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Notorious but Invisible: How Romani Media Portrayals Invalidate Romani Identity and Existence In Mainstream Society

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NOTORIOUS BUT INVISIBLE: HOW ROMANI MEDIA PORTRAYALS INVALIDATE

ROMANI IDENTITY AND EXISTANCE IN MAINSTREAM SOCIETY

by

MELANIE R COVERT

Under the Direction of Rosalind Chou, Phd

ABSTRACT

The Romani are a group of individuals that have been acknowledged in newspapers, television, movies and other forms of media but remain invisible as a people world-wide. Through the use of qualitative interviews, content analysis and qualitative synthesis, this study investigates why this phenomenon occurs in the United States as well as Europe. Overall, it was found that media portrayals negatively impact the Romani's ability to successfully acculturate, increases their experiences of prejudice and discrimination and negatively impacts their social, physical and mental health. Romani media portrayals also appropriate the Romani's ability to define themselves to mainstream society and impacts their identity development.

INDEX WORDS: Race, Inequality, Racism, Prejudice, Identity, Assimilation, Media

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DEDICATION

To the many Romani whose narratives fill these pages whom I have come to love.

"Do not waste time bothering whether you 'love' your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him."
– C.S. Lewis,

And to Shaun the very best part of my life. You have helped make all my dreams come true and supported me whatever I've done. I'll never deserve you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1   INTRODUCTION

In October 2012, *The Guardian* reported that the airing of the widely popular *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (MBFGW) of the United Kingdom had reportedly led to a significant increase in physical and sexual assaults, hostility and bullying motivated by racism and directed toward Romani in European schools. The consequences of these racially motivated behaviors included an increase in Romani withdrawals from public schools and documented emotional damage to Romani children (Plunkett, 2012). These discriminatory actions directed at Romani pushed against the strides they have made in the UK towards successful assimilation.

Barry (2001) indicates that the establishment of relationships is among the most crucial for those seeking to assimilate. The prevalence of bullying directed toward Romani within schools and in the broader social context creates a barrier to the establishment of these vital relationships. The prevalence of bullying motivated by racial prejudice is known to increase the negative outcomes associated with the process of assimilation or acculturation, thus increasing the risk for negative personal and social outcomes for those on the receiving end of this bullying. These negatives outcomes include restriction to social mobility, lack of access to social resources and decreased overall health (Forester et al., 2013; Mesinger et al. 2012; Oppedal, Roysamb & Sam, 2004; Paradies, 2006).

Immigrant groups in the United States, such as Romani groups, also encounter resistance to their assimilation and acculturation on several fronts. Among the public spaces that prejudice and resistance are encountered, popular media portrayals, including television, movies and newscasts, are among the most notable (Crocket et al., 2007; Torres, 2010). Research shows that American Romani groups encounter resistance to their traditional occupations and traditional

places of residence (Covert, 2015; Sutherland, 1975). The resistance Romani encounter have been documented through media portrayals. In**,** an episode of *MBFGW,* Romani are repeatedly turned away from renting reception venues once the owners learn the ethnicity of their potential customers. Romani are told that the rental space is suddenly "full" or that mistakes in the venue's calendar have been made. The Romani are told that promised spaces are already booked or their calls are simply never returned (Poppelwell, 2012). Despite this brief glimpse into the prejudice Romani encounter, media portrayals are largely silent on the mistreatment they experience from police, school administrators and employers.

Romani in Europe face a similar fate though their plight is much more visible than for those in the US. European Romani often encounter resistance from educators and "mainstream" parents when their children try to assimilate in classrooms (Levinson, 2007) and are repeatedly driven from places of residence as they seek a permanent "space" in which to settle **(**Petrova, 2004**).** As already identified, the portrayal of Romani in the UK version of *MBFGW* had a significant impact in the level of bullying Romani experience. Mainstream individuals resist attempts by Romani to assimilate, pushing them further into the separate lifestyles they have held for generations. The extent that these experiences parallel those of U.S. Romani remains to be seen.

John Berry (1997) proposes a fourfold model of acculturation, identifying that immigrants and minorities may choose to adopt one of four modes of acculturation or move through them in a linear model. Among the four modes, assimilation, accommodation, marginalization and isolation, Berry proposes that two of the four modes, assimilation and integration, were the most likely to produce positive mental health and social outcomes. Despite this projection, through choice or social stratification, many immigrants and minorities are

unable to follow these "recommended" paths of acculturation due the complex barriers posed by mainstream society. They may lack the social capital to follow their chosen method of acculturation or lack the desire to do so because of ongoing experiences with discrimination (Williams & Berry, 1991). Berry and others show that the process of acculturation can last for multiple generations (1997) and thus the negative outcomes of engaging in the process of acculturation are experienced inter-generationally.

A study by Covert (2015) examines the acculturative practices of the American Romani, an often unrecognized and unacknowledged minority group in the United States. Their experiences exemplify multi-generational experiences of prejudice and racism and allow for a better understanding of how the lives of minority, multi-generational and recent immigrant families are affected by the process of acculturation. In addition to the prejudice and discrimination they experience because of their minority and immigration status (Covert) American Romani are also placed in the unique position of being visible to mainstream society through negative media portrayals, largely through erroneous reality TV programs and in stereotypical roles on network television shows and movies.

Research on minority portrayals in entertainment media overwhelmingly identifies that negative portrayals of minorities influence negative attitudes of the majority group towards the minority group. These portrayals also influence the treatment of the majority group towards the minority group, influence minority groups' willingness to interact with the majority group and impact the minority group's ability to successfully navigate social spaces. These barriers increase the challenge of acculturation for minority groups within the United States (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013; Fryberg et al., 2008; Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Schemer, 2012; Schlueter & Davidov, 2013).

Given the established reality of racism and prejudice in the lives of American Romani groups (Covert, 2015) and the experience of negative portrayals in reality television and other media outlets, I propose to further examine the extent to which these portrayals have impacted their ability to successfully assimilate and how these experiences have impacted the economic, social and mental health of the Romani. Further, to better understand how the American Romani experience may differ from another group that is more visible within their society, I propose to compare their experiences to a group that is much more visible and more widely researched than American Romani, European Romani.

Romani within Europe will serve well as a comparison group for Romani in the USA for a number of reasons:

European Romani are more widely studied than Romani in the USA, giving a wealth of information regarding the Romani experience. Both European and American Romani experience a reluctance to reveal their identities and a feeling of "otherness." Both are currently seeing a decrease in traditional lifestyles. Most Romani in the USA have some European origins. Both experience an intersection of sexism and poverty along with their issues of race. Scholars from both locations often feel Romani women are left out of the feminist discourse. Both have experienced being exposed to the mainstream through *MBFGW* as well as other media portrayals. (Asylum Aid, 2002; Lane, Spencer & Jones, 2014; Levinson, 2007; Petrova, 2004)**.**

Through a mining of data I collected in qualitative interviews with Romani Women, a review of qualitative analysis with Romani throughout America and Europe, and a review of current media portrayals in the USA and Europe I hope to further explore the impact of media on mainstream resistance to Romani assimilation, on the experience of prejudice and discrimination by Romani and on the overall lived experience of Romani in the United States and Europe.

2   LITERATURE REVIEW

Berry proposes four models of acculturation utilized by minority and immigrant groups. Berry's model proposes four states of acculturation including Integration, Assimilation, Separation and Marginalization (Berry, 1997). Individuals, minority or immigrant, who navigate the process outlined by Berry are undoubtedly impacted by the influence of the mainstream when determining which strategy they will utilize in both their public and private lives. Individuals must not only take into account their own preferences for navigating this process but are also influenced by perceived expectations (Kunst & Sam, 2013) of others. When societal attitudes and expectations are in conflict with their own preferences, minorities and immigrants may experience increased levels of negative individual outcomes. These include psychological dysfunction and negative social outcomes, including social stratification (Kunst & Sam).

2.1   Assimilation and Influence of Society

Research shows that the dominant group's perception of minorities or immigrants, often impacted by attitudes disseminated through the media (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000), has a significant impact on the minority's /immigrant's ability to decide what acculturative strategy they will engage in. A study by Croucher (2013) identifies that among Western Europeans, those that feel threatened by immigrant groups are less likely to believe that immigrants desire to assimilate, thus increasing their overall resistance to immigrant presence and alternate acculturative strategies. Rojas, Nvas, Sayans-Jimenez and Cuadrado (2014) show that Spaniards who have greater prejudice towards immigrants prefer full assimilation in the public and private lives of the immigrants. Those who hold less prejudice are more open to immigrants choosing integration in their public and private lives. Among immigrant groups, those who hold less prejudice towards the majority are open to public assimilation and integration in their private

lives. Those who experience greater prejudice are more likely to prefer that they integrate publically only enough to meet their needs while privately they prefer to remain separate.

Of all mechanisms for disseminating mainstream attitudes about the assimilation of minority groups, mainstream media is among the most salient (Mastro & Greenberg, 2000). Research on minority portrayals in mainstream media demonstrates how these portrayals influence the attitudes of the majority group. Negative portrayals have a significant impact on the way majority group members treat minority group members, influence minority groups' willingness to interact with the majority group and impact the minority groups' ability to successfully navigate acculturative preferences (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013; Fryberg et al., 2008; Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Schemer, 2012; Schlueter & Davidov, 2013). Among those in America and Europe who are engaged in the challenging process of navigating social spaces within the acculturative process and simultaneously combat the effects of mainstream media, are the Romani.

2.2   Who are the Romani?

The Romani people are a recognized persecuted minority worldwide (Hancock, 2002). Originally thought to be of Indian descent by some scholars, they are dispersed throughout Europe facing prejudice, poverty and centuries old laws that often leave them without housing or work or an ability to access appropriate educational services without the threat of discrimination (Hancock). Scholarly literature has been largely silent on the plight of the American Romani, a group small in number that has faced, and continues to face, a great deal of discrimination in the United States.

The plight of the present-day Romani in Europe continues to be a desperate one. The experience of Romani in Europe has been compared to being Black in the American south during the Era of Jim Crow (Lane, Spencer & Jones, 2014).European Romani face significant persecution, lack state protection and are often found in destitute living conditions (Asylum Aid, 2002; Opera, 2014). European Romani lack social power (Petrova, 2004), face resistance from mainstream institutions (Levinson, 2002) and are vilified in the media (Lane, Spencer & Jones).

Little research exists regarding the current plight of American Romani however, a recent study by Covert (2015) highlights the intergenerational experience of stratification and the fear/mistrust that Romani have developed toward the majority group in the US, known as "Gadje." This study highlights the interpersonal and structural prejudice that Romani face in their schools, jobs and local communities. Participants were found to be victims of bullying, violence and some report being routinely targeted by local law enforcement.

In addition to uncovering prejudice as a daily part of the lives of American Romani, Covert's (2015) study highlights the negative portrayal of Romani in popular reality television such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* and *American Gypsy*. These shows portray Romani, categorized as minorities and/or immigrants, in a negative and stereotypical manner. In *MBFGW* this plays out as members of the show routinely have run-ins with the law, encourage under-age marriage and place little value on education. They are often portrayed as violent, immodest in their dress and "crafty" (Poppelwell, 2012).

The Romani's unique position of being largely invisible in the US as a people group with the majority of their notoriety coming from mainstream media is, I propose, a dangerous one. These portrayals have the potential to have significant negative social and individual affects. Research has overwhelmingly shown that negative media portrayals, whether in the news or

television/movies can have significant social affects (Esses, Medianu & Lawson, 2013; Fryberg et al., 2008; Leavitt et al., 2015; Mastro & Greenberg, 2000; Schemer, 2012; Schlueter & Davidov, 2013). Though already identified in the previous section, in the coming section, I seek to further unfold the impact of media on minority and immigrant groups and its role as a catalyst for negative individual and social outcomes.

2.3   The Negative Impact of Media Portrayals

Mastro and Greenberg (2000), in a 20 year review of minority portrayals on television, discusses the means by which negative portrayals of minorities in the media can significantly increase held stereotypes and serve as the primary informant about groups that are largely unknown. Mastro and Atwell (2012) identify that media plays a role in defining group norms, validating group identities and memberships and creating stereotypes about specific groups. Television shows create norms of thought and treatment towards minorities that are often erroneous. Further, Mastro and Greenberg identify that the majority of minority portrayals are negative, most notably those shows portraying Latinos. The media portrayals of other minority groups in America, such Indigenous Americans, are similar to that of Romani in that they are often singularly portrayed in stereotypical roles (Leavitt, 2015).

Immigrant groups fare as poorly as minority groups in their limited portrayals and the ways in which they are negatively impacted by these portrayals. Schemer (2012) finds that when immigrants are portrayed in a negative light during political campaigns, negative outgroup attitudes significantly increased. Schlueter and Davidov (2013) report that negative media portrayals of immigrants not only increase negative outgroup perceptions but make outgroups overestimate the size of minority groups and increase the immigrant group's belief that the outgroup poses a threat to their ability to successfully navigate the culture. Klingeren,

Boomgaarden, Viefenthart and de Vareese (2014) also report that attitudes in mainstream media impact the estimation of immigrant size and influence the development of positive or negative attitudes towards immigrants in the Netherlands. Based on his theory, Berry would argue that the outcome of negative minority portrayals is a significant increase in the experience of negative personal and social outcomes (Berry et al., 1989).

