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Democratic Nationalistic Privilege and the Exclusion of Europe's "Gypsy"

In the summer of 2010, I spent six weeks teaching English to schoolchildren in rural Romania with the student-run organization, Learning Enterprises. A student of International Development, I chose the organization because I knew there was a great deal of rural poverty in Eastern Europe, and I thought it would provide valuable job experience. One of the earliest surprises was the high quality of life where I taught. I would certainly not wish poverty upon my wonderful host families simply for the chance to develop career skills, and although it was not quite what I was expecting, the experience was incredibly rewarding and formative in many ways. Perhaps no aspect of my summer was more significant than my exposure to Europe's Roma population. In one of the four villages where I taught, I was fortunate enough to have several young Romani boys in my class. Although boisterous and sometimes disruptive, they were eager learners who brought a great deal of energy to my unconventional classroom- especially during games of Simon Says and renditions of "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes (Knees and Toes)." In some ways I considered them my best students. I was quick to learn, however, that the small village of Posalaca was the exception, rather than the rule, in terms of Roma assimilation. Swapping stories with other volunteers about their respective villages, I was shocked to learn that one classroom had thrown rocks at a young Romani student who tried to sit in on a lesson. I also witnessed a great deal of racism firsthand. "Watch out for the Gypsies," my other host parents- who were always incredibly accepting, kind, and open-minded with me- would always be sure to warn me any time I strayed from under their watchful eyes. "This boy is a Gypsy," one teenager jokingly warned me about his friend while we played soccer, a comment which was met with indignant though playful punches to the arm. The boy was, of course, not Romani- except in Posalaca, Gypsies were not invited to play soccer with the rest of the population. As I continued to teach in and travel to different parts of Romania, I encountered more and more exclusion of the Roma, warnings about their deceitfulness and laziness, and conspicuous absence of them from places I was allowed to roam. On a train to Brasov, in Transylvania, I entered into a conversation with a local about a book I was reading that described the Holocaust in Romania. When I expressed the complaint that the book only focused on the Jewish experience, I was met with a blank stare. The fact that Roma were the second most targeted group after Jews was not part of her history education. In addition to witnessing their exclusion, I heard more and more about the squalid living conditions of the people called "Gypsies." I had found where Romania's poverty came from. Rather than coming in the form of a general, population-wide lag behind the rest of Europe, however, it was an unfortunate and unrepresented minority dragging down the average on human development indices, all the while drawing scorn and discrimination from the majority population.

After leaving Romania, I was eager to learn more about the Roma, not just in Romania, but on the entire continent. I had always learned from my left-leaning professors and pundits that America is the world's only wealthy country which has problems with racism and poverty, while post-Imperial Europe is a socially progressive, tolerant, poverty-free heaven-on-earth, equipped with free health care. Even from more middle-of-the-road and right-leaning thinkers, I had never heard about these sorts of universally neglected populations living in Europe. Before returning home, I spent some time near Venice, where I stayed with an Italian family friend. He and I had spoken before about world and American politics, and life in general, so I knew he and I thought very similarly about many issues. I was looking forward to picking his brain about "Gypsies", as Italy also has a sizeable Roma population. To my surprise, my progressive and rational-minded friend launched into a rant about Romani drug-use, lethargy, and welfare abuse. In all previous political discussions with Europeans, I had found them to be much less predisposed towards economic liberalism; usually advocating for social safety-nets, foreign aid, and government programs for the poor more so than what is the norm in the United States. Personally, I reside somewhere in the middle in such debates, but I had a very difficult time believing the accusation that most Roma in Italy were driving around in Ferraris, living off of government checks. If this conversation surprised me, I was downright shocked after returning home and talking with some classmates about my summer experience. On more than one occasion a fellow student of development, who understood theories of structural and cyclical poverty, as well as systems of privilege, and considered himself forward-thinking, interrupted my stories with, "oh, I hate Gypsies." They would then share a tale of being pick-pocketed once or twice in Spain, or perhaps France- nothing warranting such a blanket statement about an entire race. This recurring experience, more than anything else, cemented my desire to study the Roma from an academic perspective.

Although I easily found plenty of books which chronicled the Roma's history, journals on their culture, reports on their living conditions and web resources about their political situation, nothing I came across was wide enough in scope to answer my most basic of questions- "how does this happen in Europe, and why hasn't it changed?" Literature only addresses small aspects of the Roma's situation, which, I believe, contributes to a refusal by most Europeans to accept the seriousness and pervasiveness of their exclusion. For my Senior Honors Project at the University of Rhode Island, I have attempted to close this gap in literature.

The situation of the Roma is undeniably one of exclusion. In Europe, an unobserved system of privilege has been established as the norm. I have called this a "Democratic Nationalistic Privilege." As a result of Europe's aggregate political and human development, the distribution of economic resources and civil liberties has been thoroughly formalized and institutionalized. While these components to a good life are available, the vehicles to accessing them come much more easily to the dominant populations. Unique components of the Roma's history and culture make for countless small but significant roadblocks to prosperity, and the political situation in Europe allows for the continuation of institutional and interpersonal racism, contributing to the cycle of exclusion.

Specific suggestions for how policymakers should proceed are beyond the scope of this project. Instead, I hope to diagnose the Roma's exclusion from this privilege as it stems from three broad areas; history, culture, and politics. Each independent component, while not without overlap, comes with its own specific challenges, but it is worth noting that no one factor can stand as a lone catalyst of exclusion. Willing experts in various arenas, be they focused on education, history, public health, sociology, politics, or something else entirely are capable of diagnosing specific problem areas, but a lack of cooperation between academic fields has led to the thorough denial of a deep-rooted privilege. To date, only small policy adjustments, aimed at too-specific aspects of the Roma's condition, have been instituted. The repeated failure of these adjustments reinforces the pervasive attitude that the Roma are content with the status quo, and change would be more trouble than it is worth. If the dominant societies chose to broaden their perspectives, a fairer assessment would be possible.

