to live off the little you have, even if you've only got bread and onions at dinner. At least you are happy.[6]

Ethnic identity as a "buffer" against self-loathing

A lot of research (Jeten *et. al.,* 2001; Worcher *et. al.,* 1998; Spears & Doosje, 1999; Abrams & Hogg, 1999) has found that high group identification can have a positive effect on self-esteem. Jennifer Crocker & Brenda Major (1989) have found that, for stigmatized individuals, group membership can sometimes act as a buffer to protect self-esteem. The first two mechanisms they talked about – attributing negative feedback to group membership, and comparing oneself to members of the in-group instead of the out-group, were often used by the Roma in the community as well. When talking about their children's poor performance in school, they usually related it to the fact that teachers discriminate against the Roma. They said that the teachers were not interested in that they really learn something, and children who are so small need some motivation to study. This explanation was most likely correct, but it also protected them from intrusive thoughts, such as that their children were lazy or lacked intellectual capacity.

Detachment from the Roma ethnicity

However, not everyone in the community had a high identification with the Roma ethnie. There were also people who employed what Tajfel & Turner (1986) called "individual mobility" – rather than basing their personal identity on being a Roma, they tried to distance themselves from the group and be recognized as individuals. Simona, the Romani language teacher, was such an example. It took me a few days to understand that she was actually a Roma, and that she was born there. She looked, dressed and behaved as the average young woman in Romania. She was

[6] See Appendixes, note 6, for the original quote in Romanian

27 and still not married, and was trying to have a career. She had relatives inside the community, who were leading traditional Roma lives, but she never talked about that. I only found out accidentally, towards the end of my stay. One other such example was Otto, who worked with an NGO on Roma integration issues. The NGO was based inside the City Hall. Although he had used his Roma ethnicity to build his career, he was now trying to separate himself from the stereotypical Roma image. He had a pedant attitude, always wore a suit, and spoke in sophisticated words. He never tried to hide his ethnicity – it would have been hard, since I approached him knowing that he was a Roma. However, it looked as if what he was trying to prove was not that the prejudices about his ethnic group were false, but that *he* was the exception.

Looking into the future: hopes and dreams of Roma adults and children

Thomas Meisenhelder (1982) sees hope as the one thing that makes it possible for humans to look actively into the future, and go about their lives despite the certainty of death. As long as we want to live, we still have hope. But people hope in different ways. Sometimes we have a clear goal – we hope for something specific to happen. Other times we just hope. It can be so that we set targets for ourselves, and design ways to reach those targets, as in Snyder's model of resolute hope. But even when we do not know exactly where we want to go, or cannot see a clear path ahead of us, we still hope that life will work itself out.

Luc Bovens (1999) conceptualized hope as a combination of desire plus estimated probability to reach it. When people want something, they use objective evidence to assess their chances of reaching it. Everything else is false hope, which only brings disillusionment and frustration. This perspective on hope did not prove to be very relevant for the community I studied, because people did not seem to engage in such calculative mechanisms. They hoped even when the objective evidence would have led them to believe that it was a 'less-than-fair' gamble. Perhaps life had become so uncertain in the last few years, that trying to estimate their chances of success would have left them hopeless. Most of them had lost their jobs and become even poorer. Occasional agriculture work had also become scarcer. Many of the young were trying to find work abroad, but most of these attempts had also been unsuccessful. All in all, life was just getting harder, and there was no objective evidence that it would get better soon.

The people in the community still had hope – both as a general, diffuse feeling, and in the form of specific goals and plans. In Snyder's (2001) terms, they were thinking and re-thinking pathways or strategies to reach these goals. They were not irrational in their plans, but were not basing them on just objective evidence either; they also hoped that someday they will have a little bit of luck. For young people, short-term hopes included finding a job or travelling abroad. Piticu', for example, was hoping to go to Spain in the summer and find work in agriculture. This would secure him enough income to survive during the winter months, when one could not find any work. Marius was hoping to finish school, and move to Italy together with his new wife. They would both find jobs and build a new life there.