Esses, Medianu and Lawson (2013) find that common portrayals of immigrants in the media are dehumanizing and spread erroneous ideas. Erroneous ideas spread by negative media portrayals include common themes of the immigrant's potential to threaten society, their potential to be terrorists or to spread infectious diseases. Mastro (2015) identifies that media portrayals also have the ability to shape public policy related to immigrant groups and have the potential to exacerbate racial tensions between immigrant groups and mainstream society.

Undoubtedly, research supports that negative media portrayal of minorities and immigrants has the potential to increase discriminatory attitudes and actions among mainstream individuals thus increasing the prejudice and discrimination they are likely to experience. Bissel and Parrot (2013) identify a direct link between mainstream media and the development of prejudice and/or bias towards groups including women and racial minorities.

2.4 Prejudice and Discrimination as an Outcome of Portrayals and Their Effects

Prejudice, commonly defined by attitudes towards a group or specific individuals within a group, is comprised of many individual and social components (Stangor, 2009). Prejudice, at the individual level may look like hostility, rejection or strongly held negative beliefs that take on behavioral forms. At the societal level prejudice most often results in discrimination, unfair and unequal treatment, and looks like social stratification, resistance of mainstream groups to the

presence of minority groups and widely accepted discriminatory practices towards immigrant or minority groups (COA, 2007).

Outcomes related to the experience of prejudice and discrimination are poor (Karlsen & Nazroo, 2001). The experience of prejudice has been closely associated with increased rates of poverty (Crandall & Stangor, 2005). Life satisfaction is decreased. Social support and resources are far scarcer among those who experience prejudice on a consistent basis. Williams (1999) identifies that racism and discrimination have a negative impact on SES, increase negative health outcomes, decrease overall social mobility and limit opportunities to improve one's SES. Liebkid and Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) identify that the experience of discrimination is closely connected with poor psychological outcomes among immigrant groups.

Among the most detrimental outcomes of regular encounters with prejudice and discrimination is the potential for internalization of prejudice. When routinely exposed to negative attitudes towards one's group, negative treatment because of group membership and negative portrayals of one's group in mainstream media, the individual may come to internalize these attitudes. This internalization may lead to significant harm to one's identity and a decrease in one's coping ability (Manzo & Bailey, 2005).

2.5 The Internalization of Prejudice

As already identified, media portrayals are among the most influential sources of prejudice. Mainstream media increases the extent to which dominant groups are exposed to prejudice towards minority groups, they also increase the amount of stereotypical portrayals minority groups are exposed to. These portrayals have the ability to significantly impact the identity development of minority groups (Mastro, 2009). This may be particularly harmful to

minority groups as minorities may come to internalize stereotypes given enough exposure, even when recognizing these stereotypes as harmful (Manzo & Bailey, 2005).

The internalization of negative stereotypes perpetrated by dominant groups has the potential to impact self-image in a significant way (Jones et al., 2004; Parham et al., 2000). Mastro (2015) identifies that media attitudes towards, and portrayals of, minorities can significantly impact an individual's self-concept. Studies show that stereotypical portrayals not only affect social attitudes but can impact the individual by influencing self-stereotyping, harming self-esteem, interrupting coping behaviors and increasing depression (Fryberg et al., 2008, Leavitt et al.). Negative social representations have also been associated with poor psychological functioning (Fryberg, 2002). Rivandanevra, Ward and Gordon (2007) find that among Latino youth, lower social self-esteem was associated with frequent television viewing.

The impact of negative media portrayals is especially harmful as it has the potential to prevent minorities from utilizing identification with their ethnic identity as a buffer against the harmful effects of prejudice (Crocker & Major, 1989). Studies show that those who have a strong identification with their ethnic identity are less likely to be affected negatively by the prejudice they encounter (Crocker & Major) and may be more able to buffer the negative effects of media influences (Rivandanevra, Ward & Gordon, 2007).

2.6   Research Questions

Covert (2015) establishes that prejudice and discrimination are a part of the Romani experience in the United States as a minority and/or immigrant group. Additionally, Covert highlights that the most notable and sometimes singular exposure of Romani to the American public is through the medium of reality television, which portrays Romani in a stereotypical and

discriminatory way. As already discussed, studies show that minorities and/or immigrant groups who experience discrimination and prejudice in their efforts to successfully interact with the dominate culture experience a variety of negative outcomes. Given this reality, I propose to investigate the following research questions:

What media portrayals of Romani in the United States are currently in existence? How does this compare to media portrayals for Romani in Europe? How do Romani discuss the impact of these portrayals in the United States and Europe?

Have negative media portrayals significantly impacted the lives of Romani in the United States and Europe and, if so, in what way?

Have negative media portrayals lead to an increase in barriers to assimilation for Romani in the United States and Europe?

Do Romani who experience prejudice and barriers to assimilation experience a negative impact on their social, economic, physical and/or mental health? If yes, how do these outcomes effect their overall lived experience as immigrants and/or minorities?

After delving into the literature and other sources I utilized for this study I found that additional questions arose relating to the impact of these concepts on Romani identity and their ability to buffer these harmful effects in line with the literature discussed in this review. In keeping with the approach of grounded theory, I followed this line of inquiry as it arose and added additional questions to those I initially posed. These include the following:

Does Romani identity serve as a buffer against the negative outcomes produced by media portrayals? How do Romani define themselves and how do the opinions of dominant cultures, influenced by media portrayals, impact this definition?

3   METHODOLOGY

3.1   Study Population

The study population, or subjects of inquiry for this study include interviews I conducted with American Romani women, available qualitative studies involving Romani men and women in the United States, Canada and Europe. I include available popular media sources including print, television and movies that directly reference Romani lives. I also include a small, select number of quotes publically available on social media sites including Facebook, girlsaskguys.com, Tumblr and the comments sections from a small number of websites dedicated to Romani that can be found in the reference page of this document. These quotes came from men and woman, some of Romani descent, some not, all over the age of 18.

3.2   Qualitative Interviews

In order to compare the experiences of Romani in the United States to those in Europe, I utilize qualitative studies conducted with American Romani women. I then synthesize this data with available qualitative studies including Romani in America, Canada and Europe in an interpretive manner. The interviews conducted involve women with ages ranging from 18-82 who identify as Romani in America. The qualitative studies I utilize are synthesized along with these interviews and include studies that utilize women and men of ages that fall within the age range of Romani interviewed in the United States. I utilize studies involving both men and women for the European comparison simply due to the limitations in accessing women-only qualitative studies. These studies are limited as the experience of Romani women in Europe is often overlooked. To balance this, in addition to utilizing qualitative interviews collected with women in the United States, I also draw from qualitative studies conducted with Romani men in the United States though available studies were limited.

For this study, I have sought to utilize studies in which the participants ranged occupationally and varied in living traditional Romani and non-traditional Romani lifestyles among European and American Romani. It was much more difficult to find studies highlighting the lives of Romani not living traditional lifestyles in Europe, though some literature was available. The qualitative studies utilized for analysis are focused on topics that mirror those covered in the US Romani data collections including education, assimilation, prejudice, media portrayals, identity, mental health, interaction with law enforcement, traditional lifestyles and gender. The qualitative studies I utilize for comparison include first-person accounts of Romani, analysis provided by qualitative researchers and interviewers, publically available statements of Romani and non-Romani on social media and other public sites. In addition I compare media portrayals of Romani in newsprint, television, movies and government-issued media content.

3.3   Data Collection and Analyzation

I utilize a meta-interpretive analysis of qualitative interviews, content analysis, media portrayals and social media content. As previously stated, the information I collected from American Romani women uses first-hand used semi-structured interviews. I utilized an interview guide which asked questions appropriate to this study including questions surrounding prejudice, racism, and identity and how the individual views and interprets the effects of increased visibility through portrayals in reality television. In the interviews I also explored how the stress of being marginalized affects their daily lives. Data was transcribed and analyzed using both preset and emergent categories. I examined the data to determine to what extent, if any, the experience of racism and prejudice, impacted their daily lives and if negative media portrayals enhanced these effects. I also inquired about the interaction of these women with law

enforcement, the presence or lack of travelling lifestyles, encountered resistance to assimilation and the strength of their overall ethnic identity.

The methodology I utilize for this study is known as Meta-interpretative analysis. Meta-interpretive analysis is an effective means of synthesizing available qualitative literature in a way the draws both primary and secondary data from the qualitative study. This approach to qualitative analysis allows one to synthesize literature from fields where available data is often sparse or spread out and provide a more unified, or fuller, picture of information that is available regarding the particular group or subject and what conclusions can be drawn both from the author's conclusions as well as the qualitative data presented within their studies (Wed, 2005). Included within this synthesis is an element of content analysis. I utilize content analysis to provide further weight to my arguments about media portrayals. Qualitative content analysis is an effective means of interpreting individual qualitative cases and thus, translates well to the analysis of individual case studies of media content (Kohlbacher, 2006).

I utilize Qualitative methods for this study in order to adequately gather and tell the stories of Romani women. Qualitative methods are an effective means of creating hypothesis in under-researched areas and of giving voice to individuals whose experiences have been misinterpreted when told by others (Sofaer, 1999). Because there is little literature on American-Romani, utilizing analysis based on the tenants of Grounded Theory will allow for themes to emerge during analysis (Larossa, 2005). Open coding will first be utilized to evaluate the data, followed by Selective coding which will narrow down the data to tell the overall story that emerges from interviews.

Much of the literature utilized for this study was found through a search of databases in the library of congress, google scholar and Galileo. These were the starting places for the

collection of qualitative studies I was able to locate. Following this was a snow-balling of studies as I encountered specific names frequently or found studies which were unique in their approach. Many of the studies I locate were from local European organizations and were only uncovered after weeks of digging through available national reports etc. Many of the studies I utilize were unpublished dissertations and thesis from international universities which often had to be requested through Georgia State University's interlibrary system. Very few of them had been published though they were rich studies with a wealth of qualitative data. The lack of publication among Romani women world-wide with graduate degrees made me question if this was a result of their own choices or a lack of willingness to publish this type of research. I believe this is a point of inquiry for another study and discuss this further in my conclusion.

I draw heavily from Romani blogs, Tumblr and Facebook pages as these are excellent sources of information relating to media portrayals, activism and the highlighting of world-wide issues which are not addressed in mainstream media. I provide links to all media sites utilized with the exception of those accessed through Facebook because, though they were posted publically I do wish to maintain their anonymity for the study. I was able to locate many Romani pages due to the large number of Romani activists and academics I follow on various social media sites, the majority of leads coming from those I follow on Twitter. Many of these leads served only as starting places from which to follow lines of inquiry.

In this study I choose to include quotes collected from various sources made by those outside the Romani community. I chose to do this after coming across a website called girlsaskguys which boasted a wealth of publically available conversations on non-Romani opinions of Roma from around the world. I believe that these conversations highlighted many of the themes I discuss throughout the study and that they bring an additional depth to the synthesis.

While I cover no one topic exhaustively through my methodology, I believe that the synthesis of studies from fields including law, health, mental health, education, race, sociology, government, media studies and beyond provide a thorough and broad understanding of Romani lives both in the United States and Europe which has not been accomplished by other researchers to the extent that I attempt in this study.

In this study, while I am speaking directly of the plight of Romani in the United States and in Europe, I utilize many terms when referring to Romani. I address the reasoning for this variation in-depth in chapter 6 however the degree of variation in the terms utilized throughout this study necessitates a note of clarification within this methodology. Because the methodology of this study centers on drawing from many sources, I seek to respect each source and person interviewed by referring to them with the title they choose for themselves. In addition, the reader will observe that I capitalize "Gypsy" only when it is used by a Romani as a positive identifier and never when it used as a pejorative term or racial slur. The underlying importance of this approach is highlighted throughout chapter 6.

3.4   Protection of Participants

For the qualitative interviews I collected for this study, I maintained participant anonymity by limiting the use of personally identifying information (.i.e. names, specific cities of residence etc.) and by assigning participants and any content associated with their participation ID numbers and storing these separately from one another.

Any other qualitative studies that are analyzed have followed their own protocols for protecting their participant identity, utilizing initials, first names or failing to provide identifying information at all. Any information taken from social media, though publically available was not

identified by participant name or age. The only identifying factor utilized was location and sex of commentator.

3.5   Role of Researcher

As with any research, the minimizing of invasive procedures is important to the well-being and authenticity of the study. Given the history of misrepresentation of this population in academic research it is essential that the findings of the study accurately reflect the views and attitudes of the individual participants. Romani populations value forthright approach to interactions with those considered "outside" the Romani culture. Despite my shared ethnicity with participants, as an academic researcher, it is essential to maintain the trust and value that the Romani community has placed on the researcher. For this reason, when I conducted qualitative interviews, no deception was utilized. In addition, I seek to present all qualitative studies analyzed within the meta-interpretive synthesis in an accurate manner.

I do not believe that what is presented in this study is representative of 100% of Romani world-wide and acknowledge the possibility that I have failed to adequately convey the experience of Romani in some respects. I hope that utilizing a breadth of research will garner a greater legitimacy for my analysis and will confirm my findings to a weightier degree. One can never speak entirely for one group and I would not seek to present Romani in a homogenized light, especially when presenting their case to those outside their community. I seek to identify the variation of experiences lived by Romani while also identifying similarities of their experiences.

I am more reflexive in my position as a Romani woman then I have been in prior studies within this dissertation. I have chosen to include small portions of my experience throughout the

study for no other reason than that I believed they would add an additional credence to my discussions. I in no way seek to imply that my experiences are reflective of other Romani and I acknowledge my position of privilege as an academic and one who lives their life largely under the label of "White" and therefore does not encounter prejudice to the extent that the majority of those discussed and quoted in this study do.

