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

Abstract

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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Simon 2004; Ladányi and Szelényi 2006). In fact, like Black Americans in the US (Zubrinisky and Bobo 1996), Roma people are the least wanted neighbours in Europe (European Values Survey 2001).

A significant part of the scientific literature analysing the relationship between social mobility and Romani identity maintains that it tends to be weak and is closely related to degrees of upward social mobility. According to some theories, middle class Roma who have university degrees and/or liberal professions tend to drop their Romani identity and often enter into a rapid process of cultural assimilation, a consequence of the formerly mentioned stereotypes associated with an image of marginality.

During the last few decades some interesting changes have occurred among the Roma population. In some contexts, in both Western and Eastern Europe, some Roma people have gained admission to university studies and entered liberal professions. This article aims to describe the relationship between ethnic identification and social status. The circumstances of these people – as we will see in the case of Viola – do not usually fit the stereotypical image projected abroad.

This article presents a number of findings related to Romani identity that challenge the canonical theory of assimilation assumed in part by the literature on the Roma. After situating the article within the theoretical debate and describing its methodology, the results will be structured in the following way. First, I will identify findings on ethnic identification which diverge from the ethnic assignment of the census – a source used in the theories that argue for the existence of the canonical path of assimilation in the Roma case. Then, I will present findings that indicate the existing relationship between ethnic

identification and socioeconomic status (SES) in a general way as well as in some specific contexts such as those of Slovakia and Romania.

Theoretical background

One of the most commonly assumed facts about Romani ethnicity is that the Roma population tends to follow a course that the immigration literature has identified as the canonical path of assimilation (Barany 1998, 2001, 2002; Koulish 2005). However, if there is empirical evidence to refute this thesis, the Romani case should not be an exception to what the most recent research on acculturation, assimilation and mobility suggests. Although the relationship between these social processes has traditionally been studied in the field of immigration, Herbert J. Gans (2007) emphasises the possibility of going beyond the study of immigration, ethnicity and race, which can even be useful for observing how people adapt to changing conditions. From this perspective Gans points out that it can 'open up numerous comparative research possibilities' (2007:161) that would benefit social research.

Taking into account that Roma population are treated like immigrants by mainstream society and that they continuously face the question of assimilation in whatever country they are in, theoretical contributions from the fields of immigration (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001a, 2001b) and cultural minorities (Neckerman et al 1999; Lacy 2004) could be very useful to identify possible connections between acculturation, assimilation and mobility in the Roma case.

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Segmented assimilation and cultural minorities

Scholars who have worked on immigration and ethnicity in the United States have extensively studied assimilation processes. One of the assumptions at the forefront of this research is that there are other paths of mobility in American society besides the one-way assimilation described by the authors who studied those processes before the 1965 Immigration Act. These theories were mostly based on immigrants who arrived in the United States from Europe during the first half of the 20th Century (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927; Park 1928, 1950; Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964). They were challenged when evidence showed that different ethnic groups usually maintained their ethnicity when upward mobility occurred (Greeley 1971, 1974; Glazer and Moynihan 1975), as suggested by Hansen’s Law (Hansen 1938; Gans [1962] 1982, 1999).

In recent years, the work of Alejandro Portes and other scholars has highlighted three different assimilation paths taken by second generation immigrants into American society, known as the segmented assimilation theory (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001a, 2001b). One of these paths, selective acculturation, is an upward mobility path characterised by bilingualism, highly supportive ethnic networks, educational attainment and/or entrepreneurial skills. Some second generation immigrant children do not follow a *dissonant process* of acculturation or a downward mobility path because they keep selected traits from their parents’ cultural heritage to combine with the upward mobility path. Examples of this situation are Vietnamese Americans in San Diego or Cuban Americans who attend private schools in the Miami ethnic enclave.