Because this paper will have a definitively "macro", multi-disciplinary approach, and because it aims to assemble a wide array of independent contributing factors rather than create a logical "if a, than b" sort of argument, it will make two broad generalizations. First, it will oversimplify European attitudes about the Roma. Undoubtedly, countless Europeans harbor no ill-will or racism, maintain positive relationships with and feelings about the Roma and, indeed, have even dedicated their lives to championing Roma issues. Apologies to those individuals; as a social scientist, the author is in the business of making generalizations. Secondly, liberties have been taken in defining the group's makeup. Less mysterious and scattered populations than the Roma have faced their own difficulties in counting, and tabulation for a heterogeneous, dynamic, peripheral group like this is nearly impossible. This project will be generous in its definition, including any group who can be considered to have shared the Roma experience. By no means will this paper perfectly characterize the experience, behavior, or attitude of an individual Romani citizen or community. Instead, it will be much more useful and effective as a lens to examine the "Gypsy situation" as a whole.

In unpacking the specifics of the Roma's situation, this paper will have three sections. The first will address how the Roma's complex, compelling, and often tumultuous history has led to their systematic self-identification as an out-group in Europe. The second will explore how specific aspects of Romani culture, many of which developed as a direct result of their unique historical experience, alienate host societies, make assimilation difficult, and contribute to the Roma's lack of development, trapping them in the cycle of poverty. The final section will make the argument that political realities in contemporary Europe reinforce institutional and interpersonal racism while creating sizeable barriers to change. In concluding, I will reiterate that, while no one component of the Roma experience is particularly nefarious or insurmountable, it is the union of so many factors that creates such deep-seeded exclusion and privilege, demanding, not small policy adjustments, but a massive shift in attitude about the Roma before real change can occur.

History

The history of the Romani people is both fascinating and tragic. In addition to countless other forces working against them, it is important to note that the Roma have been without a homeland for at least a thousand years. What separates the Roma from many other global minorities, however, is a considerable failure- and, perhaps, effort- to assimilate into the societies where they live. Countless academics and researchers have explored in-depth precisely how the Roma fail to assimilate in contemporary Europe, but far less scholarship has been devoted to figuring out why. This paper argues that the Roma, partly by choice, but mostly by lack of alternatives, have been systematically conditioned to self-identify as an "out-group."To properly answer the question of why, an examination of the Roma's history is vital. While certainly not providing a comprehensive account, this section will explore the specific historical factors which have contributed to the formation of a Roma identity that, by choice or otherwise, does not assimilate into the dominant society. It will conclude with the fall of the Iron Curtain, as the current political situation Europe will be thoroughly addressed in a subsequent section. Of particular relevance is the trek from Northern India to Europe, as events since arrival have mostly served to obstruct any changes to the status quo. Slavery, persecution during the Imperial Age, the Holocaust, and Communism in Eastern Europe have entrenched the Roma's out-group identification, but to understand where this comes from in the first place, one must first understand where the Romani people themselves come from.

Because of their darker complexion, it was originally believed that Europe's Roma came from Egypt- this is where the term "Gypsy" actually came from. In truth, the Roma came from Northern India. Although specifics are difficult to extract given the absence of a written history, historian Donald Kenrick has done an impressive job piecing together the trek in his text Gypsies: From India to the Mediterranean. Kenrick uses a number of methods to assemble the puzzle, including an examination of the Romani language. By counting the words borrowed from other languages encountered in different nations along the Roma's journey, historians can determine where they had been, when, and for how long. Still, it is a difficult and imprecise practice, and the study of ancient folklore sent Kenrick and other historians on many false leads. With relative certainty, however, it can be determined that several semi-nomadic groups departed Northern India for Persia between the fourth and sixth centuries. Some attribute the migration to economic opportunities in the growing Persian Empire, while others believe the group that would become the Roma were taken as slaves after a successful Persian military campaign into the region. Other research suggests that the Roma were fleeing persecution or war at home, or even, suggests Ian Hancock, another Roma historian, that the first groups to leave India were groups of soldiers organized to oppose Arabic invasion (Hancock, 1997). One interesting story, especially considering the well-known role music plays in Roma culture, suggests that roughly 10,000 lute players were recruited by the Persian Empire to play while the noble class drank wine. "There are three versions of this story, but what is clear is that Bahram Gur, Shah of Persia in the years 420-438, brought some musicians and dancers from India to Persia" (Kenrick, 1993, p. 18). Whatever the reason for departure, most of these travelers found low paying work in the flourishing Persian Empire, but religious and ethnic differences created barriers to assimilation. These Indian travelers would have looked different and practiced different religions than their Persian countrymen. Instead of integrating, they intermarried, and began to call themselves "Dom," an Indian word for "man" (Kenrick, 1993, p. 15). The letter "d," which was pronounced with a rolling tongue, could easily have morphed into an "r" over a millennium. The early Roma carved out an identity as self-sufficient outsiders. Although one group, the Zott, may have found favor as servants and bookkeepers for military officers and the noble class, this close loyalty to the Persian Shah ended up deeming the Roma untrustworthy when Persia fell to the Arabic empire. Although it is unclear if the Zott are closely related to the Roma- Kenrick does not say one way or the other with certainty- this may be an early contributor to the Roma's duplicitous reputation, if it was carried all the way to Europe. As a matter of fact, there are many accounts

of warring empires hiring Roma mercenaries who were treated as shady outsiders by their employers and enemy combatants by the opposition.