3.6   Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to identify the impact that negative media portrayals of Romani have on Romani lives, identity and choices about assimilation. The purpose of this investigation is to further highlight the experience of an often unrecognized minority and their challenges as they navigate the world of the Gadje. Additionally, by utilizing European Romani as a comparison group for this study, I hope to compare their experiences with negative media portrayals and the subsequent outcomes with those of American Romani.

In Chapter 4 of the study I explore in-depth the many vehicles for portrayal of Romani found within mainstream media. I identify the ways Romani are portrayed, for what purpose and by whom. I explore and report Romani reactions to these portrayals and catalogue their personal reflections by utilizing qualitative interviews and review qualitative sources in European literature and popular media.

In chapter 5 of the study I explore the impact of Romani media portrayals. I identify how the experience of prejudice and racism in Romani lives is tied to negative media portrayals. I explore how Romani encounters with social prejudice impacts their daily lives and how this is influenced by mainstream media. I also examine how mainstream media portrayals have a role in

creating barriers to assimilation and other acculturative strategies in the lives of American and European Romani.

In chapter 6, I identify the negative outcomes that have resulted from social prejudice created by mainstream media portrayals. I identify both individual and societal outcomes including impact to economic status, social mobility and mental health. Identify how mainstream media has impacted traditional way of living for Romani and Romani identity development. I explore how Romani discuss these issues and the variation within the Romani communities' opinions about self-definition.

In the conclusion of my study I identify how these facets of the Romani experience come together to impact the social climate of the Romani today. I explore what Romani activists world-wide are doing to address these issues. I discuss what makes this research important to the greater community of scholars, activists and all people world-wide. Additionally, I provide suggestions for addressing these social issues and identify how future researchers can expand on the current research to address and identify solutions for addressing the issues found to be substantive within this study.

As with all research I complete regarding the state of Romani in the U.S., my hope is to provide a platform for Romani to join the global discussion regarding Romani exclusion, to expand Romani scholarship and to highlight the social, economic and mental health needs of minority and immigrant groups in the US as well as Europe.

4   MEDIA PORTRAYELS

In 1921, the Topeka State Journal reported that a camp of gypsies had settled outside the city and were granted a permit to tell fortunes. While in residence, money from two local

businesses was reported missing. The owners identified that the missing cash was a result of these gypsies. The gypsy camps were searched and the oldest member of the camp was detained while the other camp members were questioned. Community members were told there would be no release until they paid the missing funds back to the store owners though no evidence of their crime, including the existence of the money, had been found within their camp. Once they provided a confession and pooled the money to pay back the shop owners, their elderly relative was released and they, according to the article, "Accepted an invitation to depart." The article also stated: "The undesirables were then urged to depart by License Collector Mattingly and Topeka is forced to exist without the diviners of the future……Today, Topeka has no gypsy inhabitants." The article clearly identified that gypsies had been relegated to the role of outsiders. The sarcastic tone of the article left the reader with little doubt of the value placed on the lives discussed within and any gypsy reading the article would have little doubt that they were socially unwanted and outcast.

This article was not the only example of newspapers reporting crimes pinned on gypsies who just happened to be near-by when money, or children, were found to be missing. The Library of Congress holds an archive of American Newspapers from 1836-1922. An initial search of articles relating to Gypsies/Romani activity produced over 100,000 references many retelling the narrative described above. Some articles simply made an announcement, stating "Gypsies visit city" (Little Falls Herald, 1920) describing their clothing and actions while others chronicle for several pages their depraved life of stealing children and robbing others from town to town (The Day Book, 1913).

For a time, early in American history, the presence of Romani (Gypsies), inside or outside towns, in rural locations and even at fairs and marketplaces was not an unusual sight.

Their presence was known and felt and their existence was well recognized by what was largely the main source of media at that time, the newspaper. For reasons that will be discussed throughout this paper, as time went on, Romani slowly faded from public eye in America, though they often made small appearances in movies or television shows where they were largely portrayed stereotypically, as caricatures, rather than as an un-recognized minority (Dobreva, 2009).

The first questions I propose to answer for this study are, "What media portrayals of Romani in the United States are currently in existence? How does this compare to media portrayals for Romani in Europe? How do Romani discuss the impact of these portrayals in the United States and Europe?" Overall, my findings indicate that Romani have existed in American mainstream media throughout history through their presence has not been consistent and has never been without stereotypical and prejudiced portrayal. This also proves true for Romani in Europe though on a much larger scale and with what is seemingly a much larger impact on their daily lives.

4.1   General Media Portrayals in America- "Gypsies Aren't a Race…"

Due to the somewhat invisible nature of Romani in America, it was much more difficult to find general sentiments regarding their portrayals in mainstream media. Specific examples, as will later be explored, were much more abundant. A study conducted in Canada by author Juliann Beaudoin (2014) engages qualitative research targeting the plight of the Canadian Romani immigrant. Her research concurs with the experiences of Romani world-wide. Beaudoin shows that media portrayals of Romani, even in North America, help to cement the erroneous beliefs of those who are not Romani. These beliefs can lead to a resistance towards Romani immigrants and Romani efforts to assimilate.

Beaudoin (2014) provides several examples of media contributions to the general distaste for Romani in Canadian society. Beaudoin reports on a television segment by a conservative TV personality. The segment aired publically in Canada and highlighted racist attitudes towards Romani that have permeated Canadian society:

> Gypsies aren't a race, they aren't a religion, they aren't a linguistic group. They're the medieval prototype of the Occupy Wall Street movement. A shiftless group of hobos that doesn't believe in property rights for themselves—they're nomads—or for others. They rob people blind. (Levitz, 2012 as cited in Beaudoin, P. 159)

The program highlighted some of the most deep-seated emotions held by Canadian natives. The quote exemplifies the problematic language of the program, language that removes Romani personhood and ethnic identity simultaneously. The program also exemplified the resistance to not only Romani assimilation but to acknowledgement of Romani as a legitimate minority.

While there was a general negative reaction to the airing of this program and others like it among Romani in Canada and their supporters, little can be done to fight against these messages by those within the Romani community who are unacquainted with the workings of popular press. Mike, one of Beaudoin's (2014) informants describes the limitations this way: "…refugees with language barriers, they don't know how the media works. You know, I've had people ask me, "How much do I have to pay to get my story in the paper?" And I just find that sad (Mike, P.174)". Because of their social stratification, Romani may lack the education or social resources to adequately combat negative media portrayals. Romani immigrants, such as those in Canada, have the added barrier of language preventing them from responding to discriminatory messages in a socially positive way.

In 2015, I completed a series of qualitative interviews with Romani Women across the United States. Among those interviewed, Rachel, a woman in her 20's from the Northeast described the general impact of negative media attention in her own life.

> It's awful, I've had some people who used to be my friend, she's posting statuses about oh Gypsies are so crazy and I'm like you know that we are not actually like that right and she's like what do you mean "we"? And I messaged her privately and I'm like yeah surprise, "Hi". She started spewing out the most racist garbage I have ever heard my entire life, and she unfriended me and I was like "really." That was probably just because of [the media], that's all she knew.

Rachel identified that a person she considered a "friend" developed her beliefs about Romani from popular media sources who portray Romani in a negative light. These beliefs lead not only to racist and abusive language but also to a willingness to end their friendship because of how deep-seated they had become. Her beliefs were strong enough to override the years of interaction and positive impressions that Rachel had made and led this "friend" to engage in marginalizing Rachel as result of her identity.

Rachel also identified that the state of negative Romani portrayal and recognition in the media is, if anything, casual racism at best. Without a true recognition of Romani existence and identity, the impact of these portrayals is often unrecognized.

> …recently the first lady used the term "gypped" and she had been told before that some Romani find that offensive and she like doesn't want to apologize for it apparently. People are starting to recognize we are a group but the First Lady of the United States won't acknowledge that she said a hurtful word toward us. She doesn't want to say we are a real ethnic group or whatever. We had all these shows, would it be acceptable if they were about any other race. Would it be ok if there was show that was like my big fat Jewish wedding and it demonizes Jews like it demonizes the Romani, I don't think it would be allowed. I think it's almost like we're the last acceptable group to globally ridicule without any consequences.

Rachel makes a significant point about Romani that is found throughout much of the literature on Romani lives; racism toward Romani is the last acceptable form of racism. This racism is often perpetrated through the media leaving many with, at the very least, questions regarding Romani lives and existence and, at the very worst, racist ideologies that were created centuries ago.

4.2   General Media Portrayals in Europe- "Gypsies are Different"

In Europe, the sentiment that racism against Gypsies, Romani and Travelers (GRT) is the last acceptable form of racism pervades (King, 2015). Though guidelines on how to portray GRT for journalists and others in the mainstream media were created, they are loosely adhered to. And, just as in North America, Romani possess little power to counter these negative images. Though they are often reported on in Europe, Romani are rarely consulted regarding their opinions or takes on significant issues about GRT lives (Plaut, 2012). GRT's in Europe are viewed as "passive objects in a chess game of great powers….rather than active subjects" (Plaut). A qualitative study of Romani children in the UK highlights the fact that much of the bullying and discrimination experienced by Romani is a direct result of media attention. Romani within traditional communities may fail to recognize or understand this because they are not aware of how they have been portrayed, largely due to their unique lifestyles (Ureche & Franks, 2007).

Romani or GRT portrayals in Europe mirror those in America, showing stereotypical caricatures of Romani that are commonly recognized by the general public (Tremlett, 2013). When not portrayed in a racist or marginalizing way, actors and models appropriate the GRT lifestyle as a way to showcase a romanticized, carefree life (Tremlett). Romani are portrayed in a way that suggests homogeneity and GRT or Romani themselves lack control over their own representations (Tremlett), something that will be discussed in-depth later in this paper. Tremlett

identifies how any of these approaches to Romani representations are problematic, "Whether 'noble savage' or 'bogeyman' whether celebrations or denigrations, these representations of Gypsies base their viewpoint on the same pivot- Gypsies as different from the majority society" (P.1078). As Tremlett points out, whatever the vantage point of Romani representation, they all serve one purpose, to "other" Romani from the mainstream, creating an additional barrier for Romani relations with the Gadje.

Just as in America, the average European's idea of Romani is limited by what they see in the mainstream media. A qualitative interview conducted with Romani children and community members in the UK confirms that true knowledge of Romani lives and their plight is lacking among "outsiders": "…most of us only know anything about them from what we read in the press or see on the television and that is prejudiced and biased" (Lane, Spence and Jones, 2014.P. 15). A Romani woman interviewed by Lane, Spencer and Jones (2014) concurs with this "outsider" opinion, stating "it's the paper and TV and professionals that make the settled community not like us" (P.19). What is known about Romani to those outside the community is most often funneled through the mainstream media. Those inside and outside the community are able to acknowledge the bias that comes along with these representations.

Unlike in America, much of the negative media attention that influences the attitude of the average European is a direct result of government involvement. Policy makers identify Romani as "beggars" (Ceneda, 2002). Government officials release statements or engage in broadcasts which serve to incite fear or prejudice towards Romani or do little to restrict those who engage in these behaviors (Ceneda). It is not uncommon for Government officials to make negative comments about Romani (Lane, Spencer & Jones, 2014) even going so far as to say "the only good gypsy is a dead gypsy (Ceneda)."

Similar to the experiences reported by Rachel but on a much greater scale, Roma in Europe are affected not just on a societal level by negative media portrayals but also on a personal level. Erjavec, (2001) discusses how media representations of Romani are used to normalize discrimination against Romani and situate it as "rational." She describes a media story in which a Romani family was physically prevented from moving into a village because local villagers had experienced negative interactions with Romani in the past and, rather than being called out for their racist actions, they were portrayed as rational actors who were protecting themselves. Local media assisted their cause and failed to report that the house was legally owned by the Romani family. Reporters emphasized instead how one Romani family could lead to an onslaught of others. The Romani family was unable to live in the home they had purchased, leaving them without housing (Erjavec).

The Roma family described above is just one of many examples of the discrimination experienced by Romani as a direct result of media portrayals. Before identifying further the resulting discrimination experienced by Romani, it is important to understand more fully in what forms these portrayals come both in the United States and Europe, and how these are discussed within and outside the Romani community.

4.3   Romani in American Newspapers- A Suitable Target

As already identified, newspapers have had significant impact on Romani lives. Newspapers are often the points of origination for much fear and distrust towards Romani. The various stereotypes surrounding Romani remain largely unchanged in newspapers and long-held prejudices are used many times over by journalists covering Romani issues (Okely, 2014). Newspapers portray Romani as criminals, dangerous individuals and "immigrants" who should

be feared for what may potentially accompany them (Okley). Okley identifies: "The Gypsies, with centuries of demonization, have become the ideal scapegoat for new uncertainties".

Romani are used as an easy way for journalists to draw readership due to the ease with which one can sensationalize Romani or easily prey on mainstream fears surrounding Romani (Oleaque, 2014).

> Their bad reputation in the eyes of society and the media seems to have been intensified, leading to an association of gypsies with wretchedness…. They have become a suitable target for any type of negative comment about them, always for the sake of sensationalism… Most of the times the gypsy matter is only dealt with to further ascribe it to a stigmatized description, since this is the most newsworthy and recognizable aspect (P. 2).

As Oleaque describes, the Romani life is newsworthy because it has been sensationalized. Journalists who are able to capitalize on negative societal views of Romani do so for the sake of readership and popularity. Because it works, it continues, intensifying mainstream society's negative associations with Romani lives.