Hopes and resolutions among the people in the community

Living and working abroad was a dream that many young people shared. For the old, the dreams usually revolved around the children and were longer-term. Dan hoped that his children would get an education and have a decent life. He had most hope in his youngest son, who was only nine years-old, but was apparently "the smartest of all". He knew nothing about the probability of these dreams to come true, nor had he too much control over it. The only thing he could do was see to that they went to school and did their homework. Mariana, whose children were already close to adulthood, was hoping that they would find a job and stop living in poverty. Viorica's children were living abroad and she was not happy with their lifestyle, but was hoping that, one day, they would "return to God". Other people, like Dorina or Iosif, had more worldly and concrete plans for the children, such as building a house for them.

A lot of the people in the community were religious and put all of their faith in God. When talking about their lives, they complained about how hard it is to make it through the day, and how it hurts to not be able to provide for their children and see them suffering. But they often concluded with something like "but I know God will take care of us" or "God is good, I know He won't leave us". Their mode of hoping was close to Jürgen Moltmann's (1970) critical hope: they protested against the suffering of the present, and looked forward to God's promise of a better life. They knew something about how they wished this life was, but the agency was not theirs. All of their faith lied in God.

Most of the older people projected all of their hopes and dreams onto their children and grandchildren. What was regarded as children were those younger than 15-16; after that, girls

were expected to get married, build their own families and live an adult life. This, however, was beginning to change. Nicoleta, for example, was 15 years old and going to high school. She lived with her parents, and did not have a boyfriend or any plans to get married soon. When I asked her about it, she laughed and said it is too soon to think about that, even though most of her relatives got married around that age. She was very preoccupied with school. At that time, she was just getting ready for a training programme in a retail store, as part of her high school education. She was hoping that if she performed well, she could perhaps get a job there later. Her sister, Sara, was two years younger and had about the same preoccupations. The two of them were very close.

For Nicoleta and Sara's family, the daily life was built around the children's school program. There were five children in total: the youngest was 9 and the oldest 19. They were going to school in shifts – some in the morning, others in the afternoon. Everyone in the house was up at 7, to get Timotei, Elisei and Sara ready for classes. They were having lunch when they were getting back, and then Nicoleta was off to school. She was studying in town and finishing in the evening, so someone had to pick her up because it was dangerous for her to walk alone. The father, Dan, was the one who most wanted that the children get an education. He believed that this will direct their attention towards something useful, instead of drinking, drug abuse, or other self-destructive habits that teenagers often get to. The children were not at the top of their class, but they were interested in school and enjoyed going. Other people in the community spoke of them in admiration, comparing them to their own children.

Getting out of the village to go to school had opened up new perspectives. Nicoleta and Sara were not thinking about getting married just yet, but instead dreamed about seeing the world. As for most other children in the village, their universe was rather limited. They had travelled very little inside the country, and had never been abroad. They had never been on a ship or a plane. Nicoleta once told me:

> Did you fly in a plane? How does it feel like? If I ever take a plane, I will look down at all the people. Maybe I happen to see this teacher I hate, I will throw a bottle of water in his head.[7]

[7] See Appendixes, note 7, for the original quote in Romanian

She could speak good English and was very proud of it. She always wanted to speak English to me instead of Romanian. She had also taught herself Hindi from watching Indian movies on TV. She dreamed about travelling to India one day.

Dan and Tizana's children were, however, more of an exception. Many of the children in the village did not attend school, and those who did were only going when the weather was nice. People gave me many reasons as to why they were not sending their kids to school. Some said that they were very poor, and they were ashamed to send them without proper clothing. Or that even if attendance is free, you still need money for books, paper, pens and chalk. Viorica said that she is not sending her granddaughters to school because she is afraid that they will get into bad habits. This is also the explanation that Dan gave me for why people behaved this way, although he did not see it as a valid reason.

How children dreamed up their future

When they were not in school, the children would sometimes help around the house. They did the dishes or helped with the laundry. Tanta, an older woman, once told me that 3-4-year-old children even help with collecting iron for selling. They wandered the garbage field all day, looking for nails and other small metal objects. When they were free, they went outside and played with the other kids. There were a lot of small children in the community – most households had 5 or 6. In the afternoons, when people were usually free, the streets were filled with children running around and playing.