As the Persian Empire declined, more and more Roma moved northward and westward to find more economic opportunities. As with the original migration from India, many were taken as forced laborers. Kenrick reports that most Roma left Persia for the Arabic empire by 750. Judging by the Romani language, the Roma did not live under Arabic rule for very long, most likely settling in Armenia by 850. In every new place they occupied, the Roma faced similar prejudices against foreigners. Neither Persia, Armenia, nor, later, the Byzantine Empire provided sufficient opportunities to retain the majority of the population, and by the twelfth century most Roma were living in the Ottoman Empire. According to Kenrick, "the first arrivers in Constantinople included snake charmers, astrologers and other fortune tellers as well as circus artists" (1993, p. 46). Kenrick, Hancock, and Zoltan Barany, author of The East European Gypsies, are all in agreement that the Ottoman Empire was the Roma's springboard into Eastern and Central Europe. Most sources suggest that the first Romani populations entered Ottoman-controlled Europe around the fourteenth century.

In addition to the obvious acquired nomadic tendencies, there are three important lessons to take from this summary of the Roma's trek to Europe, the effects of which are still observable today. The first is that, during the eight century journey, the Roma were never fully assimilated into the formal economies of host nations. The urban Roma were always more likely to fill small niche roles, such as minstrels, palace clerks, messengers, or, of course, soldiers. As there were sizeable barriers to land-ownership, the many Roma working in the agricultural sector were more frequently herders, which would have discouraged sedentary lifestyles. Kenrick does share one account of a "small, self-governing community" (1993, p. 27) in the Arabic Empire, which began as a plantation until the slaves seized control themselves. This population, likely related to the Roma, was only allowed to rule over the land for fourteen years, ending in 854 with a bloody military invasion by Caliph Mortsem. This also may have represented the last time the Roma were given political autonomy. For over a millennium, the Roma have answered to a larger legal authority and played a peripheral role in state economies.

Secondly, and undoubtedly related to the first point, the Roma were never in one place long enough to establish strong literacy in the native language. Even in Persia, where some Roma secretaries and book-keepers worked for the emperor, they retained their own language at home, as evidenced by the survival of the Romani language, which is very similar to Indian languages like Hindi and Punjabi. Because most Romani careers did not require literacy, nor did observance of their religion, strong reading and writing traditions never developed. This was exacerbated by the fact that each new language often came with new characters. The literacy component will be re-examined later.

Lastly, the Roma got very used to being outsiders. Having been treated as second class citizens in nearly every stop between India and the Mediterranean, the Roma became accustomed to discrimination by the majority. They became self-sufficient, distrustful, and even xenophobic, learning the lesson that there were few rewards for assimilation. Those who did assimilate often did so by cutting ties with their families and neighbors, robbing the Roma of some of their most productive citizens. To ensure the population's survival, loyalty to the community began to trump loyalty to the larger society. Romani people lived, worked, and practiced religion away from their countrymen, and- to keep the family and community structures intact- likely began to see non-Roma as undesirable.

An important caveat to remember in examining this early history is that not everyone who left Northern India arrived in Europe. Those members of the population that learned a valuable trade, acquired fertile land, or, for whatever reason, had an easier time assimilating into the local society were much more likely to stay. The dark-

skinned migrants who reached Europe around the fourteenth century were, of course, the ones with the greatest predisposition against assimilation.

If the Roma's out-group identification took shape during the trek to Europe, it was cemented while living under the Ottoman Empire. Because some Roma brought unique skills from India, Persia, and the Byzantine Empire that ensured them economic relevancy early on, they followed the Ottoman expansion into Eastern Europe. The Ottomans used the millet system, which meant Romani populations had some autonomy in governing their own affairs. While they faced moderate discrimination, the lack of alternatives dissuaded many Roma from leaving the territories that would later become Greece, Romania, and Hungary. Barany writes "though their social position was decidedly subordinate and marginal to other groups, most Gypsies fared considerably better in the Ottoman Empire than in other regions. The Roma occupied the lowest tier of the social scale… but they had a definite place in society" (2002, p. 84). Romani populations could make livings as herders and craftsmen, but faced undue taxation whenever they attempted to settle on one piece of land. At first, the Roma's nomadic lifestyle was tolerated. As the Ottoman Empire expanded westward, however, the need for labor and tax revenue rose, and growing Roma populations were increasingly seen as a nuisance. In Wallachia and Moldavia especially, the relatively tolerant Ottoman leadership had a diminished presence, and local populations began to regard the Roma as petty criminals. Leaders sought ways to stop the migration of Romani herders and traders. The first accounts of slavery in these regions were as early as 1348. In Ian Hancock's essay titled "Roma Slavery," he describes slavery as an "abuse committed by the feudal landlords, without any legal base or legitimation." Although tolerated by Ottoman rulers, the Roma certainly could not count on them for legal protection. Laws codifying the treatment of slaves were weak and rarely enforced, and slavery in Eastern Europe continued until 1864 (Hancock, 1997), only two years prior to emancipation in the United States. For the generations of Roma who were bought and sold as slaves, development stagnated. Education was unattainable, and fragmentation from the dominant population increased. While not all of Europe's Roma were enslaved, few fared very well in the Imperial Age. Many Central and Western European states deported the Roma to their colonies overseas, and in Pre-Hapsburg East-Central Europe, "as many as 133 anti-Gypsy laws were written… in 1551-1774" (Barany, 2002, p. 92). "In Prussia in 1722, it became a capital offense just to be a Gypsy" (Crowe & Kolsti, 1991, p. 34). One interesting story, shared by Barany, tells of 18,000 children who were taken away from their parents and sent to schools for forced assimilation. The deployment of education as a tool to erode cultural individuality undoubtedly contributed to the Roma's distrust of that institution. It is also worth noting that in Central and Eastern Europe, churches, that, in some cases, held Roma slaves, were the chief organizers of schools. Barany writes that "they did not concern themselves with Gypsy children until the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century" (2002, p. 88). Even when they did target Romani children, participation came at the cost of abandoning their cultural identity- not to mention their native language. Deeply entrenched anti-Roma attitudes meant that even educated Roma could not count on the same opportunities as their countrymen, and a Hungarian survey found that 90% of Romani populations were illiterate in 1893 (Barany, 2002, p. 87). The Industrial revolution, which offered economic gateways for much of Europe's poor did little for the Roma. The advent of factories and mass production wreaked havoc on the profitability of traditional Romani trades like smithing, and participation in those few new industries which did not require education or special training would have required settling into urban centers, which met resistance both from the Romani culture and the already present urban populations.