As previously discussed, the Library of Congress' newspaper archives from the 1800's and early 1900's is a wealth of the American mainstream's interaction with Romani. A sampling of the articles available from newspapers across the nation can give one significant insight into the ways that newspapers were used to create a narrative surrounding the "mysterious" Romani in United States. Many of the articles discuss common themes such as gypsy kings and queens, witchcraft, kidnappings, unkempt children, artistic temperaments and romanticized lifestyles. Some identify that the advent of publically available motor cars and the trend of taking motoring trips had made "gypsies" living in the countryside more visible (Cameron County Press, 1911).

In 1913, reporters from The Sun, having previously engaged with Romani in America, finding them to be attractive with colorful clothes, decided to seek out Romani in Europe. To their great disappointment, the Romani they interacted with failed to meet their romanticized views and instead they describe them as, "decidedly unproductive of romance, beauty or poetry. The English gypsies at home are not particularly attractive…" in describing their interaction in this way, they further perpetrate the romanticized view of Romani life and objectify European Romani as objects for entertainment rather than a severely marginalized and impoverished group.

Also in 1913, the Day Book of Chicago, Illinois reports on a story in which a 9 year old girl goes missing. The father reported he had observed a group of gypsies passing through the town recently and accused them of stealing the girl. A search for the gypsies ensued crossing over 4 states with newspapers from up to 500 miles away carrying the story of the child stolen by passing gypsies. The reporter himself appeared somewhat sympathetic to the plight of the gypsies in this story. He identifies that many gypsy camps were searched and upset and that several gypsy families were accused of stealing their own children. The child in question had not been found at the time of publication.

In the article, the reporter acknowledges, in a rare representation of the Romani perspective on the story, that contrary to beliefs about their aggressive and criminal tendencies, the Romani were "the meekest people of the road" and

> They protested to us always that they did not steal children. They told us that they were always suspected that everywhere they went they saw the haunted, scared eyes of mothers. [They said] but why should we want more children, the families of all gypsies are large.

Though rare in its ability to give Romani voice, this article further substantiates the popular idea that Romani steal children. It also further highlights the lack of rights held by Romani who were arrested and searched for crimes they were accused of despite a lack of evidence or even an eye witness. Another article published a few years later, in 1916, by the St. Tammy Farmer follows very much the same narrative. A boy went missing at the same time a band of gypsies arrived in a Pennsylvania town. Their camp was searched as well as their children and no evidence of criminal activity was found.

Among the more confusing and simultaneously racist articles I discovered within the archives was an article written by the St. Mary Banner in 1915. The article was reprinted many times over across the country. The article begins positively enough discussing the difficult plight of the "gypsies," their lack of housing, income and the stigma they encounter from the justice department. The reporter then begins to delve into what is believed to be the true nature of the gypsies including their involvement in the White slave trade, "There is evidence that the gypsies have sold their wives and daughters into captivity indicating that the morals of the gypsies are degenerating." He highlights their involvement in threatening local farmers who would not accept trade deals. This included accusations of poisoning cows and burning houses, "American communities…… are looking upon the horse-trading fortune telling thieving gypsies with more suspicion than usual at this time." The article claims that gypsies had never been sent to jail for their crimes. These accusations provide confirming evidence to those who may have already held negative stereotypes about Romani and offer a prejudiced view of Romani to those unacquainted with their lives. To both groups, the article depicts Romani as dangerous outsiders, a threat to decent society.

The author goes on to identify that gypsies have been persecuted, enslaved and held down which makes the remainder of the article all the more shocking. According to the author:

> In their religion, which is a religion of hate they have no word for God, soul or heaven… They have their own King whom they elect yearly… in Spain. The king is supposed to be inducted into office by the sacrifice of two White babies.

The article then identifies that the gypsies have now realized it is too risky to sacrifice White babies so, instead, they steal the babies who are then adopted by the king. Despite their residence in America, they have "never gone through the crucible which makes Americans out of Foreigners." They are still very much in need of being domesticated. The author believes that it would "take many years to drive the thieving traits out of the American Gypsies…" One hardly needs to delve into this article without seeing the racist ideologies surrounding the Romani purported by the author (St. Mary Banner, 1915). By disseminating this "history" of the Romani in papers across the country, and mixing racism with a hollow form of compassion, commonly held beliefs about Romani could be further cemented. Those without information on this group would be ill-informed.

The theme of compassion mixed with overt racism pervaded the many articles gathered from these archives. A newspaper from 1892 (The Daily Pacific) discussed the history of gypsy oppression and counters the ideas that gypsies steal and work as a little as possible. Despite these enlightened thoughts the author also identifies, "The general impression regarding the race is wrong- most of them are industrious in their own way-they do not like civilization." This quote is exemplary of even modern day newsprints that consistently "other" Romani. Further, the author brought to mind his subjects by describing them in this way, "…all have seen our wandering nomads traveling along our highways or bivouacking in their filthy tents and still

more filthy camps." This quote serves to further confirm that gypsies are "dirty," among the most common of gypsy stereotypes and among the most common of reasons to reject interacting with them or accepting them into one's town or neighborhood.

Newspapers of this time also highlight the interaction of Romani and law enforcement, a theme that will be explored throughout this paper. In this instance, as in other articles, Romani are portrayed as being constantly entangled with the law. In 1916, the Ashland Tidings, of Ashland Oregon reported on a robbery in this manner: "True to their inborn instincts, the horde of gypsies which passed through Ashland last Sunday failed to get out of the country without committing a serious depredation." The author goes on to describe how the "gypsies" held up a man for $20.50. The Sherriff then "arrested three of the dark-skinned holdup men." Following their arrest the article indicates that, "the police and the mayor invited the gypsies to shorten their stay to no time at all" kicking the remaining gypsies out of the town.

The article from the Ashland Tidings (1916) also points out that gypsies are often entangled in legal issues in other major cities and in fact, they seem to enjoy the benefits rendered from these entanglements.

> It is said that in San Francisco during the winter the jails are filled with gypsies, who seemed to enjoy the conferment and the regular meals. Finally, a special ordinance was passed ejecting them from the city.

The author believed that Romani, so debase in their desires and morality, chose to engage in illegal activities in order to garner free room and board. This depiction of Romani life serves to bring further confirmation to the "criminal Romani" stereotype.

These news articles provide a significant look into the historical role that newspapers played in disseminating information about the Romani in America. As time went on, however,

Romani became increasingly invisible as their mistrust towards outsiders grew and the fear of reveling their identity was passed from generation to generation. While print media has waned in popularity, other forms of media have arisen to take its place. Within these new forms can be found many of the same stereotypes and prejudices that historically plagued newspapers. A search for recent articles about Romani in the United States turned up very little.

4.4   Newspapers in Modern America

Among the modern newsprint articles I was able to locate, one example confirmed that little has changed in the mind of the public as well as the local law enforcement regarding the presence of Romani. A bulletin posted in Tampa Bay, Florida in January 2016 warned residents to be on the lookout for gypsy scammers in their community (Lonon, 2016). They were accused of scamming local residents with shoddy paving jobs or outright theft of jewelry or money during the day. They specifically identified the group as gypsies and gave this warning: "Should a homeowner confront a gypsy, they will give excuses to explain their presence on the property." While it may very well be true that gypsies are committing these crimes, one thing is certain, gypsies continue to be presented in a homogenized way in newspapers. The rare modern mentions of this group in newsprint highlight involvement with the law, craftiness, criminality and lying. Unlike many other minority groups, there are no alternate representations to counter these images.

4.5   Romani in European Newspapers- "The Worst Representations…"

The representation in European newspapers is similar to the historical representations in America though they persist as widely today as in the past (Okely, 2014). Reporters write influenced by previously held judgments and lack accurate information about Romani or Gypsy,

Romani and Travellers (GRT's). Okely reports "The Gypsies, with centuries of demonization, have become the ideal scapegoat for new uncertainties." Her words characterize the relationship between the Romani and newsprint throughout Europe. The Romani are more often than not vilified. Reports of Romani are situated in language that is prejudice, promoting racism and discrimination (Lane, Spencer & Jones, 2007). Tereskinas (2001) discusses the lengths at which newspapers go to represent Roma in a negative light when compared with other minority groups:

> Roma people merit the worst representations as the least socially integrated, criminal and exotic group. The press frequently refers to the Roma minority as criminal, deviant, socially insecure, inscrutable, and manipulative. In the police reports published in the newspaper, Lietuvos rytas, the ethnicity of Roma is always emphasized. (P. 8)

Roma are more likely to be depicted in a negative light than other minority groups. Their ethnicity is emphasized due to the immediate negative associations journalist know will be elicited from readers.

Plaut (2012) identifies: "Roma have consistently been portrayed as passive objects in a chess game of great powers….rather than active subjects." Newspapers often discuss the Romani "problem" but rarely consult them directly (Morris. 2000). "Many Travellers will not see or cannot read the things that are written about them. Not only are they taunted, denigrated and laughed at, it is done behind their back" (Morris. P. 213). Though sometimes unaware of what is being reported on specifically, European Romani are more than aware that the media portrays them in a negative light. A qualitative study by Lane, Spencer and Jones (2014) uncovers Romani sentiments towards their representations and the way they are treated by journalists:

> Newspapers follow you to camps [their homes] and take photos of your property… (P.20)

The media are rubbish, the just make a fool of Travelers and make up stories in their own head (P. 20)

While Morris identifies that Romani may not always have access to how they are being depicted, Lane, Spencer and Jones highlight the fact that Romani routinely encounter journalists in their daily lives and have an inherent understanding of their attitudes toward Romani.

In places such as Bulgaria, it is reported that 90% of hate speech in print media is directed at Romani (Danova, 1998 as cited in Erjavec). In Italy, print media comes in a variety of forms directed at the Romani community. These forms include media hysteria about Romani presence. They include government issued emergency decrees allowing for the eviction of any minority deemed a "threat" which unfairly target Roma. Newspapers compare Romani to "animals." Molotov bombs and violence against Roma are reported on as citizens and government officials ask for man power to be used to remove Romani from Italy (Sigona, 2008). In her 2000 article on Gypsy Travelers and the media, Morris cites this notice posted in a local newspaper regarding Romani:

KEEP THIS SCUM OUT (And it IS time to hound 'em, Chief Constable). They call themselves tinkers, itinerants new age travellers. We call them parasites. The scum of the earth who live off the backs of others. They contribute nothing but trouble… They set up filthy, disease-ridden camps on roadsides and in parks and offend every decent citizen. (P. 214)

This notice is a shocking example of the overt prejudice Romani encounter throughout Europe and is representative of countless examples of the way that Romani are targeted through newsprint.

In the UK, a code exists that states a person's race should be mentioned only when it is strictly relevant to what is being reported (Morris, 2000). Despite this rule, the Romani ethnicity

of GRT in Europe is rarely overlooked and is often overemphasized. Local newspapers make life challenging for those traveling by spreading false statements about them before they arrive in a town, resulting in a pre-existing resistance to their presence (Morris). They are most often represented in newspapers as a group that is inherently bad (Morris: Plaut, 2012). There can be little doubt that the dissemination of information which is outright opposed to Romani is often channeled through newspapers, however, indirect and even fictional portrayals in mediums such as movies have the potential to disseminate these same messages.

4.6   Romani in the Movies- "A romanticized view…"

I received an email letting me know that I had been cast as an extra in an upcoming film. Though I lack ambitions of being famous, it is something I always imagined would be fun to try. My excitement grew until the night before I was supposed to report for filming. The email I received describing the scenes I would be participating in stated that I would be filmed at a "circus" set in the 1930's. At that moment an uneasiness began to settle over me. I immediately began to wonder if the "gypsies" would be making an appearance in this film. Gypsies were a common staple for circuses during this time period, in movies at least.

What would that look like? Would I drive four hours to film only to leave in the first scene as a conscientious objector to the way that Romani were being portrayed? I couldn't deny at some point there were probably individuals in my family's past that had told fortunes at fairs or circuses but, the thought of seeing it portrayed in all its romanticized glory, the colorful costumes and the "other worldly" knowledge, left me in a perpetual cringe as I arrived on set.

We sat through a scene in which a "gypsy" woman, dressed in stereotypical clothing, was threatened by the whip of the ring master as a car hovered over her head, a car she was meant to

control with her mind. With every whip crack, the cringes returned. I knew it was just a movie but, I thought, had this really been the 1930's and had that really been one of my own people sitting in that chair, she would have been viewed as nothing more than an object of entertainment, a symbol of mystery. Little thought would be given to the difficult life she was leading and discrimination she was likely to face. Later, as I stood next to the fortune teller's tent and the camera crew filmed the main actors walking in, I wondered what this scene would look like in its final form, what the "gypsy" woman had said to them and I hoped I hadn't just participated in something I would come to regret. There can be no doubt that the film served as another example of the Romani being a thing of the past, or even, a figment of Hollywood's imagination.

4.6.1 The Hunchback of Notre Dame

While newspapers most often seek to villainize Romani, their portrayal in movies is largely a romanticized depiction of their existence. Though portrayed in many films throughout American history, among the most notable portrayals are those that have occurred more recently. *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* is a Disney film that focuses on the relationship between a Romani woman and a disabled Romani man. Criticism for the film's portrayal of Romani can be found among various Roma activists and bloggers. Among these, on Tumblr, the author of "Romani in Art, Literature, and Music" (Tasbeeh, 2015) identifies just what is so problematic with this romanticized portrayal of Romani. The author of this article points out that the source material for this movie, originally by Victor Hugo, is incredibly racist, far beyond what Disney would be willing to portray. She also states that Quasimodo's character, though Romani, has been "white washed," that the other Romani in the film are merely "racial caricatures" and that "racial slurs" are used throughout the film.