I asked small children to make drawings of their dreams for when they grow up. All of them started by sketching a big, colorful house, sometimes with a little fence around. They then drew their future family: two adults and no more than 2-3 children. The rest of the page was filled with things that they found beautiful, such as flowers, stars and little hearts. One boy even drew a church right next to the house. They dreamed in the way Bloch (1995) pictured hope: as an unwillingness to accept the suffering of the present. Right now they were living in houses that were nearly falling apart, perhaps sharing a room with five other people, wore the same ragged clothes every day and had just enough food to survive. But they had rainbows planned for tomorrow.[8]

[8] See Appendixes for examples of children drawings

Older children wrote short essays about how they wanted their lives to be. Most of them wanted to have a job – as a firefighter, a cab driver, a policeman, a doctor or a singer. They also wanted a big house and two or three children. Other material possessions that they wished for were a car (the car was always a Lamborghini and always spelled wrong), sometimes a motorcycle, a computer, toys and clothes. Many of them wanted to immigrate to countries such as France, Portugal or the UK. Some wrote about wanting to help children or people in general. Others wrote about being respected, both themselves and their families. One boy wrote that he would like to have a friend.

All in all, the children were the embodiment of hope for the community – both in a personal sense (hope for one's own children) and as a concept. In conversations, people were often speaking about the children in general, and wishing that their lives would be better than their own. A group of Roma adults were organizing activities for the children of the community on Sunday afternoons. Something that caught my attention in the beginning was that the adults assumed a parental role towards all children. It was hard to make sense of who was whose parent without asking. When gathering for religious ceremonies, for example, all adults were looking over all children. When they misbehaved, anyone in the group could take the liberty of punishing them. The babies were passed around people's arms, and you could tell that they were used to it. Shakira, a four-year-old girl, had been abandoned by her parents about six months earlier. Three different families were taking care of her, treating her as their own child.

The people I met who were already past their thirties only spoke about the future in relation to their children. They still had hope, but not so much for themselves as for *them*. These hopes rarely took the shape of thoroughly-designed plans that could take them from A to B. There was perhaps too much uncertainty and too little resources for that. Instead, they hoped in general terms, in some kind of essential goodness of life. The young, on the other hand, had resolutions, such as finishing school, getting a job, travelling to India, building a house or starting a family. Children spoke about these dreams with joy, as if they knew for sure they would come true. Only as they were getting older, they started to account for the possibility that they would fail.

The children were constructing their hopes and dreams in opposition to the life of their parents. They wanted everything that was missing now, such as security, a steady income, and a better social status. Their role models were more fortunate relatives or acquaintances, especially those

living abroad. But the problem with these dreams was that they usually had no connection to reality whatsoever. In Luc Bovens' (1999) terms, what they are doing is only false hope, which brings nothing but frustration and disappointment. I do not agree with the assumption that all hope which is not based on objective evidence is in vain, and I believe that there are ways for these children to adjust both their dreams and their strategies so that they can get a better life.

Summary and conclusion

My first concern with this paper was to discover how the Roma people manage their ethnic identity, in the context of the intense stigmatization associated with being a Roma in Romania. How do they respond to the labels of *Roma* and *ţigan*, and which other identities do they assume? I was also interested in how the stigma and the exclusion shape their daily lives, and what they are hoping for the future. To get some knowledge about these questions, I have done one-month fieldwork in a Roma community in South-West Romania. Most of the data comes from participant observation, open-ended interviews, and collected drawings and essays of Roma children.

I have found out that, for the Roma in the community, the term *ţigan* was not offensive in itself, but only in connection to the negative associations it carried. However, it was still more comfortable to use than the formal label of *Roma*. It was what the people in the village used themselves when speaking to a *gadji*. Among themselves, the Roma placed a lot of value in the different *neamuri* or ethnic subgroups, and the borderlines between themsleves and *other Roma*. As Frederic Barth (1968) noted, a person does not have just one single identity, but usually a portfolio of identities to choose from depending on the social situation. But in the eyes of the majority, all of these other ethnic affiliations that the Roma themselves practice are invisible.

As many other Roma, the people in the community are living on the margins of the society. Their houses are built in a separate part of the village, and they barely have any social connections with the outside. They have poor access to education, the job market and the welfare system. Erving Goffman (1963) notes that stigmatized individuals often find refuge among equally-stigmatized. Perhaps the social cohesion of the community is in part built on everyone's fear of getting outside.