The beginning of the 20th century could have been a significant turning point for Roma populations. After all, autocratic rule was on the decline, slavery had been abolished, and states began taking responsibility for services like education. Although the Roma were still without a home-state, governments throughout Europe were showing increased responsiveness to their populations. The First World War, however, drastically set back economic progress in many Eastern societies, and the rise of right-wing Nationalism spelled disaster for the Roma.

In the Great Political Theories, Michael Curtis explains how the formation of European Nation-States harbored populist ideologies. “In the middle of the nineteenth century, nationalism had been liberal in orientation, becoming the focal point for opposition to oppressive or autocratic regimes and foreign control. In the latter part of the century, nationalism became increasingly associated with the right” (1981, p. 235). Theorists like Giuseppe Mazzini laid the groundwork for fascist policies taking hold in Italy, Germany, and Romania. In Romania, especially, attitudes like “integral nationalism,” as explained by David Crowe in The Gypsies of Eastern Europe, “had a detrimental effect on all of the countries minorities… their status in interwar Romania was comparable to that of the Jews, who, though they played a much different role in Romanian society, were treated as second class citizens and subjected to increasing abuse, particularly in the 1930s” (1991, pp. 68-69). Although books have been written about the Porajmos, the Romani word for Holocaust, crimes against Roma still receive only a fraction of the attention that crimes against Jews do. Estimates of the toll on Europe’s Roma population vary from one quarter (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011) to as high as seventy-five percent (Crowe & Kolsti, 1991, p. 45), with some historians suggesting deaths totaled over four million. Whichever figure is accurate, such a wide discrepancy of estimations is indicative of the underwhelming European response to the tragedy. West Germany justified laws enacted before 1943, calling them necessary precautions against criminal behavior, withholding justice from many survivors. Not until 1979 did West Germany concede that such policies were racially motivated, and by this time many of the survivors had already passed away (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2011). Crowe and Kolsti described the Porajmos as a “footnote” in the Nuremburg trials, and no Nazi was charged with crimes against Roma until 1962 (1991, p. 45).

Following the Second World War, Western Europe’s nation-states maintained populist democracies, and Eastern Europe, where most Roma still reside, fell under the Iron Curtain. Interestingly, many Roma maintain relatively positive memories of the communist era. Many cite access to education as a reason for this. For all the faults of communist leadership, socialism meant free education, which created many opportunities for previously disadvantaged populations. Although literacy rates improved slowly under communism, the second half of the twentieth century was in all likelihood insufficient to change Roma attitudes about formal schooling. Barany writes that “Gypsy children were often ostracized by their peers and discriminated against by teachers” (2002, p. 133). Additionally, classes were rarely in Romani. Roma schoolchildren were passed through undeservingly, or clumped in special education classes. Roma literacy remained very low, and few attended secondary school or college. The jumps in Romani employment were largely the results of rapid industrialization and mandatory employment policies in communist states. Many Roma got jobs in factories, which, of course, did not require much education. Steady paychecks were an improvement, but employers maintained negative attitudes the Roma, whose low education rates and contrary cultural attitudes about work made them somewhat unreliable employees. Barany cites Alena Gronzikova, a Romani editor in Prague, who wrote “it was better under communism. The average Gypsy had a job, had welfare subsidies, and he was not beaten up” (2002, p. 152). Indeed, socialist governments worked very hard to clamp down on ethnic conflict, a potentially strong destabilizing force. With collapse of communism, many of these attitudes, which had been simmering below the surface, erupted. For all the successes Europe has had with development and democracy, even the current landscape poses a great deal of problems for the Roma.

In closing, it is vitally important to note the role identity plays in a society, especially one that has faced as much hardship as the Roma. Maslow’s pyramid, a widely accepted tool for determining human needs, only places safety needs and physiological needs ahead of social needs- which include love, affection, and belonging. Identity is very important in filling this need. Additionally, familial and community ties in Roma communities are incredibly strong, and this likely developed because the Roma could not count on being welcomed elsewhere. The same can be said about the next block on Maslow’s pyramid, esteem. On a more practical level, throughout their history, the

Roma were subject to exploitation at the hands of the dominant culture, and may have learned to differentiate themselves as a way to ensure resources, including promising human capital, is retained. Finally, defenders of Europe's current policies do not understand why the Roma choose to maintain cultural practices that may harbor poverty, but after 1400 years of mistreatment, distrust of the majority starts to make sense. In Gypsy Law, which will be thoroughly cited in the following section, Walter Weyrauch writes, "the Gypsies' determination not to assimilate into the dominant society has been crucial to their survival as a separate population" (2001, p. 29). It is not only important to note, however, that the Roma culture is decidedly different, but also what those actual differences are. The next section will explore specific facets of Roma culture which work to subvert the Roma's place in European society.

Culture

As noble a characteristic individuality is in theory, in practice, societies tend to castigate and ostracize people or groups that deviate from the norm. In the last section, the establishment of a Roma identity as an "out-group" was explained through a summary of their history. In the past fifty years, however, and especially since the demise of communism, democratization, social liberalism, and increased inclusiveness have created avenues for advancement for previously disadvantaged populations throughout Europe. Increased political participation and economic advancement by people of different races, religions, genders, and sexual orientations would indicate that modern Europe now provides ample opportunities to groups that fall under the category of "other." Even if the Roma are the population in which it is the most pronounced, it is unlikely that they are the only population to self-identify as outsiders following long periods of discrimination. When presented with the identification argument, many ask why the Roma do not seek the benefits of economic and political assimilation while maintaining their uniquely different culture. What makes coexistence so impossible? Answering this question requires a deeper understanding of what specific practices comprise the Roma identity. This section will briefly touch on two cultural staples; illiteracy and nomadism, and then examine the legitimacy of "Gypsy lawlessness."