Among the larger news sites and academic scholars little can be found in the way of protest and any protest found gives way to religious objectors, feminists and others concerned with disabled persons (Whittington-Walsh, 2002). Like it or not, the movie is among the most recognized portrayals of Romani. Anecdotally, when I personally have divulged my identity as Romani, it is among the most common responses I receive "Oh, you mean like Hunch Back of Notre Dame."

4.6.2 *Sherlock: Game of Shadows*

Among other recent depictions of Romani life, *Sherlock: Game of Shadows* was released in 2011, starring Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law (Silver, Wigram, Downey, Lin & Ritchie, 2011). In the film, the pair travel across Europe with a band of gypsies to stop Professor Moriarity's evil schemes. Sadly, the portrayal of Romani in this film falls very much into the romanticized notion of Romani. The first scene that introduces a Romani character shows a Romani woman clearly sexually objectified in her portrayal, telling fortunes and engaging in dishonest schemes.

The sexualization of Romani, particularly Romani women, is a known and harmful stereotype (Hancock, 2008) that *Sherlock* eagerly plays into. Throughout the movie Romani are portrayed as adventurers, good at fighting and engaged in underground criminal dealings. Critical reception of this movie was even scarcer than with *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Hahn, Trousdale &Wise, 1996) though their portrayals are essentially along the same themes. Critical reviews that were located indicate a feeling that the portrayal of this Romani woman is positive and have this to say regarding her portrayal:

> It was encouraging to see a woman involved who didn't have to be either man's love interest, who could hold her own in a fight without toting a machine gun or

breaking out tae kwon do, and wasn't being flaunted on screen in an overtly sexual manner. (Asher- Perrin, 2011)

The author of the article felt that the independence of the woman portrayed, her ability to fight for herself and her lack of romantic entanglement qualified the role as an empowered one.

The author goes on to say that she believes the women portrayed by the director of *Sherlock* are portrayed with a "surprising amount of respect." Despite this, this particular author fails to acknowledge once that this woman is being portrayed as a Romani and, though she discussed most of the films themes and characters at length, fails to ever mention the aid Sherlock received from the Romani and how they play into the outcome of the film (Ahser-Perrin, 2011). Though center stage in this film, they are invisible in their stereotypical portrayals and the Romani women is, as so many Romani are, allowed to be either a woman or Romani but not both.

It should be noted that both *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Sherlock: Game of Shadows,* though they are American films, portray Romani in Europe in a romanticized light, making them, if anything, a subject of lore or fantasy. These portrayals are often a factor in the resistance of American Romani to acknowledge their ethnicity and existence. Gertie, a Romani woman in her 50's acknowledges the role that movie portrayals have played as an intermediary between Roma and the outside world, "Yeah I mean very few people know anything about the personal lives of Gypsies. I think they have a romanticized view from the movie or the media." Gertie's views align with the general consensus that media portrayals are the main source of information about Romani for those outside of their community.

4.6.3 *Modern Movie Portrayals*

In recent movies, controversy has surrounded the portrayal of Marvel's character, The Scarlet Which, or Wanda Maximoff, in the *Avengers* franchise (Whedon & Feige, 2015). While revelation of her Roma origins may or may not lend itself to the "mystical" trope associated with the Roma, the fact remains that writers of Marvel comics created a powerful super hero with Roma origins that remain unacknowledged. Her back story in the comics highlights the persecution and prejudice faced by her parents, who are both Roma and Jewish, and survivors of the Holocaust. Despite her special powers, her back story has the potential to highlight the history of the Roma people in a realistic way and bring their story into the notice of mainstream America and others world-wide. When casting the movie, this character was cast as a blonde-haired blue eyed women, a possible but not common look for the majority of Roma. Her origins were largely ignored and her ethnicity has gone unnoticed (Abad- Santos, 2013).

Some fans have argued that an outright acknowledgement and understanding of these origins is not essential and all but irrelevant in the Avengers portrayal. Some Romani activists however, would argue that this character, and her brother, have the ability to help Roma world-wide view themselves as survivors. Acknowledging their ancestry and the history surrounding it could bring the plight of the Romani into the life of a powerful protagonist, rather than a victim. The "white washing" of these characters has taken a rare opportunity for a positive portrayal of the Romani and a chance to educate the public on their tragic history away, for the time being (Fernandez, 2016). An opportunity has been lost for Hollywood to become further informed regarding Romani portrayals and to bring a new type of diversity to their casting. This is unfortunate for a country that is far behind Europe in their on-screen portrayal of Romani people.

In Europe, Romani portrayals and their criticism are more readily available than in the United States. In Eastern Europe, for example, Imre (2003) identifies that Romani are often exoticized and their lifestyles are idealized on screen. Romani are commonly "othered" by these films and perpetuate the narrative that those Romani who become successful financially or otherwise are an exception to the Romani community. He sees this as a serious affront to the Romani community, stating "representation can constitute an act of violence." He also acknowledges that this type of representation has led Roma to be skeptical of filmmakers even from within their own communities. Imre criticizes film makers for failing to acknowledge their position of privilege being outside of the Romani community and how this may impact or bias the way they represent Romani on the screen.

In no way is this list exhaustive in its discussion of films that portray the Romani. The list of Romani portrayals and appearances in movies is quite long, however, these examples give a glimpse into the ways in which mainstream America and Europe continue to be exposed to Romani as a people. While documentaries and other forms of film arise to counter these images, they have yet to make a significant mark on the lives of many in the mainstream. Beyond the impact that these films and others have made, television has moved to the forefront of controversy in its role as the primary mode of representation for Romani, certainly in America but, to some extent, in Europe as well.

4.7   Romani on Television

Though screen portrayals of Romani have not been adequate in accurate portrayal, what is known about their impact is limited. The medium of Romani portrayal known for the most significant impact on the lives of the Romani is television. Romani portrayals on television have risen in popularity in recent years in both Europe and the United States. These portrayals, just as

in newspapers and movies, fail to adequately convey the many challenges Romani face in their

everyday life and, instead, promote either a romanticized view of the Romani or an image meant

to incite fear or distrust. One need only to observe statements made by those outside of the

Romani community to understand the impact that these portrayals have on deeply held

prejudices. A recent viral video (LiveLink, 2016) of Irish Traveler women produced a flood of

racist commentary, many commentators indicating that the public behavior of these women only

confirmed what they previously believed about GRTs. One individual, from America, had this

to say regarding "gypsies" from Ireland and their portrayal in the video: "For anyone who has

had dealings with Irish gypos in any way, shape, or form you will know that they are literally the

scum of the earth" (American, Comments Post). Not only does this commentator use a

derogatory term (gypo) but they also categorize an entire marginalized group as the very lowest

of the low, based on what they have observed through the medium of television.

The commentator's sentiments were mirrored by another commentator in Europe who

felt the way television was portraying the "gypsy" community was entirely reflective of the

many deficits in their culture:

> Gypsy women are by far the most ignorant people compared to almost anyone. Not just
> illiterate and unable to read the time, but (as revealed on TV last year), they often don't
> even understand days of the week. The men in their despicable criminal communities
> actually prevent them from having any education. Any. (European, Comments Post)

Unacquainted with any real information regarding the Romani way of life, many viewers from

mainstream society reach their own conclusions regarding the lives of the Romani and many,

such as these commentators, have chosen to share this with others, spreading further the

prejudice and misinformation that originates from television portrayals. These attitudes most

often turn to actions which can have serious ramifications for Romani as will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.8   Historical Portrayals in the United States

Historically in the United States, Romani appeared on television in romanticized and stereotypical roles just as they had in movies. We will discuss here at some length an example of representation that was typical of the portrayal of Romani throughout the history of U.S. television. In 1966, an episode of the *Andy Griffith Show* aired titled "The Gypsies" (Maclane & Rafkin, 1966). This episode depicts the arrival of a family of gypsies on the outskirts of town. The gypsies begin selling goods and telling fortunes throughout the town, prompting the sheriff to ask them to move on. The gypsies place a "curse" on the town due to their lack of hospitality, causing fear in the townspeople. The gypsies decide to remove the curse and they are eventually found out to be nothing but con-men. The Sherriff asks them to leave Mayberry and not return.

I chose this episode of The Andy Griffith Show (Maclane & Rafkin, 1966) because the episode successfully represents on every major stereotype associated with the Romani, "good" and bad. At the beginning of the episode, Sherriff Andy Taylor and his girlfriend see smoke coming from a field on the outskirts of town. They stop to investigate. The scene changes to four gypsies, two men and two women, cooking over a campfire while the men play cards and guitar. They sit in front of a brightly painted Caravan and are all clad in bright colored clothing and gold. The younger woman of the group suddenly exclaims, "Policeman is coming." She picks up a tambourine and the man his guitar, they all begin to dance and sing and laugh as they wait for the Sheriff to arrive. This one scene manages to capture the "gypsy" life in its romanticized glory, colorful clothing, music and dancing, a carefree lifestyle. It also hints at a darker side to "gypsy" life, putting on a show for law enforcement, having something to hide.

As Sherriff Taylor arrives at their camp, one of the men greet him by saying "Welcome to the gay, carefree camp of the Gypsies!" The men become overly flattering of the Sherriff and his girlfriend and the young woman begins to act suggestively towards the Sherriff. They introduce their mother as the "Queen of the Gypsies." The Sherriff warns the "gypsies" about having a fire lit due to the dry season. As he leaves he wonders if they plan to stay or if they are just passing through. "What difference does it make?" his girlfriend asks. "We've had gypsies here before," he says with a knowing look and decides to head back to their camp.

The gypsies see the Sherriff returning and immediately fall back into their singing and dancing as he approaches. He questions how long they plan to stay outside of Mayberry and explains his questioning: "The reason I ask is last year we had some gypsies pass through here and they went around and started cheating people, they had a lot of different angles."

The Gypsies respond in the negative, those must have been "bad" gypsies but we are "gay and carefree" and would never sell "worthless" junk. This scene begins what is the theme for the remainder of the episode, the darker side to the gypsy life, lying and hustling others. Sherriff Taylor's response to them is unfortunately a fairly accurate depiction of historical interactions with law enforcement. Sherriff Taylor views gypsies in a homogenized and prejudicial manner and insinuates that a long term stay would be unwelcome.

The scenes following show the gypsies going from door to door selling fake gold earrings, telling stories and flattering their customers to make a sell. They tell fortunes for money, which Sherriff Taylor believes is dangerous and dishonest. He visits their camp again and where the elderly mother is drinking heavily. The gypsies once again begin to sing and dance. Sherriff Taylor tells them it's time to "move on." In retaliation they come to the town square and put on a ritual dance in which they place a "curse" on the town. They state that rain

will not fall in Mayberry until the gypsies are allowed to return. Both this scene and a scene

towards the end of the episode where they "lift" the curse play into the mystical nature of the

gypsies, able to curse or bless someone at will. As the gypsies leave town for good, having been

"found out" as hustlers by the entire town, Opie asks his father, Sherriff Taylor "Can gypsies do

any magic at all?" "Yes, yes they can," he answers "They can take out a pair of worthless

earrings, show them to your Aunt B and make 12 and ½ dollars disappear like nothing." His

statements leave the viewer with the underlying message that despite all their showmanship and

fancy words, the gypsies are nothing more than common thieves and hustlers (Maclane &

Rafkin, 1966).

4.9   Modern Portrayals on American television

The only stereotype the episode of *The Andy Griffith Show* did not hit on was that of

stealing children. This portrayal was representative of many other shows of the time, each

allowing the portrayal of a people little was known about to take on a life of its own and

portrayed to the viewer, that these were accurate representations of gypsy lives. In modern times,

Romani lives have made small appearances in stereotypical portrayals on shows such as *Star

Trek: The next generation* (Roddenbery & Snodgrass, 1989) and in outlandish and culturally

unaware portrayals on shows such a *Bones* (Hanson, Reichs & Charles, 2014).

Among the more popular modern television shows that portray Romani in the US, is *The

Riches (*Lipkin, 2007*).* The show aired from 2007-2008 for two seasons and starred Minni Driver

and Eddie Izzard as a pair of Irish Travelers who get into a car accident, killing a wealthy family.

The family takes on the identity of the wealthy individuals and proceed to "con" the town's

residents into believing they belong as the "Riches." The show came out to positive critical

reviews and a wide viewership. While seen as entertaining, much of the show falls into the

stereotype that the life of the Romani is most often tied up in poverty and criminality. Once again, through this portrayal, negative ideas about travelers, or Romani, become legitimate as they are played out in prime time television. Despite the fact that Romani are largely without a voice on how their representations are portrayed, viewers believe these portrayals to be "realistic" (Kabachnick, 2009).

The writers of many shows that portray Romani imply that criminality is an "ingrained" characteristic of their DNA. To some, this is seen as "an attempt to forgive Irish Travellers, since their need for grifting is beyond their control." It is almost has if they have no choice in the matter, it is in their blood, and thus, one cannot hold them accountable for their actions (Kabachnik, 2009). Kabachnik identifies what is problematic with the way identity is constructed for Romani within the show *The Riches*, "Irish Traveler culture is constructed as an insular, criminal group that is diametrically opposed to and exploitive of, everyone else." Kabachnick, following an extensive dissection of this show, was left with one conclusion, "If there is one thing we can learn from *The Riches*, it is that we still have a long way to go before Irish Travellers begin to be represented as any other ethnic group would expect to be."