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3 A similar situation has been observed by Karin Lacy (2004) in the upward
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5 social mobility processes of black people in the United States. Lacy proposes a
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7 variant of this selective acculturation path, which she calls *strategic*
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9 *assimilation* and in which 'middle class blacks who have access to white
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11 neighbourhoods and predominantly white work spaces demonstrate concerns
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13 about maintaining black social ties and culture' (2004:925). On the other hand,
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15 Neckerman *et al.* (1999) criticised the segmented assimilation theory for
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17 viewing blacks as only poor and not taking into account the existence of what
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19 they call a *minority culture of mobility* that promotes upward mobility
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21 strategies in a climate of strong discrimination and inequality. Despite their
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23 interesting arguments, the empirical data to support them is missing.
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32 *Roma identity, acculturation and mobility*

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36 Research on Roma has also focused more or less implicitly on the relationship
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38 between acculturation, assimilation and mobility. Traditional studies have
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40 closely linked Romani identity with marginality and poverty. This research
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42 recognises Romani identity as one which is created and maintained in
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44 opposition to mainstream society (see Sutherland 1975; Nagel 1979; Okely
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46 1983; Formoso 1986; San Román 1986, 1997; Stewart 1997). Education and
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48 work are considered to have been created by the *gadje* (non-Roma) culture, and
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50 therefore not to be original elements of Roma culture. Immersion in these two
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52 spheres would lead to the loss of this identity and assimilation into mainstream
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54 society, given that the essence of Romani identity rests on the difference
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between the Roma and the *gadjé* (non-Roma) culture and the social distance maintained by the Roma towards the other culture.

More recent theories continue to reflect this tendency. According to Barany (1998, 2001, 2002), Romani identity is highly vulnerable to upward mobility. He describes how Roma people lose their identity and try to assimilate into the mainstream when they get white-collar jobs and enter higher education. He reached this conclusion based on data from Slovakia that showed that only 37 per cent of the Romani people identified themselves as such in the census.

Barany, like other authors, adopts Gordon's straight-line theory to explain the process of upward mobility among the Roma. According to it, Roma people with high levels of human capital or entrepreneurial skills tend to choose the path of full acculturation into the mainstream. As stated by the authors, this path would be especially attractive for Roma people without ethnic markers such as skin colour. The only Roma people who maintain their identity would be those who form part of what Barany calls the Romani *intelligentsia*. The main reason for keeping their identity is their individual political aspirations and interests.

Robert Koulish (2005) carried out a similar study. In his work on Romani identity in Hungary he observed that the self-classification of Romani interviewees decreases relative to an increase in educational and economic opportunities¹. Koulish's argument is based on the fact that only 1.4 per cent of the people who classified themselves as Roma in their questionnaires had attended university, while this figure was 4 per cent for those who had not identified themselves as such. A similar tendency occurred in relation to income. The people who identified themselves as Roma earned half as much as

those who did not (Koulisch 2005:317). Koulisch agrees with new methodological developments suggested by Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) or Kemény (1997) in which the data from the census is not trusted and an “over-sample” of Romani people selected with the help of a group of experts². Finally, the research included one hundred and fifty questionnaires that allowed for a mixed classification made by the interviewees (self-classification) and the interviewer (interviewer classification)³. This method is based on the supposition that there is no error in the interviewer classification, even though one hundred and fifty cases are not significant enough to estimate the results of the study of the Hungarian Romani population in the way that Koulisch does.

Previous research has shown that the image of the Roma population in mainstream society is usually associated with marginal conditions (Mirga and Gheorghe in Acton 1997; Belton 2005a, 2005b; Bhopal and Myers 2008) and with a reactive ethnicity due to the discrimination suffered or the forced assimilation policies created by states (Hawes and Pérez 1996; Guy 2001). At the same time, however, scholars such as Ladányi and Szelényi (2006), Sánchez-Aroca (2005), Crea (2001-2004), Vermeersch (2003, 2006) or Gay and Blasco (1999) have indicated that Roma identity does not depend on social exclusion or marginality, even though a large number of Roma people face social exclusion.