Many development experts and policy-makers blame the Roma's persistent poverty on a lack of education. According to a recent Economist article on the Roma, "One of the biggest problems is schooling: Roma children are routinely placed in institutions for the mentally handicapped. A new survey by Amnesty International says that in Slovakia, Roma make up less than 10% of the school-age population but 60% of pupils in special schools. Unsurprisingly, many leave school early, without the skills they need to compete in the job market. Instead they drift into collecting scrap metal, begging or petty crime" (The Economist, 2010). The Roma developed a strong distrust for formal education in the Imperial Age, when schools were used to fragment the population. It is also a reflection of the general distrust the Roma harbor for state governments, who, of course, administer education. While the Roma may recognize that education could lead to more economic opportunities, there are forces at play which prevent a cultural shift. European education, especially in the east, is specifically defined to fit the homogenous societies of the states in which they are implemented. Many European teachers and students complain about misbehaving Roma, who are simply culturally different. Slovakia is not the only country to clump Romani students into remedial classes, but the science of human genetics tells us race has absolutely no bearing on intelligence (Fullwiley, 2010). Conditions of poverty often result in higher incidence of acquired learning disabilities, because so many develop at a young age, but Roma culture undoubtedly plays a role in their persistent failure in schools. The Roma are more often social learners, and their children struggle in schools that mandate sitting in silence for prolonged periods. Even more "well-behaved" Romani students have a tougher road because teachers may expect less from them, and be quick to send them to remedial schools or courses at the first sign of struggle. Furthermore, because they are such a small minority, post-primary education in the Romani language is virtually unheard of, and even primary education in the Roma's language is hard to find. The sub-par schooling received by the Roma translates into far diminished returns, which means there are very few educated Roma to become teachers or role models for young students. This reinforces Romani skepticism of education, which translates into less effort both in and outside the population, further exacerbating the problem. Finally, many professions valued by the Roma, such as herding and music-making, require no formal education.

Since leaving India, the Roma have remained on guard against staying in one place for too long. Even in situations where Roma have played important roles in host economies, the same sorts of jobs which did not require schooling also dissuaded a sedentary lifestyle. Thomas Acton tackles the issue of nomadism head on in his book, Gypsy Politics and Traveler Identity. Acton writes that "travelers' ability (real or perceived) to cross spatial boundaries (including national boundaries) has been seen as a direct threat, particularly within Eastern European countries struggling to establish their 'national identities' after the breakup of the Eastern Bloc" (1997, p. 73). He

goes on to describe how the European Union has led to the relaxing of border control, which creates even more anxiety and xenophobia. The strongest point Acton makes about nomadism, however, is in how it can work to reinforce negative attitudes harbored by a dominant population. "Their nomadism (real or perceived) locates them as 'strangers' within a spatial area. It is easier to blame 'strangers' for deviant behavior (especially when they come and go) rather than blame your 'own' people and thus have to critically examine and possibly undermine or threaten the structure of your 'own' community" (Acton, 1997, pp. 78-79).

One of the most common traits attributed to the Roma is lawlessness. In liberal democratic states, the continuation of discriminatory legislation which targets the Roma is often justified by the high crime rates associated with this population. Many argue that Romani criminal behavior extends far beyond what might be attributed to high poverty rates and diminished access to education; that there is a lawlessness inherent to their culture. The European news media amplifies Romani criminality, and movie and book representations exaggerate wildness. Many Europeans see all Roma as pickpockets and petty thieves. Lawlessness carries more implications than mere criminality, however. Structuralists understand that a turn to crime is often a last resort by a struggling population, but lawlessness would imply that a population will steal and cheat even when presented with viable alternatives. Populations will naturally trust someone who turns to crime out of necessity before someone they deem inherently lawless. Are the Roma lawless? Social theory suggests not. Thomas Hobbes famously described the life of man outside the protections of society as "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Leviathan, 1651). Social contract theory, and all that has followed, is built upon this notion that human beings have only survived as a species because of our ability to band together and create civil society. The simple act of relinquishing some liberty and agreeing to the rules of civilization protects man from the harshness of life on the outside. Hobbes' second law of nature states that, to ensure their own wellbeing, men will "lay down this right to all things; and be contented with so much liberty against other men as he would allow other men against himself" (Leviathan). All societies subscribe to this basic rule. Keeping this in mind, it is clear that the labeling of Roma as lawless is nonsensical. All societies have laws. The survival of the Roma indicates that they are merely using different laws to govern and protect themselves than the dominant society. This conclusion raises two obvious, though much larger questions: what sorts of rules do the Roma play by, and why is their law so often confused for lawlessness?

Before unpacking the specifics of the laws which govern Roma society, it is worth noting that there is a long history of minorities' unique norms and rules being misinterpreted by the dominant social group. Perhaps the most well-known example is the acceptability of charging interest in Jewish Talmudic law clashing with Christian dogma that forbade usury in Renaissance Europe. Many scholars and historians, such as Niall Ferguson, author of The Ascent of Money, trace the roots of anti-Semitism back to this cultural discrepancy. It is also worth noting that many Jews turned to careers in finance in large part because there were roadblocks to owning land. When a group is denied access to the predominant source of livelihood, improvisation becomes a necessity, and the new means of support are often absorbed into the traditions of the people. For almost a millennium and a half, the Roma have faced institutional and informal roadblocks to accessing the formal economies where they lived. Naturally, many Roma sought new ways to provide for themselves and their families. One of the most controversial and quoted aspects of Romani law is the proviso which, in some cases, allows for theft. Although the Roma are very much a heterogeneous group, and that law which is written- usually the exception- is frequently contradictory, researchers have consistently found this to be true. In Gypsy Law, Walter Weyraugh writes "studies indicate that the most frequent violations of the host countries' laws by Gypsies are theft and fraud. Some have interpreted this phenomenon as a reflection of a Gypsy penchant for lawlessness. The Gypsies, however, have no moral objections to these activities so long as one does not victimize another Gypsy, causes no physical harm, and takes no more than is necessary to survive" (2001, p. 49). The caveat that stealing from other Roma is forbidden is very important in understanding that the practice developed as a way to protect Romani communities from outside abuse. This