4.9.1 My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding

Few of the portrayals already discussed have been able to effectively convey that the Romani are a legitimate minority or immigrant group living in modern America. This changed when TLC adapted a widely popular British television show, *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Popplewell, 2012) and brought it to America to give a "real" look into the outlandish world of the "Gypsies." *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* documented the marriage customs of Romani the United States. For many Americans, this was the first real-life exposure to Romani and it was wrought with stereotypes and poor representations of their true lives. The show

premiered on TLC in 2002 and is currently entering its fifth season. It has been wildly popular

with mainstream audiences and has received significant criticism from the Romani community.

Those in support of the show have dubbed it "horrifying, bizarre and compulsively watchable

(Bosch, 2012). Bosh describes the Romani on the show as exhibiting the "deeply conflicting dual

traditions of extreme conservatism in slutty clothing." The show, which originated in the UK,

was equally as popular as the American version, if not more so, and because Romani are quite

visible in European society, served to do further harm to a minority group already surviving on

the fringes of society (Plunkett, 2012).

My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding has left society with questions about the true origin

and nature of Romani and their ethnicity. Girlsaskguys.com (n.d.) is a website on which men and

women can anonymously ask each other about any topic and are given answers by as many

individuals as are willing to contribute. Among these anonymous though public conversations

one can get a significant glimpse into the attitudes of the general American public toward

Romani. One can also plainly see how their attitudes have been influenced by popular media.

The following is one conversation that took place about Romani identity:

Girl: How are the self-described gypsies/travelers of America actually gypsies? My
understanding of gypsies were the tan/olive skinned eastern Europeans so how are
those guys gypsies when they can blend in with the cast members of MTV's
Buckwild?

Girl: Being a gypsy isn't about skin color, it's their ethnic background…
Essentially they're "white" but from different cultures. Those gypsies on TLC are trailer
park trash though. Supposedly they're 10xworse in the UK, which is probably why
they're disliked...not condoning or supporting racism/discrimination towards them btw.

This conversation highlights some of the unfortunate consequences of the portrayal of Romani

on *My Big Fat Gypsy America Wedding* (Poppelwell, 2012). The images and stereotypes

conveyed through the show have left those having this conversation confused regarding who the Romani actually are and have helped to cement the negative attitudes already held by others. Despite Girl #2's claim that she is not supporting or condoning racism toward Romani, she indicates that Romani are both '"trailer trash" and "10X worse in in the UK." Girl #2 obviously believes that a separation between racist attitudes and actions is quite large, how else would she fail to see that it is the dissemination of these attitudes that qualifies as racism and leads to discrimination (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.).

Similar conversations about the impact of this particular television portrayal could be found elsewhere on the site. One poster indicated that she felt the show actually failed to live up to the negative stereotypes she has heard regarding Romani however, another poster was immediately available to provide answers, erroneous at best, regarding her questions about Romani. These questions would have already been answered had the show adequately explained and portrayed the life of the American Romani (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.).

> **Girl**: I watch *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* and they don't seem so terrible, but then again they're in America and I'm American. They say they don't steal or commit crimes as stereotyped. But, I've always seen people in the UK talk badly about gypsies and how they steal and when they leave one area (cause they're travelers), they leave the area dirty and a mess and they're known for taking pets.
>
> **Guy**: On one hand, they are widely considered an underclass in most countries they are in, so they are naturally treated and thought of badly by others by default… they DO frequently engage in criminal behavior, scams/swindles, violence, intimidation, and often live a very "ghetto" lifestyle and make big messes that others have to clean up.

While there is no way to determine where the guy in this conversation developed his information, one can certainly see that the misinformation provided by *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding (*Herman, 2012) has created an opportunity for misinformation to multiply and become further seated in the attitudes of those who bother to watch.

Another example of confusion produced by this show and the ignorance with which individuals readily speak up regarding the existence of Romani in America can be found in the following online conversation (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.):

> **Girl:** So I was watching a TV show on TLC about gypsies and I don't know what they are. I find it crazy that they let their daughter's dress the way they do and basically make them marry before they are 18 to become stay at home wives. So please help me understand how that can be acceptable. Thanks guys.
>
> **Guy:** I'm from 'Murica. We don't have gypsy problems.
>
> **Girl2:** What about that big fat American gypsy weddings program and the spin off series gypsy sisters?
>
> **Guy**: Never seen either of those. Or heard of for that fact.
>
> **Girl2:** Well, saying that there are no gypsies in America is pretty ignorant
>
> **Guy**: I didn't say we didn't have them. We have everybody. I'm just saying it's not a problem.
>
> **Girl3**: When I ask people they usually tell me they're thieves and not people to trust. I wouldn't know because I've never met one. I hear about them now because of the T/V show "American Gypsy" and the Disney Character Esmeralda… Disney makes everything look cute but gypsies are pretty much Satanists.

This conversation is rife with ignorance regarding the Romani life and existence and there can be little doubt where much of this comes from. Television shows such as *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* among others have created a narrative surrounding a little known group. Conversely, the guy in this conversation identifies that there is no gypsy "problem" in America and acknowledges he has never viewed these television programs and yet now, one can only worry that he will investigate these singular points of reference for the mainstream and further delve into a world of misinformation. One could argue that a show such as *My Big Fat America Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012) creates an opportunity for education from reliable sources as much as it does opportunities for misinformation. While Romani activists have sought to bring

countering images, as will be discussed later in the chapter, Romani rarely own the shaping of their identity in the mainstream, as will be discussed in a chapter to come.

It can be difficult for Romani to face the reality that their identity, something held so tightly to in Romani history, has been publically exposed on national television, and not in a way that would improve the relationship between Romani and mainstream society. Gracie, a woman in her 60's from the South East United States discussed at length how television portrayals, and specifically *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012) has forced many Romani to reveal themselves, something they never intended to do.

> I tended to not talk about being Romani to outsiders so I never intended to do that but I think there are a group of us now who believe that if we don't do that then things will be bad. So I mean if you let TLC interpret who you are then that's who you are to the public.

The extent that *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding (*Herman, 2012*)* has negatively portrayed Romani has forced American Roma, like Gracie, to take a stance in defense of their identity out of fear. These Romani fear that what has been a historical truth for Romani in America could again become the reality for Romani in the present day.

My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding is problematic for a number of reasons. Comanescu (2015) identifies that the show typically focuses on outdated practices of the Romani. The show consistently "others" Romani by portraying them as a secretive and entirely isolated community. Comensecu identifies:

> The large social issue of discrimination that perhaps lies at the root of the tensions between Romanies and the majority population becomes solely an issue of Romani cultural identity. Discrimination is legitimized by providing evidence that the Roma simply cannot be integrated.

The audience is presented with reality scripting and is encouraged to understand these actions as inherent to the Romani community:

> Because Romanies tend to be defined in terms of behavior, rather than other characteristics, almost inevitably any antisocial behavior will be pinned down to some innate characteristic of their culture.

Comanescu does acknowledge that the American version of this show at least provides some historical context. He points out, in a reference to Romani scholar Ian Hancock, that because America is a land of immigrants who possess varying physical features, the Roma of these shows do not differ physically from American Whites. This lack of physical variation supports the mainstream idea that rather than being an ethnicity, being gypsy is a set of actions. This idea aides viewers of shows such as *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* in accepting that the actions portrayed on the show are markers of what it means to be a gypsy.

4.10   The Harm of Reality

Oskana Marafioti, author of *American Gypsy: A Memoir*, and an American Romani has been loudly verbal regarding the harm that the portrayal of Romani on *MBFGW* could cause. An article penned in 2012 by Marafioti details his encounters with the producers of the show. Initially excited about the show, once he understood the angle producers hoped to take, he came to recognize quickly the danger that such a show could pose to the American Romani community. His first reservation came when he recognized he was not what the producers were looking for:

> As a college graduate, a classically trained pianist, and member of the film industry, I did not fit the bill of the "real gypsies" he was interested in meeting; everyone he had

been interviewing resembled me far more than the tambourine-jangling caricature he had in mind.

Marafioti recognized that he was not what producers were hoping for and that his efforts to encourage a direction that would portray Romani in a more positive and realistic light went unheeded. In his article, he discusses what he had hoped to communicate:

> …a show like this can harm a group of people already under scrutiny, people who also have families to watch over. Being a Romani isn't a way of life or a cult. We aren't Gypsy by choice or calling. No one can decide to become a Gypsy one day. We are a race of close to 10 million, with a culture that spans centuries and across continents. It is one thing to present a willing group of people in a negative light, but quite another to represent an entire race of people as a niche stereotype. This is particularly dangerous since people know so little about us and yet think they know so much.

Marafioti is cognizant that negative portrayals of Romani have historically damaged Romani in the eyes of the mainstream. Marafioti hoped to convey that Romani and their lives are more than just an entertainment concept or troupe and that to portray them in a stereotypical way has real-life consequences for the Romani community.

Many Romani are in agreement with Marafioti's premise. Fener, a Romani woman in her 40's from the Southeast United States identifies the embarrassment that *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012) has caused her personally:

> Yeah, you see this stuff on TV like *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* is there… to me that is embarrassing, I am embarrassed. We have gypsies that are Dr's attorneys, represented in the UN now and you try to break away from what people seem to think gypsies are. Fortune tellers and you know, out stealing off people. And well they'll steal your children from you. I heard that one growing up…I can't stand that, they make us look like a bunch of idiots and again it's all for TV. They get paid they get money for being on this reality TV and it's all a big lie…but feeds into the stereotypical thing of what these people believe.

Fener conveys a personal sense of frustration and embarrassment towards the way Romani are being portrayed and acknowledges that it is a further confirmation of stereotypes about Romani

that have been held for generations. Others, like Ruby, have mixed feelings regarding the show

though she admits it has brought shame to her personally:

> Well I feel like with the advent of TLC (laughs) [The Gypsies] become famous
> or infamous I don't know and I feel like it has brought wealth and that it, I don't
> know, its brought shame in a way to some of us that don't want to be looked at
> like that…in a way it's a thing of shame… It's a lot of mixed feelings.

Ruby acknowledges that for those on the show, wealth and notoriety have come however, it has

also exposed the identity of Romani who wished to remain hidden.

The impact of media portrayals will be discussed at length in the coming chapter

however, it is worth identifying further at this point, how *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Herman,

2012: Poppelwell, 2012), in both America as well as the UK has already impacted the lives of

the Romani. Plunkett (2012) identifies that the mistreatment of Romani in the UK has

significantly increased and that this mistreatment has been tied directly to the show. What has

been identified by experts as "measurable long-term harm" has been observed within Romani

communities. This includes physical and sexual assaults, racist bullying, hostile questioning,

damaged self-esteem and removal from school due to bullying. These outcomes have all been

linked with the airing of this *MBFGW*. Posters for upcoming seasons tout, "Bigger. Fatter.

Gypsier." causing many within the Romani community to protest the flippant way their plight as

a marginalized group has been considered by the mainstream and by television networks. One

Romani interviewed by the reporter, seeking to contextualize the problematic language of the

show posed the question, "Supposing the posters had sad 'Bigger. Fatter. Blacker'?" (Plunkett).

The harmful impact of *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Poppelwell, 2012) in the United

Kingdom prompted a complaint from organizations within the Romani community (The Journal,

2013). The complaint claimed that negative stereotypes endorsed by the show encouraged

prejudice towards Romani. The complaint was rejected and no further action was taken. The commissions dedicated to ensuring appropriate content failed to acknowledge the significant impact that *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* was having on its citizens. One Romani woman recounted the impact of the show on her life and her children (The Journal):

> We want the children to get an education but there is a lot of prejudice especially since the 'My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding' programme. We pulled them out of school while that was going on. It was a bad thing, they posted up all over the place, it was disgusting.

This Romani woman quoted in The Journal gives evidence to the very real way that Romani have been impacted through current negative media portrayals. Taking her children out of school in order to avoid the prejudice that resulted from these portrayals significantly impacts their ability to successfully navigate relationships with those outside of their communities and to obtain a competitive education.

It would perhaps provide some clarity to both the Romani community and mainstream society to know how the stars of the show themselves feel about the way they are portrayed or the feelings that other Romani have towards them as a result of their involvement in the show. Based on their contractual obligations however, many are unable to speak out regarding their roles. In a previous study I connected with one of the stars of the show to determine if this person could be interviewed. While she acknowledged her interest in taking part, she indicated her contractual obligations meant she was not allowed to take part in any interviews or photo ops of any kind, effectively preventing her from having any say outside of what is orchestrated within the program.

4.10.1 American Gypsies

Despite the obvious connection of shows like *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012: Poppelwell,, 2012) with harmful outcomes, they continue to air and have resulted in the development of spin-offs such as *Gypsy Sisters* (Thomas & Tarantino, 2013) and shows produced in an eagerness to capitalize on the popularity of the mainstream's interest in Romani lives such as *American Gypsies* (Kriss & Lipera, 2012). *American Gypsies* is an equally problematic television show that has been protested by members of the Romani community, anticipating the harm it is likely to cause (Nicoara, 2012). The show, produced by National Geographic, has been criticized for exoticizing Romani life, confirming stereotypes and othering of Romani (Nicoara).