Some Romani researchers have pointed out that there is also a place for Roma identity beyond marginality (Gheorghe in Acton 1997; Hancock 2002). Other scholars, such as Touraine, Wieviorka and Flecha (2004), Tóth (2005), Sordé (2006) or Prieto-Flores and Puigvert (2007), describe the current

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situation of the Roma people and support the claim that people tend to maintain their identity even when they obtain university degrees.

If all this research is key to understanding the connections between social mobility and Romani identity, until now there has been little consistent and representative data to verify whether there is any relation between the two. This situation has generated considerable debate between researchers who support the canonical theory of assimilation in the case of Roma and those who refute it.

Data and method

One of the main sources for this research was the data obtained from a study conducted by the United Nations Development Programme, ‘The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency Trap. A Regional Human Development Report’ (UNDP 2004). This research was based on a questionnaire given to a sample of 5034 people in five countries in Eastern and Central Europe (Bulgaria, Slovakia, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Romania), making it one of the largest quantitative studies of Romani populations in different countries (there were around 1000 questionnaires completed for each country). The survey relied on random quota sampling for Roma people 18 years old and older, taking into account data from censuses in the different countries and the advice of experts in ethnic relations and of representatives of each national polling agency. However, one of the most important aspects of the sample selection was the participation of Roma organizations and NGOs to better fit the sample to the distribution of the Roma population in each national context.

The data were compiled from face-to-face interviews at the respondents' homes during 2001 and 2002. The results presented in this work do not include the data from Hungary because the people who did the field work there decided, during the initial interview, to filter out those cases in which the respondents did not identify themselves as Roma. In connection with this situation, this statistical material is interesting because the study is not only one of the few quantitative studies of this style or one of the most comprehensive, but rather because it also lets us observe which elements influence self-identification and the lack of self-identification among the respondents that had identified themselves as Roma in the previous census.

Analytical strategy

In addition to single-variable descriptive statistics, binomial logistic regression is used to observe the effects of the explanatory variables on the likelihood that people will self-identify or not as Roma. In this respect, it was considered advisable to carry out various binomial logistic regressions since this is one of the best ways to observe the probability of a specific situation occurring (identifying oneself as Roma) as a dependent variable based on a categorised non-numeric variable, taking the completed questionnaires into account. The different independent variables used for the logistic regression were transformed into "dummy" variables to statistically exploit the data better and thus facilitate analysis and interpretation (Morgan and Teachman 1988; Kaufman 1996). Most of these variables are directly or indirectly connected to the relationship of SES with race or ethnicity. They are income (those who have medium or high incomes), education (those who have secondary or higher

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education), unemployment (those who are unemployed), discrimination when attempting to access employment (if they face discrimination when trying to get a job), age, gender (male). But it was also considered appropriate to introduce sociocultural variables that might influence Roma identification. These are connected with elements that might be influential in reinforcing identity and making it salient both out of the home – the area of residence (if the majority of the population in the area was Roma)- and at home – language (if respondents used Romani at home). Finally, the results of the models tested in binomial logistic regressions that were the most highly significant, taking Romani identity as a dependent variable, will be presented.

As well as the quantitative data used for this research, the official census questionnaires from the aforementioned countries were also reviewed to find out how the ethnic identity question was formulated and assess the different methodologies used to do so⁴. The different methods used in the censuses to record ethnicity and the way in which these different strategies can affect the final results by making the said identity more or less visible were presented. The questionnaires created for the last census by the different census offices in Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania were used to collect information on the census data and on the methodological approaches taken. This first step in the analysis of the census data established a principle that involved continually asking where the data originated from, what methodology was used and what the institution which collected the data’s ideological approach was. Organisations tend not to collect the data in the way in which we as social scientists would like, in other words, by responding directly to our research questions instead of providing a response to latent interests (Becker

1998; Nobles 2000). Taking this into account, it is possible to have a more comprehensive overview of how the data collection was carried out and how that may affect the results obtained in the end. In this sense, the UNDP survey also allowed the ethnic identity of individuals to be compared to the way in which they had defined themselves in the previous census and the differences between these two questions and their meaning to be highlighted.