does not mean Roma will turn to thievery as a first choice. The prevalence of outright theft is greatly exaggerated because it is grouped in with other, less definitive forms of stealing. Welfare abuse is a common tactic. Although definitively immoral in the eyes of most European taxpayers, it is important to remember that the Roma are a small minority that is almost entirely unrepresented in government. Through history, states have shown very little responsiveness to the Roma population at best, and at worst, targeted the Roma for extermination. It would be unfair to expect Roma to have a strong moral obligation to remain truthful in dealings with a government that does not represent them, rather an unfriendly and frequently abusive majority population. Regardless of cultural background, most would agree that hoodwinking a powerful authority figure is downright admirable when the authority in question is guilty of perpetrating injustice. From the perspective of the Roma, European state governments fit this mold. Weyrauch writes "Gypsies believe they cannot expect sympathy or even neutrality from the host country, an attitude that undoubtedly affects some of their conduct (Weyrauch, 2001, p. 55). After a millennium of discrimination, why would the Roma draw any other conclusion?

A great deal of Roma behavior that draws criticism from European society is even more ambiguous than petty crime or welfare abuse. European consumers are reluctant to buy from Romani salesmen, because it is common knowledge that the Roma live by the maxim "let the buyer beware." This, of course, makes it harder for these salesmen to make a living, which drives them towards other economic activities, but it also contributes to the Roma's duplicitous reputation. Mores governing right and wrong, honesty, and possession, however, are not as universal as many westerners take for granted. One of the most vital functions of society is to manage the distribution of resources. Western societies place a great deal of emphasis on merit-driven possession. In some cultures, however, it is normal that should you need something from a neighbor, you can take it. In the Soloman Islands, it is considered taboo to refuse if asked for something (Troost, 2004). Furthermore, Weyrauch points out that "a host culture may tolerate essentially fraudulent advertising and sales practices- for example, in so called clearance sales and 'bait-and-switch' schemes- as long as they are employed by people who are perceived as members of the dominant culture and who meet the minimum standards of local custom" (Weyrauch, 2001, p. 50). There are thousands, if not millions, of financiers in the western world who make money on schemes like credit-default swaps, hedge fund manipulation, and shady investment practices, often- though not always- technically legal. Beneficiaries of frivolous lawsuits are hardly admired by the population at-large, but, as with finance, scorn tends to be directed at a system which allows for manipulation rather than the individuals who employ such tactics. Additionally, many Europeans are beneficiaries of colonialization, which was essentially, in most cases, the stealing of resources from other continents to supplement European livelihood.

Lastly, it must be noted how over-stated Roma criminality is. Throughout his text, Weyrauch argues that crime is only perpetrated by a small section of the Roma population, even going so far as to argue that "these persons were held in low repute as deviants within their Romani communities" (2001, p. 8). Barany suggests that, "according to some sociologists and Gypsy leaders, the bulk of Romani criminals come from the most disadvantaged 30-5% of the Romani population; their criminality, in turn, is largely responsible for the way ordinary people view the entire Romani community" (2002). Many Europeans might argue that, if only 30-5% of Roma are actual thieves, the other 70-95% is engaging in duplicitous, theft-like behavior, such as begging, conning, abusing welfare and committing fraud. Each of these activities, while certainly all questionable from a western standpoint, have varying levels of justifiability and legality. This attitude creates a vicious cycle. Romani people who wish to assimilate into the formal economy have trouble doing so, because they are deemed untrustworthy. To make a living, they will instead turn to other, frequently duplicitous practices which in turn reinforce their stereotype as untrustworthy. In concluding, Weyrauch advocates for the importance of Roma culture, even where it conflicts with western norms, writing "it assures the survival of the group by emphasizing group loyalty and

relationships over the rights of individual members and it usually prevails when it comes into open clashes with the surrounding legal system of the state" (2001, p. 86).

This examination of Roma culture has several implications, though, unfortunately, few suggestions. In an ideal world, populations could live in prosperity without having to abandon near and dear cultural practices. In reality, however, the Roma will likely have to educate themselves and avoid criminal activity if they wish to establish a presence in Europe's formal economy. The author hopes a middle ground can be pioneered. If schools taught in Romani, for example, Roma children could be educated without seeming to break family and community ties. As Weyrauch points out, "rules that have the appearance of being irrational, antiquated, and mysterious- such as the Gypsy laws relating to states of purity and pollution – turn out on closer inspection to serve the community's need to preserve its sense of identity" (2001). Specific practices like theft are not what the Roma fear losing through assimilation; rather, it is their identity that is at stake. These traditions and beliefs have merely evolved as vehicles to keeping identity intact. Culture is dynamic, and if assimilation were possible without abandonment of Roma identity, why would anyone choose crime and poverty over well-paying jobs and prosperity? In this paper's next and final section, the external political factors which necessitate a choice between severing cultural ties and living in exclusion will be explored.