To understand subjective racism and exclusion experiences, I have to consider that the people I met are not just Roma: they occupy different positions on different social axes. Being poor, unemployed, a woman, or an old person, is also part of their identity. Such experiences are best understood through an intersectional framework: by looking at how the different social divisions are intertwined and intermeshed. For instance, the life of old Roma women community is very hard. Old age does not come with a higher social status for women, as it does for men. However, it often comes with the obligation of unpaid care work: for grandchildren, for the sick, and for the men. All while getting even poorer than before, having no perspectives for future employment or pension, and not being able to get treatment for your own deteriorating health.

People have different ways of coping with discrimination and exclusion. For many, being a member of the community provides a "buffer" for protecting their self-image against negative experiences. They place, often correctly, the cause of racist encounters on being a Roma instead of their personal characteristics. Others find refuge in Christian belief and being part of a religious community. A few have also pursued individual mobility (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), by trying to distance themselves from the group and disassociate from the Roma ethnicity.

As most people, the Roma are hoping for a better future. As they are approaching their late thirties and their children are growing up, most of these hopes are projected on the young generation. I collected drawings and short essays to learn about how the children themselves were picturing their future. Most of these have some common themes: getting a steady job, being respected, having a family and a house, and living abroad. Although perhaps disconnected from reality, their dreams are still proof that they have not given up on their future.

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Appenidixes

A. Notes

1. Au fost plasați la marginea oraşelor şi din cauza asta a fost greu să aibă acces la educație. Rudarii au fost plasați în centru, în mijlocul populației majoritare. Din cauza asta şi-au uitat şi limba, nici nu mai recunosc că sunt romi... Au avut viață grea romii, erau robi la boieri care îi vindeau separat, despărțindu-i de familii.

2. Legea e mai puternică decât legea judecătorească. Legea poate să te dea afară din sat. Legea poate să-ți dea casa foc. Legea țigănească, adică [...] Judecătorii pun un jurământ acolo... Când se face o judecată, se depune un jurământ: chiar dacă eşti fata mea, chiar dacă eşti copilul meu, eu fac dreptate, pentru că aşa-mi cere legea. Judecători înseamnă oamenii mai în vârstă, care judecă şi analizează lucrurile, care este adevărul şi care este minciuna.

3. Păi dacă-l pun şi e, de exemplu, copilul ăştia mai curat, şi al meu mai mizerabil, cum, că nici nu-mi permit eu, că ce zice? Mamaie, eu nu mai stau cu ăla în bancă, că e murdar! Nu? Şi dumneavoastră ați spune: Doamnă, eu nu-mi mai dau copilul la şcoală, că e murdar, nu ştiu ce... Şi oricare om e, pentru copilul lui... nu vrea să-şi dea copilul să râdă altul de el. Păi vedeți? Ăştia nu ştie nimic, ce zice: A, că nu vor să dea copiii la şcoală. Păi cu ce să-i dăm la şcoală?

4. Păi nici asta nu-i bine. Dar ştii cum se spune, dacă la un bărbat îi cade pălăria jos, o ia, o scutură de praf, şi o pune la loc pe cap.

5. La început, trebuie să recunosc că mi-a fost frică. Auzisem multe lucruri rele despre oamenii ăştia, şi mă gândeam: Doamne, cum să mă duc eu acolo, că nu pot să țin nimic în curte, că mă fură.

6. Eu am crescut în sălbăticie, lângă pădure. Venea vulpea, ursul la geam. Când mă duceam la şcoală, mergeam 7 km pe jos. [..] Şi eram prima din clasă. Când am terminat clasa a VIII-a, am vrut să merg şi eu la liceu. Am dat examenul şi am luat 10 la matematică şi 3 la română. Că mi-a dat Somnoroase păsărele. Şi eu învățasem lucruri grele, dar pe asta nu ştiam s-o analizez. Şi am luat 3. Şi m-am dus la directorul liceului, care mă ştia că sunt bună, demult mă urmărea. Şi atunci mi-a zis să dau la profesională, la Craiova.

7. Unii se duc afară la furat şi la cerşit. Nu e corect. Mai bine să trăieşti din puținul tău, chiar dacă ai doar pâine cu ceapă la masă. Dar eşti fericit.