This research aims to test the hypothesis that, in the Romani case, there is not enough significant data to confirm the existence of only one path of full acculturation into the upward social mobility processes the Romani people interviewed were experiencing. If this was the case, a segmented theoretical framework of acculturation, assimilation and mobility would be needed in the case of the Roma people.

Analysis and results

Some evidence observed in ethnic identification

A statistical exploitation of the UNDP survey makes it possible to observe a high rate of Romani self-classification in different national contexts within which the questionnaires were carried out, contrary to what was perceived by Ladányi and Szelényi or Barany⁵. On the other hand, there was also high variability, depending on their country of origin, in the number of people assigning themselves the definition of Roma in the national census. Although the sample was based on the censuses in each country, it contained an extra element that previous studies had not taken into account, which added great value to it. This element was the active participation of Romani organisations in the creation of the sample. These results demonstrate that the contributions

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of Romani associations have a greater impact than the opinions of experts or interviewers when recording Romani identity. In this sense, as Flecha and Gómez (2004) point out, you can trust people’s interpretations as long as there is an atmosphere of trust and equality⁶.

The results can be seen in Table 1. On average, only 10.5 per cent of the interviewees do not identify themselves as Roma. The differences between a sample produced by experts and interviewers and a sample chosen with the collaboration of Romani organisations cannot go unnoticed. For example, in Romania, in the study carried out by Ladányi and Szelényi, only 31 per cent of the people interviewed classified themselves as being Roma; in the UNDP research –see table 1- the figure reached 95 per cent.

[Table 1 about here]

Another element demonstrated by the results is the large variability when people classify themselves as Roma in the census. This variability in the data can be attributed to methodological issues and racist attitudes in the region and not to the highly variable identity of the people interviewed. In the Czech Republic and Slovakia the percentage of people who classify themselves as Roma is lower due to the approach taken in the census questionnaires. In both cases, the category of *nationality* is based on an exclusionary idea and does not allow people to designate more than one option for themselves. As a result, the majority of the Romani people who responded to those census questionnaires

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faced a dilemma when they had to choose between two identities (Roma or the majority identity); in other words they either feel “Slovakian” or they feel “Romani”. This methodology demonstrates, both in Slovakia and in the Czech Republic, that the high percentage of Roma who had previously identified themselves as being part of the mainstream society in their national census (44 and 50 per cent respectively) is considerably less. In both contexts the data show that affiliation with Romani identity remains high (90.6 per cent in the first case and 86.5 per cent in the second). This indicates that the data on ethnic definition in the census, especially in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, leads to specific interpretations of Romani identity, as Zoltan Barany has already observed.

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

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

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Examining the relationship between ethnic identification and socioeconomic status

The data provided by the UNDP research was very useful for the purpose of observing which factors can have a marked influence on a person’s decision to identify him or herself as Roma. Is it true that education or social class influence whether people identify themselves as such? What are the main factors that positively or negatively affect said identification? The logistic regression in table 2 shows some of the factors that had a significant influence on self-classification as Roma in the Eastern European countries where the research was carried.

Some independent variables that are more significant in the relationship, ordered by priority, include having defined themselves as Roma in the previous census and the use of the Romani language at home. Income and unemployment are also influential, but to a lesser extent. On the one hand, those who tend to identified themselves as Roma in the previous census tend to maintain that identification in subsequent consultations. Even so, the probability of β (identification in the previous census as Roma) is not very high (0.27). If a person who has classified him or herself as Roma is chosen randomly, there is a one in three probability that that person will also have defined himself or herself in the previous census as Roma. This low probability is due to censuses not correctly recording the said identity – as observed previously. Another factor that has a certain degree of influence on identification is the use of the Romani language, an element that also appears to be highly significant in the research carried out by Ladányi and Szelényi

(2006). It is important to point out that logistic regression produces two new elements which also have a certain degree of influence, and attract attention.