Politics

With all the things working against the Roma, and such a tumultuous history, some might wonder why they are given so little attention. The Roma are different from many other disadvantaged populations on the globe in that they mostly reside in thriving democracies. Generally speaking, peoples who face great struggles tend to live in states with low levels of freedom. Few would expect to find such a struggling group on the prosperous European continent, and so claims of privilege are often ignored. Europeans, many of whom are quick to donate time and money to help struggling populations in Africa, East Asia, and Latin America, have far less sympathy for the Roma simply because of geography. Acknowledging a system of privilege in Europe by its citizens would imply their own successes are not earned, but perhaps illegitimate. Instead, Europeans are quick to blame the Roma for their predicament. Many who are informed about the plight assume that democratic institutions offer plenty of avenues for advancement, and therefore they are at fault for stagnation. Such assumptions are not totally unfounded. Democracies are highly responsive to their populations, and struggling citizens generally have means to address their problems. Also, democracy is expensive, which supports the correlation with developed states. In Europe, however, the Roma prove to be a notable exception to this trend. The political, social, and economic successes of their countrymen hide the Roma's struggles, while the benefits of living under a free government are largely lost on the Romani people, because access to resources has been so thoroughly formalized. Furthermore, some European democratic institutions even protract the Roma's exclusion on some levels, by promoting fervent nationalism and majority despotism. In this final section, the European political system that entrenches a system of privilege will be thoroughly examined.

The link between democracy and development is not completely erroneous. Most of the world's higher developed countries tend to be democratic, and the reverse is also true. Additionally, political rights and freedoms are indisputably a valuable component of a high quality of life. In assessing the happiness of a population, civil liberties and human rights cannot be ignored, and democracies certainly provide these things more than other forms of government. The danger lies, however, in assuming that populations living in functioning democracies have no concerns whatsoever. European democracies tend to think of themselves in this way. Romania is home to more Roma than any other country, many of whom live without basic amenities like plumbing or electricity. In 2007, Romania joined the EU and became a donor of Official Development Assistance. A United Nations Development Programme newsletter summarized a ceremony honoring this accomplishment. "State-Secretary Raduta Matache remembered the first humanitarian aid received by Romania after the fall of communism in 1989 and, years later, after floods and said that today 'it's time to help others'." (2008). This claim displays a pronounced ignorance- willful or otherwise- of the Roma's situation. The Roma, a very scattered and hard to count group, are minorities everywhere they live. Even in Romania, which is home to more Roma than any other country, they only make up 2.5 percent of the population (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). Because, generally speaking, democratic governments can survive by keeping the majority of their population happy, a struggling minority group may not draw the concern of policy setters. Governments are also interested in presenting an image of prosperity both to their voters and to the international community. Democratic leaders love reporting aggregated statistics to create an image of success. Hungary has a GDP per capita of $19,000, which is a respectable 63rd in the world (Central Intelligence Agency, 2011). This average, however, hides the problems of the Roma living in Budapest's District VIII, where "many Roma/Gypsy families found themselves homeless or in run-down and unsanitary housing with practically no amenities, but according to various sources, this was not even the city's most dilapidated" (Gil-Robles, 2006). As Europe becomes more interconnected, this problem will only get worse, as EU-wide statistics get used with increasing frequency. These aggregated numbers are also used by governments to set education, housing, and employment policy, as pointed out in The European Roma Rights Centre's 2004 Report on The Situation of the Roma in an Enlarged European Union. Following a summit in Lisbon in the year

2000, European heads of state set five benchmarks for improvement in European education for the next decade, each of which targets an aggregate percentage of the entire state population. The ERRC's report suggests that these policies may even hurt the Roma, as schools may disregard troublesome minority students in order to meet the aggressive goals set in Lisbon. There is no mention of "racial segregation and other forms of ethnicity-based exclusion as a threat to the realization of the Lisbon goals" (European Roma Rights Centre, 2004). The report goes on to cite many, many reports of similar cases of exclusion in various sectors of society. This is why the European Roma Rights Centre has pegged "disaggregated data collection" as a strategic priority for 2010-2012.

Getting ignored is not always, unfortunately, the worst thing that can happen to a struggling population under a democracy. Barany writes, "Although the East European states established democratic institutional structures soon after the fall of communism, the accommodation of ethnic minorities was generally not at the top of their agendas. Even in states that have been relatively quick to create the institutional framework for dealing with minority concerns, many view democracy as majority rule and overlook minority rights. These and other problems have helped create an environment in which politics of national identity poses a threat to democratization, especially where the state has been designated as the national-state of the dominant ethnic group" (2002, pp. 40-41). Because so many European countries are nation-states, the Roma face more difficulties than they would in multi-ethnic democracies. Thomas Acton explains how the Roma fall victim to the "yardstick of otherness." There is a natural tendency of homogenous societies to define themselves not by what they are, but what they are not. Non-Roma take pride in not exhibiting all the negative characteristics seen in Romani populations. If dominant cultures are successful in defining vagrancy, for example, as a Roma characteristic, they can revel in their comparative decency. This is certainly not to say all Europeans are racist, nor does it suggest that Europeans are unwilling to trust individual Romani members of society, but if the majority can successfully attribute all of their country's shortcomings to a minority population, they will resultantly have more positive feelings about their own identity. This fosters an environment of racism. Targeted violence against Roma is commonplace in Europe as a result of racist attitudes. Last September, a family of six Roma were shot in their homes in Bratislava, Slovakia (The Economist, 2010).