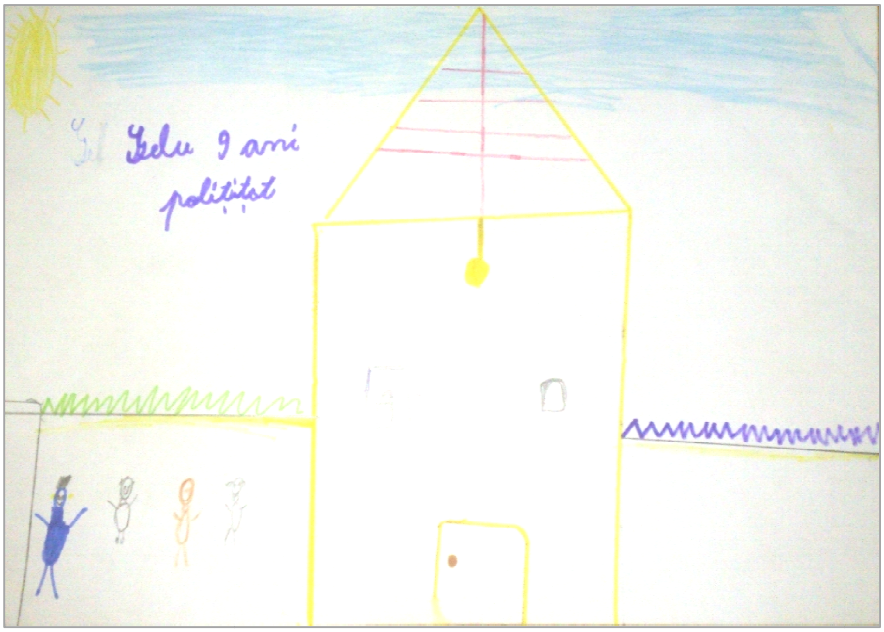
8. Ai zburat cu avionul? Şi cum e? Dacă zbor şi eu vreodată cu avionul, o să mă uit în jos la oameni... Poate îl văd pe profesorul ăsta al meu, pe care nu-l suport, să-i arunc o sticlă de apă în cap.

B. Examples of drawings

Drawing 1 – Alex, 9 years old

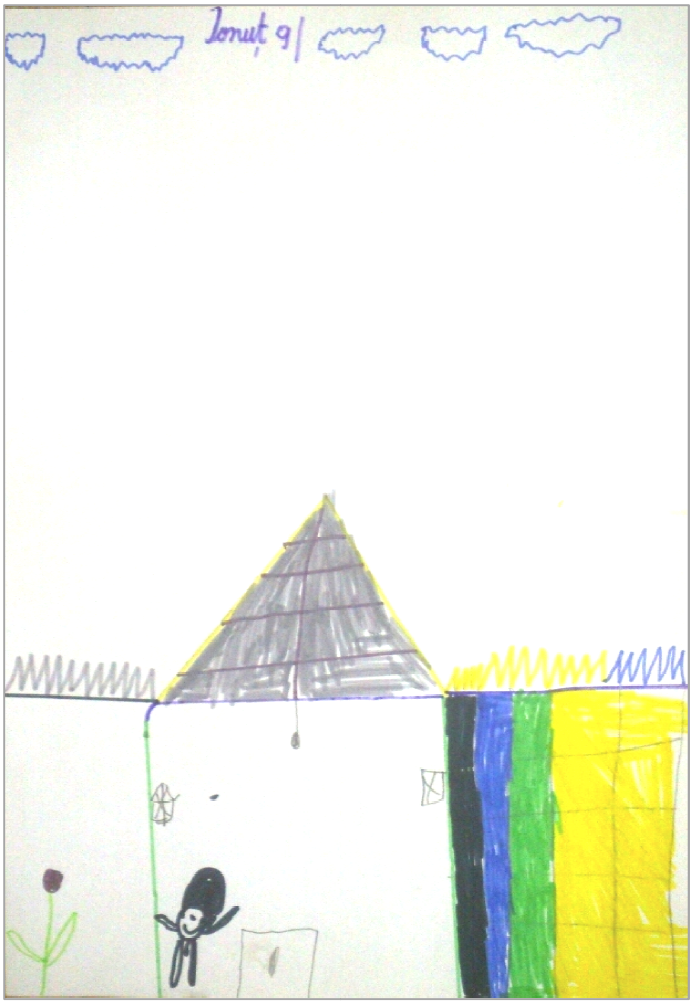
Drawing 2 – Gelu, 8 years old

Liviu, 8 years old



Gelu, 9 years old

Cove, 9 years old



Ionut, 9 years old