In contrast to the canonical hypothesis of assimilation defended by certain North American authors at the middle of the last century (i.e. Warner and Srole 1945; Gordon 1964), as well as by other more contemporary authors who have specifically studied the Romani case (Barany 1998, 2001, 2002; Koulis 2005), interviewees who have a higher income tend to identify themselves as Roma more readily than those who have lower incomes. This situation is interesting because it is normally believed that the opposite is true. In other words, it is believed that those who have lower incomes tend to identify themselves as being Roma to a greater extent. As many other authors have indicated, a situation similar to the American one is also occurring in Central and Eastern Europe, in the Romani case, prompting the need to identify different upward mobility paths among the Roma. In this respect, it seems that the construction of the Roman identity is not only tied to an oppositional culture of the minority underclass, but that an ethnicity affirmation process is also taking place among middle class Roma. Finally, it should be mentioned that gender can also influence this identification process. That is to say that men are marginally more likely than women to define themselves as Roma.

Another relevant factor is that there seems to be no connection with education. Having completed secondary school or being university educated does not affect whether people identify themselves as being Roma or not.

[Table 2 about here]

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This statistical data contradicts the theory that those with more education or higher incomes are more likely to assimilate into mainstream society. Although, as Ladányi and Szelényi (2006) point out, there tends to be more Roma amongst poor people, the simple fact that they are poor or socially excluded does not influence whether they classify themselves as Roma or not. So, I propose the Roma people, in addition to the possibility of following a path of full acculturation, follow other upward mobility paths during which their Romani identity remains important. In this respect, the data demonstrate that the connection between acculturation, assimilation and mobility in the Romani case would leads to a segmented assimilation process and not one that follows a straight line. Furthermore, with the data from the UNDP research it is not clear there are different paths since the questionnaire was not designed with this objective. Even so, several works of research have provided us with some clues about how segmented this process might be in the Roma case. In one of them, Tóth (2005) identifies two different upward mobility processes among Roma people in Hungary and in the United Kingdom. In each one Romani identity is maintained. In the first, however, in Hungary, the people are caught between two real worlds – the Romani and the majority culture – while in the other, in the United Kingdom, they only symbolically identify themselves as Roma. Although representative data of these processes are not available, it is an insightful and suggestive proposal. In another study, Prieto-Flores (2009) describes three different paths of assimilation among middle class Roma. Two are related to the segmented assimilation theory (full acculturation and

selective acculturation). The third stems from what he has identified as the limitations of a theory that only allows for a single upward mobility path in which ethnic identity remains. Studying the Romani case reveals at least one more, the *outdoors acculturation path*. In this case, identity has no salience among middle class Roma. It is only experienced on an individual and/or family basis because of a fear of discrimination. This kind of identity is maintained “in the background”, particularly when ethnic networks are weak and it does not fit the stereotypical image of Roma. For outsiders, then, these people seem fully acculturated even though they continue to think of themselves as Roma. They experience their identity in a symbolic way (Gans [1962] 1982; Alba 1990; Waters 1990), inhibited by the fear of being discriminated against if it becomes public or salient.

Differences between national contexts

As can be seen in Table 3, the characteristics that influence how people identify themselves vary according to the different countries being analysed. We must also remember, as indicated by Csepeli and Simon (2004), that Romani self-identification can be determined by different elements in different national contexts, such as the nature of the encounter, existing prejudices, the impact of the majority on the minority and the assimilation policies of the State, which can have a bearing on people identifying themselves more or less as Roma in different national contexts. We must also consider the social anthropological perspective, according to which the internal mechanisms of each Roma subgroup vary from one context to another and identifying who is

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Roma and who is depends on the existing internal heterogeneity among the Roma (Stewart 1997).

For the analysis, two specific cases were selected: Slovakia, studied by Barany (1998, 2001, 2002), and Romania. In the case of Slovakia, according to the different logistic regressions carried out, there is no relationship between socioeconomic level or education and identification as Roma. Barany probably reached his conclusions based exclusively on reports from the Slovakian statistics office and interviews he carried out with certain experts and Romani representatives. The statistical data provided by the UNDP research suggest a different reality. In the case of Slovakia, only two of the elements indicated previously as possibly playing a role in people declaring themselves to be Roma or not continue to persist. These are previous self-classification in the census and the use of the Romani language at home. In this sense, it seems that some cultural bonds, such as the use of a common language, have an influence on making the Roma identification salient.