Individuals are not the only perpetrators of racial injustice, however. In some instances, whole populations which constitute a majority use their superior numbers to impose unfavorable conditions upon a minority. This process was called tyranny of the majority by John Stuart Mill, and majority despotism by Alexis de Tocqueville, both of whom are noted 18th Century proponents of democracy. Many European states are considered populist, meaning policy is dictated by the majority. With so many anti-Roma attitudes, majority rule is often disastrous for the Roma. Anti-Roma attitudes are hardly taboo, it would seem. "One recent newspaper survey found 68% of people wanted all Italy's Gypsies expelled, whether or not they held Italian passports" (Walker, 2008). Some politicians have even been accused of breaking the law to push through popular anti-Roma policies. After a series of Romani expulsions In August, 2010, French President Nicolas Sarkozy drew harsh criticism from the European Roma Rights Centre and other groups. Sarkozy's government argued that the Roma who were removed from areas surrounding Paris, although holding EU passports, had violated the terms of their work agreements by not seeking formal employment. Sarkozy also argued the Roma camps were "sources of illegal trafficking, of profoundly shocking living standards, of exploitation of children for begging, of prostitution and crime" (BBC, 2010). Although the legality of the unemployed Roma's stay in France is up for debate, depending on the interpretation of a 2004 European Union Directive on Freedom of Movement, the methodology Sarkozy used to expel the Roma unquestionably violated the EU's Charter of Fundamental rights, which prohibits collective expulsions and race-based discrimination. According to the European Roma Rights Centre, an interior ministry circular specifically targets "Rom," the French word for Roma, for expulsion, and no non-Romani citizens have been found to be involved. Nevertheless, "opinion polls suggest that as many as 65% of French people back the

government's tough line" (BBC, 2010). Attitudes about the Roma are no friendlier in Eastern Europe; in Romania, a popular bill which would have changed the official name of Roma to "Gypsies" was recently voted down after it was decided that it would violate the Roma's right to self-identification. Romanian President Traian Basescu, though actually staunchly opposed to the bill, but he has been criticized in the past for calling a journalist a "stinking Gypsy" (Chiriac, 2011). These widespread attitudes undoubtedly play out in policy setting.

Most democracies, especially those which are considered successful, have built-in safeguards against majority despotism, such as a free press, a fair judicial system, and, of course, elections. Roma have a very difficult time accessing these three formalized avenues for justice, however, and their presence in some ways only creates the illusion of fairness. Because of staggeringly low education rates, Roma are less likely to become lawyers or journalists, and are not very effective at self-advocacy. Organizations like the ERRC must do the bulk of the work. Weyrauch suggests that talking to journalists about Romani culture and way of life is frequently taboo in Roma culture. Policy is also slow to change because the Roma are so disengaged with politics. Members of government, almost all of whom are non-Romani, do not try to woo Roma voters, and resultantly are not very responsive to those populations. Roma are hesitant to invest energy in politics, because they know that even if turnout among was higher, their small numbers in each country would make change very difficult. Low turnout promotes the idea among Europeans that the Roma are content with the status quo. When becoming victims of discrimination or other forms of injustice, most Europeans can turn to a fair judicial system for assistance. The strong legal traditions in European countries make it so other forms of retributive or restorative justice are not recognized; Europeans are content to leave matters in the hands of the seemingly unbiased state. Formal legal protection is much more difficult to access for the Roma, however. The Roma, who have their own laws and legal system, are skeptical of European state courts, and, in many cases, do not even attempt seeking justice through formal avenues. The number of Romani lawyers is also very low. In his famous essay, Democracy in America, Alexis De Tocqueville writes, "democratic government favors the political power of lawyers. When the wealthy, the nobles, and the prince are excluded from government, the lawyers come, as it were, into their own for they alone become the only enlightened and skilled men for a nation to choose outside its own ranks" (1840, p. 310)

Political injustice is much easier to impose on vulnerable groups like the Roma, because they live in perpetual poverty. In the same way that political protection has been formalized, economic access has gone the same route in developed Europe. In un-free and poorer countries, disadvantaged populations must get creative in finding ways to make ends meet. In rentier states on the African continent, corruption is frequently a source of income for struggling groups, simply because there are no viable alternatives. Furthermore, less structured economies are much more dynamic, and much less regulated, allowing for greater creativity in entrepreneurship. South African townships, for example, are riddled with barber shops which would likely not meet tax or health code regulations in the developed world. In Europe, however, strong formal institutions as well as social mores are in place which clamp down on corrupt or informal economic activity. Enforcement of economic regulation is much stronger, because the consensus- which is supported by the experience of the majority population- is that there is ample opportunity for any member of society to succeed, so long as the rules are followed. Informal routes are made taboo and, in many cases, illegal. This is not to suggest that the Roma living in Europe unequivocally face more challenges than some impoverished African populations, however it is definitely worth noting that many Romani communities face equal levels of material poverty, but with stronger European institutions blocking the economic activity relied on by some developing groups in Africa and elsewhere. What Europe instead offers the Roma is a chance access to the admittedly more lucrative formal economy. Accessing this economy, however, can only be done on the terms of the dominant society, and necessitates a cultural shift by interested Romani wage-earners. Employers are not interested in uneducated applicants, which, given the cyclical and mutually reinforced exclusion of the Roma in schools, creates an inherent inequality. It would be utterly disingenuous to suggest

European states have not implemented any policies to improve the position of the Roma. Many of these policies, however, come in the form of scholarships to young students. The recipients of such scholarships are not simply the “best and brightest” from Romani communities, but also those most prepared for assimilation. In many cases, the Roma identity of these individuals must be sacrificed, including sometimes severing ties with family members. Universities and employers do not want to be associated with traits that are considered inherent to the Roma. Because there are so few middle and upper class Roma, economic ascension usually means departure from Romani communities. This has created a sort of “brain drain” within European states’ borders, halting any real, population-wide development for the Roma and reinforcing Romani xenophobia.

As with every argument in the previous two sections, no single one of these factors just mentioned alone would be enough to condemn the Roma to poverty and exclusion. The union of so many nefarious forces, however, creates an undeniable system of privilege. For the Roma, self-imposed exile and less lucrative informal economic activities have become the path of least resistance. Democratic-Nationalistic Privilege is an enormous, though not insurmountable foe. This population’s incredible ability to adapt gives the author reason to hope. The author also believes the Roma’s worst times are behind them. For all its faults, Europe is a continent that has done a great deal of good for its citizens and the world, and its people are interested in seeing the execution of justice. As soon as they adopt fairer attitudes about the group called “Gypsies”, institutions and norms will slowly start to change, leading for a great shift towards prosperity for the Roma. Until that time comes, the Roma will continue to persevere, as they always have.

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