In 2014, a petition was created through causes.com to bring an end to *American Gypsies.* Among the claims against the show was the claim that *American Gypsies* "misrepresents Romanies for financial gain at the expense of Romani culture, livelihood and social status" (Jasaroska, 2014). The petition went on to say that those willing to sign would agree to take part in "any potential class action lawsuit and/or any other legal action which may serve the purpose of holding these offending parties responsible…"

While many signed the petition, the creators of the petition were unable to reach their target goal. The show, though no longer in production, continues to be aired causing Romani to feel they must speak out in defense of themselves and their communities:

> I'm An American Gypsy and I am sick of the way my culture is portrayed on television…- (Reddit User, 2014)
>
> The "American Gypsy" TV show burning Millions of Romany souls. (Petition Signer, Anonymous)

> I am an American integrated Roma, and these shows make me very disappointed to call myself American. I'm sick of having to fear persecution for being who I am. People are ignorant, and they take what they read and see on television for granted. Enough is enough. Never again.-(Man, Signed Petition, Anonymous)

> National Geographic is demonizing Romanies through negative, inaccurate and irresponsible portrayals in mass media, this is causing a great harm for the Gypsies, therefore these shows, must be stopped immediately!-(Petition Signer, Anonymous)

Each individual who commented on the petition shared commonalties in what they hoped to express. Themes of frustration, acknowledgment of negative outcomes resulting from these portrayals and a desire to see them at an end were common among the commentators.

There can be little doubt that the portrayal of Gypsies/Romani on American television as well as Europe is problematic. Again, this is in no way an exhaustive account of television portrayals but is meant to characterize television portrayals of Romani world-wide. These accounts are also meant to highlight the response of the Romani community to these portrayals. Consistent themes emerge through television portrayals leaving Romani feeling inaccurately portrayed, marginalized and othered. Despite the protests and critical reception of these shows, they continue to be popular with the mainstream and producers continue to seek opportunities to capitalize on the American fascination with Romani. A recent Facebook (n.a., 2016) post by one such producer read as follows:

> A UK TV production company is looking for the REAL gypsies of the USA! Are you a newlywed moving in with your new Prince or Princess? On the hunt for the perfect daughter-in- law? We want to hear from you! Message me if you're the REAL DEAL...

This advertisement leaves little doubt that the desire to capitalize on the American appetite for outlandish Romani lives is still very much alive. The only response to this obnoxious plea came from a Romani women who simply responded: "Please go away."

4.11   The Impact of Media Portrayals on Gender

One cannot dissect Roma portrayals without making some note of the gender disparities that exist within these portrayals. For Romani women, in addition to the stereotypical portrayals that befall Romani as a whole, their experiences are almost entirely left out of media portrayals. Romani are presented in a homogenized manner and media representations fail to identify the intersectional experiences of Romani women who encounter discrimination as a result of their ethnicity as well as their sex and, often times, impoverished conditions (Oprea, 2004). These realities exist for portrayals in both the United States and Europe. Though shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012: Poppelwell, 2012) focus largely on Romani women, they fail to adequately portray the challenges and roles unique to Romani women within their communities and situated next to mainstream society.

A recent feature on BBC's *Women's Hour* (Murray & Starkey, 2016) provides a much more accurate portrayal of the life of a GRT in Europe. Rather than focusing on ancient tropes and outlandish behaviors (as the popular reality series do), they portray a realistic look into the daily life of the "traditional" Romani women who devotes her day to cleaning and cooking for her family. She owns the land she is parked on and discusses the lessons she is passing on to her daughter. She identifies themes of cleanliness, modesty of dress and manner, and hard work, themes which are important within the GRT community and not reflected in current popular media. She discusses reality shows, how they are "meaning to be shocking" and "not typical of gypsy people." In addition, she identifies that the women in the shows are "not as modest as most gypsy girls are expected and desire to be." The interviewee discusses being turned away and targeted in local pubs and market places and identifies how things have changed from past days: "We didn't feel that different [then], we felt like a much more valued part of the community." The program, though a mere 20 minutes, is a positive step forward in recognizing

the unique voice of Romani women and in providing those outside their communities a more

realistic look into their lives.

An article written in The Guardian, a UK newspaper, provides another realistic look into

the lives of actual Gypsy women (Bindel, 2011). The article, titled "The Big Fat Truth About

Gypsy Life" identifies the lack of accurate information presented by shows such as *My Big Fat*

Gypsy Wedding (Poppelwell, 2012). Bindel identifies that the show overlooks the poor health

and poverty that many Gypsy women face. The show paints a picture of women able to afford

lavish weddings and designer gowns when this is not a reality for the majority of the community.

Some worry that this will influence mainstream viewers to believe Gypsy women are merely

conning the government and living off assistance they don't need, leaving Romani women to

worry that they many lose the little help they have.

Bindel (2011) relates that many women within the Gypsy community are victims of

domestic violence, a widely prevalent occurrence in GRT communities throughout Europe. In

addition, Romani women face a significant number of miscarriages and SIDS-related deaths due

to lack of clean water and proper access to health care. They routinely experience evictions and

illiteracy among these women is disproportionately high. All of these factors are overlooked as

they do not play into the spoiled and outlandish narrative told by these shows. In addition, Bindel

interviews several Gypsy women who were significantly bothered by the way they have been

portrayed as Gypsy women:

> The programme didn't show the real way we go on. All my friends are asking if it's true
> what they show on telly and I think they've done different [towards me] since it was
> shown. (Mary, 15)

> The way us women come across in the programme is a disgrace… It shows us nothing
> but slaves to men, only good for cooking and cleaning and always being available to open

our legs to the men... We don't' want that for our daughters. (Helen, woman in her 20's)

Again, news articles such as Bindel's along with programs such as BBC Women's Hour are bringing a countering image to negative portrayals of women and are providing a realistic look into the challenges that Romani women face.

4.12   Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter I pose the questions: "What media portrayals of Romani in the United States are currently in existence? How does this compare to media portrayals for Romani in Europe? How do Romani discuss the impact of these portrayals in the United States and Europe?" As I discuss, media portrayals of Romani occur in a variety of mediums. Those that have been most popular have changed with the increase and availability of new forms of media and the advent of reality television. This is true for both Romani in the United States and Europe though negative portrayals in print media continue to be widely problematic for European Romani on a much greater scale than for Romani in the United States.

Common themes emerge in various media portrayals both in the United States and in Europe. Themes of "otherness," alienation, being immigrants in their own home and secrecy. Romani in both Europe and the U.S. are portrayed, even in current times, as dirty, conniving, mystical, otherworldly, exoticized and romanticized, violent, dangerous and something to be feared. Romani have spoken against negative media portrayals as they are able, seeking to counter these negative images and identify the potential for negative consequences. The work of Romani activists seeking to counter these images was not yet discussed at length but will be at a later point in this paper. The impact of these portrayals of Romani's day to day lives and their ability to successfully choose their own strategy for acculturation, assimilation or, at minimum,

successful co-existence in the world of the Gadje is discussed in Chapter Five. In Chapter Five, I answer the questions:

Have negative media portrayals significantly impacted the lives of Romani in the United States and Europe and, if so, in what way?

Have negative media portrayals lead to an increase in barriers to assimilation for Romani in the United States and Europe?

5 PREJUDICE, DISCRIMINATION AND THE ROLE OF MAINSTREAM MEDIA IN CREATING BARRIERS IN THE LIFE OF THE ROMANI

In January of 2016, Travellers from Ireland were evicted from homes parked at an unofficial parking site (Holland, 2016). Seventy Traveller men, women and children were evicted. Local law enforcement forced the Travellers from their homes and suggested splitting the men, women and children up in order to secure safe accommodation, separating families and requiring children to be separated from their mothers. The evicted Travellers and others from the community feared that the local council may have been seeking to take away their children under the guise of providing help. A spokeswomen for the families had this to say regarding the incident:

> We have heard reports of these kinds of intimidating suggestions being put to
> Travellers in Co Louth since the evictions and even before. This is an ongoing
> issue. It has been said to Travellers that if they declare themselves homeless
> the children could be taken away. These threats to break up families are not
> acceptable.

The suggestion from local council that Romani families be broken up in order to secure appropriate housing was unacceptable to the community and their advocates. The spokeswoman for the families identified that Romani felt they were being intimidated to relent to the council's suggestions. The Romani community once again saw themselves the target of behavior that would be considered unacceptable if directed toward any other minority group.

In March of 2016, fans outside a Dutch football stadium threw coins at Romani beggars, including children. The Romani women were encouraged to press up against the football fans or get down on their knees in exchange for money. The fans sang racist chants and burned money in from of them. Video footage caused an outcry against the shameful actions of the fans as they treated Romani as if they were "circus animals" (Investment Watch, 2016). The team spoke out against their actions, pledging to do whatever they must to find and punish these individuals.

There can be little doubt that Romani world-wide face discrimination and prejudice and that this is often tied to the way they are portrayed by the media whether on paper or on screen. In this chapter, I answer the questions:

Have negative media portrayals significantly impacted the lives of Romani in the United States and Europe and, if so, in what way?

Have negative media portrayals lead to an increase in barriers to assimilation for Romani in the United States and Europe?

Overall, I find that the way Romani are perceived is often passed down through media portrayals and these portrayals serve to cement prejudicial attitudes which lead to discrimination by law enforcement and health officials. These attitudes prevent Romani from acquiring

sufficient housing and education. These attitudes also lead to a resistance by the majority to assimilation or successful coexistence by the Romani.

5.1 General Experience of Discrimination- "…no life for the Gypsies"

The experience of Romani in Europe is an established narrative, there can be little doubt that they experience significant discrimination and social stratification. Though on a lesser scale, the same could be said for Romani in North America. In Canada, Romani are viewed as immigrants and outsiders (Beaudoin, 2014). Many have come to Canada to escape the racism of their home countries. Sadly, many, though not facing outright hostility or violence, face a lack of trust. This lack of trust is fueled by newspaper reports which doubt their claims of oppression from their home countries and increase the belief that they have come to Canada in hopes of filing bogus claims for help from the government. Canadians not of Romani origin have a difficult time understanding how many Romani, who appear White to their eyes, could be recognized and persecuted in the manner they claim. This confusion creates significant distrust towards Romani which is exacerbated by the way they are portrayed in print media (Beaudoin).

Several Romani within Beaudoin's study identify the difficulties they face in their home countries:

> And in the Czech Republic, in all of Europe, it's horrible, there's no life for Gypsies. It's almost like Hitler. Yeah, like Hitler. Nobody knows—nobody can imagine how life is there. And not just for our family, but all Roma people, they are afraid to live there (Elana, new Romani refugee to Canada)

> Like on Facebook, there is one page where there are all Gypsy people, and they put information, like what's going on...there was [a picture of] the dead body of a Gypsy, without eyes, without organs and everything, and they said, like this one, we will do to every Gypsy who we find until they disappear from this country- (Elena)

Their experiences, fueled by the media in their home country, make it all the more difficult to experience resistance to their presence and their desire to become a part of Canadian society.

As previously discussed, in the United States, Romani have historically been portrayed as con-artists and thieves who make their living conning individuals through their trades including fortune telling. An article in The Harvard Crimson (Lacalle, 2009) identifies the lasting effects that these portrayals have had on U.S. laws that remain in some states today.

> Even in the U.S., the law seems to be biased against Gypsies. A Gypsy in Maryland recently enlisted the American Civil Liberties Union to fight a law that outlaws fortune-telling. The practice is banned because many consider it fraudulent based on the belief that predicting the future is impossible. The Gypsy involved in the case, however, stated, it's not like you choose it. You're born with it.

Many Romani consider fortune-telling not only a trade but a gift they are born with. Laws created to prevent them from plying their trade and using this gift not only prevented them from making a living but also allowed them to be turned away from towns. The law prevented them from establishing permanent residences in the United States.

As previously discussed, historical portrayals of Romani in the United States, most notably in newspapers created a culture of mistrust and vilification towards the Romani. The result was an unwelcome atmosphere leaving many Romani to face a life of poverty, discrimination and prejudice. Ruby, a woman in her 40's from the Southeast United States describes the life of her father, a man currently in his late 70's, growing up in this America:

> My dad, later in life, told me about going on the road with my grandfather and how he would make clay pots and try to sell them door to door, just anything and everything he could like to get chickens or flower for food. They were really poor, there was a lot of poverty, they had leaky roofs and shacks with no floors. There was a lot of poverty he experienced that he didn't talk about a lot or share a whole lot about.

Peaches, a Romani women from the Southeast in her 80's, describes the situation of the Romani in these simple terms: "I think most Romanichal knew they were discriminated against but it was just the way it was."

Vaidy, a Romani woman in her 40's from the North East United States has encountered this culture of resistance and vilification first hand. While teaching an undergraduate class this exchange took place:

> They said you call a people who take their children out begging and their children suffer in the hot sun and there should be a law against that and you know sometimes they take White children so they could have more attractive begging things. So I slapped my hand on the desk and I was in the middle of a lecture and I said I am sorry that is a racist stereotype. We do not steal children and that is not appropriate for an academic classroom.

Vaidy saw first-hand the impact that attitudes commonly passed through media outlets has on the way those in the mainstream feel and act towards Romani. This is especially true for those who are unlikely to have ever encountered Romani personally. Rachel identifies that experiences such as Vaidy's are not uncommon in the life of the American Romani:

> The main issue is no one actually cares, if you make a joke about poor White people, White people are going to get pissed off, that happens a lot but the only people it's acceptable are Romani but no one really cares but it's like we kind of get lost.