[Table 3 about here]

In the case of Romania (see Table 4) the two elements indicated above (identification in the previous census and the use of the language) are maintained but the appearance of two new elements can also be observed: having suffered from discrimination when seeking employment and the area of residence (if it is an area inhabited mainly by Romani people). In such cases,

the existence of previous discrimination and geographical concentration have a certain influence over the dependent variable. This situation is similar to that described in the study by Csepeli and Simon (2004), whose results highlight that Romani identification in Romania might be stronger in environments where the ties with other Roma people are important. It should be added that this may be reinforced if people have suffered discrimination in their search for either qualified or unqualified employment.

[Table 4 about here]

Conclusions

This article has attempted to reorient current thinking about the relationship between assimilation and mobility, particularly in the Roma case. The assumption that Roma people, when they prosper economically or acquire high levels of education, tend to enter a path of complete acculturation and therefore drop their Romani identity is widespread in the scientific literature. However, until now there has been little representative quantitative data to either demonstrate or question this assumption.

This research aims to go beyond this theoretical framework, taking into account new representative data about the relationship between Romani identity and SES. It also demonstrates that the straight-line process of assimilation is not a useful way to explain this relationship in the Roma case. What is more, as has recently become evident, upward social mobility does not

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always have to go hand in hand with full acculturation, although there are some connections between the two factors (Gans 2007).

The implications of these results are various. First of all, the findings presented in this article clearly support the idea of viewing Roma upward social mobility as a segmented process since education and income do not usually affect the ethnic identification of Roma people negatively. One new observation is that interviewees who have higher incomes tend to identify themselves as being Roma more than those who have smaller incomes. Secondly, further research is needed to explore what kind of symbolic connections exist between acculturation, assimilation and mobility among the Roma. Széleny and Ládanyi (2006) and Vermeersch (2003, 2006) have clearly explained what happens in the lower class, but little work has been done to explain what happens in the middle class (Tóth 2005; Sordé; 2006; Prieto-Flores 2009). Future research should examine how important these different paths of assimilation are among Roma and what types of social determinants contribute to them. Answers to these questions will give us a better understanding of this topic.

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Notes

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

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

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

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

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⁵ Although there are high rates of self-classification amongst the Romani population, this does not mean that there can be no variability in the ethnic identification of a person.

⁶ Although it is difficult to make the position of the researcher disappear, some mechanisms may be introduced to try to avoid this gap (McCorkel and Myers 2003). In this case, one of the cornerstones of the research carried out by the UNDP was the participation of Romani organisations in its elaboration and execution.

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Tables

Table 1. Questions in relation to Romani identity

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

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

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

Nationalities: Bulgarian, Slovakian, Czech and Romanian.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nationality: Romanian			
The person identifies him or herself as a Roma	Coefficient	Typical error	Exp (B)
Gender (male)	.445	.376	1.560
Age	-.067	.407	.936
Identification in the previous census as a Roma	2.905***	.548	18.251
Education (secondary or university)	-.067	.407	.936
Use of the Romani language in the home	2.665***	.546	14.367
Income (medium-high)	1.508	1.098	4.519
Unemployment	.342	.463	1.408
Discrimination when attempting to access employment	.980**	.375	2.666
Area of residence (high presence of the Romani population)	.909*	.399	2.483
Constant	.268	.733	1.307
-2 Log-Likelihood = 213.944			
Nagelkerke R ² = .457			
D.F. = 8			
N = 980			
Source: Own table based on data from the UNDP. 2004. <i>The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. Avoiding the Dependency trap. A Regional Human Development Report</i> . Data available on the following website: http://roma.undp.sk			
* p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001			