Rachel acknowledges that experiences of both overt and covert prejudice are a normal part of the Romani experience and they continue in large part because few care about their occurrence outside of the Romani community. To Rachel, the real life of the Romani is invisible to anyone but themselves.

5.2 Unfiltered Prejudice

With few countering images to those the media routinely portray, Romani are subject to age-old stereotypes. Often unrecognizable to outsiders, Romani in the United States face unfiltered prejudice and discrimination akin to Vaidy's experiences. Rachel identifies that this often makes things more difficult for Roma in the United States because they can never be sure who to trust with the revelation of their identity, unlike Europe where Romani are much more recognizable:

> A lot of people don't know about us in the US but a lot of people do so you have to be careful, in Europe everybody knows so it's a little bit easier I think but here, people have a lot of opinions about it…. I'm not very dark but I do have olive skin and I do have a very Romani nose you know… and I think I look you know, very Romani. I've been abroad and you know people recognize me for what I am without having to talk to me. I think that contributes a lot. I don't think most Americans know what kind of features we have.

The inability of Americans to distinguish a Romani based solely on looks is both a blessing and a curse. For some, it means they are able to slip in and out of the mainstream as they choose, or are able to successfully assimilate without facing resistance from those who are unaware of their identity but who potentially hold racist attitudes toward Romani. On the other side, as discussed in the previous chapter, this leaves Romani to combat the belief that being Romani or Gypsy is more a way of life than an ethnicity and to combat negative attitudes associated with this invisible people. Media outlets have disseminated and cemented these beliefs, leading to racist interpersonal interactions such as those described by Vaidy and Rachel and much more, as will be discussed further in the chapter.

5.3   Prejudice in Europe- "They are being exploited"

In Europe, the situation for Romani is dire. Asylum Aid reports in 2002 (Ceneda) that there has been a significant increase in racial violence towards the Romani in Eastern and Central Europe, locations I discuss in Chapter 1 as having a significant bias towards, and campaign against, Romani in newsprint media. Romani in these areas are being forced to abandon their homes and immigrate elsewhere and they are being denied asylum. Anti-Roma campaigns released by governments as well as newspapers and radio follow them regardless of the countries they find themselves in (Ceneda, 2002). In Romania, Roma experience mob violence and violent harassment by the countries' police.

Green (2016) reports that there are allegations of Traveler families being put on secret Blacklists at holiday camps where they seek to take their families on vacation. When they attempted to investigate why they were being turned away from camps when they had prior reservations, they were threatened with arrests. The Travellers believe they have been placed on a blacklist due to their ethnicity, recognizable by their last names. In March of 2016 *The Local* reported that Roma families in Linz, Austria had experienced the third arson attack on Roma camps this year. The homes of 15 people who were living in tents were burned to the ground. Local newspapers identify the victims as "beggars," fail to identify the racial motivations behind the attacks and minimize the incident by stating that no one was physically in danger.

Not only do these stories occur as a result of a culture of vilification surrounding Romani, but the lack of accountability by those who commit these actions, The journalists who report on these stories but refuse to hold anyone accountable continue to perpetrate an environment where the victimization of Romani will also be portrayed as warranted or misunderstood. The lack of

accountability in the media lends itself to a continuation of these types of occurrences because few exist to speak on the Romani's behalf.

In the Czech Republic, Romani who requested accommodation from the local government were placed in what was previously a hotel, a residential site approved by the local council (romea.cz, 2016). The place they were sent was infested with mold. Water stains were present throughout the rooms and floors. Graffiti covered the walls. The rooms had no running or hot water. The husband of the couple placed in this site stated, "I would not house an animal there." Local media remained silent about these deplorable conditions though this was not an isolated case. The dehumanization of Romani allows them to be treated as few groups are. One local Sergeant states the Romani are often put in, "Horrendous [housing conditions]. They are being exploited in a lot of cases" An Inspector adds, "No other sector of the community would have it."

The media portrayal of Romani, in its silence, has as much potential for harm as it does in its outright prejudice. The silence of the media in its unwillingness to highlight the inhumane treatment of Romani in Europe has significantly impacted their ability to obtain the basic necessities they need to live. Lane, Spencer and Jones (2014) relate the experience of one Romani man in Europe, in need of work who met resistance:

> When I come to the agency they told me don't get no job because It's very quiet. When they go in the office and come back they tell you there's no job…. Because looking at my color, you know, that's no for work

This gentleman related his experience in seeking employment. Upon seeking a job at an employment agency, he recognized he was given the proverbial "run-around" because of prejudice towards his recognizably ethnic features. Another study by Rechel et al. (2009) recounts the experience of a Romani parent who lacked trust in the healthcare establishment's

willingness to assist Romani. "In the Roma neighborhoods, if there is an emergency, the ambulances refuse to go there. This is widely known. [...] There are two reasons. The one is that they really refuse to go there…" Roma are widely known to lack appropriate access to emergency medical care due to overt prejudice and yet, the media remains largely silent on the many barriers Romani face.

Though frequently criticized for their inability or unwillingness to assimilate into mainstream society, Romani are frequently met with resistance to finding settled housing, proper educations, and access to healthcare (even when it is provided by the state), protection by the law and employment, things that would contribute to their assimilation or accommodating aspects of their Romani culture with the mainstream. Throughout this chapter I discuss in-depth the ways in which Romani have been negatively impacted by media portrayals in each of these areas and the forms of acculturative resistance the Romani encounter in the United States as well as in Europe.

5.4   Interpersonal Prejudice in America

Romani in the United States fear or face prejudice and discrimination on an interpersonal level from the Gadje. Even those who exist as fully assimilated members of the mainstream may carry around a fear of facing this type of racism. Many carry memories of times that relatives or they themselves have experienced this prejudice first hand, a prejudice that separates them and makes them feel "othered" in their own country. A Romani woman in New Jersey, posting on a Facebook forum about the issues surrounding Gypsy stereotypes, had this to say about her experience with interpersonal prejudice:

> I feel like the "gypsy trope" makes them think Romani aren't real, like they're just in
> stories or something... Even though those stories were often racist tales people told their

> kids to make them stay away from us. It pisses me off a lot. It's like we're invisible in America.

This woman recognizes the harm of the "gypsy trope." This trope, paraded throughout American media as the main theme of Romani representation, has led the mainstream to not only deny the existence of Romani, and thus their ethnicity, but has also led others to remain careless of how they speak of Romani. These individuals encourage their children to remain separate from Romani if they encounter them. Interacting with those who do not acknowledge the Romani's existence leaves many Romani feeling invisible.

Because many people do not acknowledge Romani existence or buy into the difficulties they face even in the United States, Romani encounter a large amount of interpersonal prejudice online. This prejudice may originate in social media spaces or online forums meant to give the general public a space to exchange ideas and discuss their opinions openly. These types of online forums become meeting spaces where individuals, who again are unlikely to encounter Romani personally, freely share their strongly held prejudices widely influenced by popular media.

As I discuss in Chapter 4, Girlsaskguys.com (n.d.) is a public forum in which questions can be asked and answered anonymously by anyone world-wide about any topic. The following are opinions about Romani posted by American men and women meant to educate others. The first was submitted by a man from the U.S.:

> …And they are very insular and actively resist assimilating into the cultures around them, which prevents the situation from improving very much. It's pretty much standard ghetto behavior with a few additional quirks of their own thrown in. They don't want "help" and have no interest in changing.

One can see what is problematic with these attitudes from this quote alone. The poster villainizes the Romani and accuse them of engaging in "ghetto" lifestyle, making the poverty that many experience inherent. He also blames them for their current situation by making resistance to assimilation about their stubbornness and lack of desire to change rather than highlighting the years of racism and prejudice that have made them fearful of how they will be treated by the mainstream. In addition, he fails to recognize that many Romani in the United States have managed to integrate successfully into mainstream society while holding onto their Romani roots. In his narrative, Romani are inherently ghetto and blamed entirely for their experience while society is left unaccountable (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.).

Another American man, postulating on cultural differences in America highlights this "fact" about Romani: "Gypsies in some countries openly steal and their children are trained to steal. They consider it acceptable." A woman from the United States gave her own narrative of Romani world-wide:

> It's a culture of broken people that are basically doomed to wander the countryside of European countries. There are not that many "morals"… That is why they dress in scandalous clothing to attract men... even the younger ones expose and degrade themselves. I remember seeing a picture of a family of "modern gypsies" and the grandmother, the mother and the daughters all had eyes that were dead. The "modern"; Gypsies are not respected and are subjected to discrimination daily. The Men are "Gods" and the women are servants.

The opinions of both individuals, speaking with an air of fact but void of vindictiveness, genuinely perceive Romani as they have been portrayed: to be void of basic societal norms and morals. They view them as living under archaic rules and, even in seeing the plight of discrimination and poor treatment, say so with the air of blaming the victim. Society, again, has remain unnamed as having any responsibility in their plight (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.).

Even those individuals who express an "admiration" for Romani are often actually expressing a desire to appropriate their culture and reduce Romani to a set of behaviors rather than an ethnicity, thus denying their existence, leaving them to feel invisible. Another quote from girlrsaskguys (n.d.) exemplifies this type of admiration:

> **Girl**:I wanna be one
>
> **Guy**:You really don't.
>
> **Girl**: Lol why? It's more that I wanna have a nomad life before I settle.
>
> **Guy**:That's fine, but you don't want to be a typical gypsy Traveller. "Excuse me, a bunch of kids from this campsite just set fire to those cars over there and robbed   the local shop!" The response, "sorry about that, boys will be boys."

While the girl expressed a desire to take on the Gypsy "lifestyle" of traveling, she lacked any knowledge of the many challenges Romani living this lifestyle face. The responder felt the need to gloss over their experiences of marginalization and to criminalize Romani and their way of life as one without morals, heedless to the rules of "civilized" society.

I titled this section "Interpersonal Racism in America" because this type of racism, though directed at the group is experienced person to person. Whether that person has made a Romani reading these comments feel invisible or marginalized or whether it has led to the mistreatment of Romani they encounter individually. Romani are most likely affected by these attitudes, as already stated multiple times, because there is no thought given to filter these racist beliefs. Not only are they spoken openly online but in person as well. Failure to acknowledge the ethnicity and existence of Romani or, as already stated, a perpetration of the "gypsy Trope" by the media leave individuals with the belief that Romani are nothing more than an act. Those speaking on behalf of the mainstream fail to acknowledge that Romani exist as a marginalized group and, at the very least, are a people who exist and have feelings.

The following are just a few more people that Romani may have the opportunity to encounter in their everyday lives (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.)

Girl: It seems like the only people who look down on gypsies are Europeans. Literally no one here in the U.S. cares of thinks less of them.

Guy: That's because we don't have gypsies. If we did then plenty of Americans would hate them.

Girl2: Those that I see on streets need some fashion advice and a shower. A normal understandable vocabulary wouldn't hurt either, and normal people behavior.

Guy2: If you saw them regularly you would understand. They are generally extremely violent they beat their kids on public transport and yell at each other all the time and most stealing and murder and theft has a Roma perpetrator…… People always say "well of course they are like that, they live in poverty and people are wary of them but that doesn't justify the violence, the yelling, spitting… you don't see a   non-Roma person doing that.

The anonymity of the online world provides these girls and guys the ability to express their true opinions of Romani in an unfiltered way. Though these opinions are expressed online, given the content of their posts, it is evident that these attitudes are carried with them into their everyday lives, lending themselves at the very least to covert forms of interpersonal prejudice.

5.5   Interpersonal Prejudice Europe

As in America, prejudice toward the Romani is in existence however, because Romani are more known and more visible in Europe, this prejudice takes on more severe forms than in the U.S. The following are some examples of Romani experiences of prejudice and discrimination that have taken place in Europe and were posted publically on Facebook (2016) as a way to expose this discrimination when other mediums, such as local newspapers, failed to acknowledge its occurrence:

JUST WANTED PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT A PUB IN MY VILLAGE THAT MY FAMILY BEEN GOING TO FOR OVER 50 YRS BARRED ALL TRAVLLER EVEN

WOMEN AND CHILDREN ALL BECOUSE THE LANDLORD CAN ANY TIPS IM TAKING IT FURTHER THANKS ALL. (Romani Woman, UK)

Customer notice, please be aware that we have travelers in the park and ride. Police have been notified. Please be vigilant and report and suspicious behaviors to reception. (Facebook post highlighting posted notice in UK neighborhood that listed all Romani companies that lived on the street.)

Well I'm in my late sixties and for as long as I can remember it's always been the same and I can't see it changing to be honest even when my kids went to school they put the gypsy children in a different room from the gorger kids and playtime they wouldn't let them out to mix with other children and that was in the seventies that's the reason i took my children out of school and they never had any more schooling I wonder what would happen if they done that to the refugees ay" (Facebook Post, UK Man, 2006)

Through these posts, one is able to see that Romani in Europe are banned from frequenting commercial establishments, segregated in public schools and among peers and are targeted as criminals, all as a result of simply being recognizably Romani.

Just as in the U.S. individuals are vocal regarding their attitudes towards Romani even when expressing racist or discriminatory thoughts. On a survey from girlsaskguys.com, 21% of girls and 32% of boys said "gypsies are scum." Others had this to say about Romani, even those they have encountered (girlsaskguys.com, n.d.):

Guy: Well, the gipsy culture is a little different, they are encouraged to trick people and steal. Most of them complain about not being able to get jobs or help when they take any chance to screw people over. Now I know this sounds racists but this is the truth about the majority, I've met gypsies that where really good friends. PS: They are usually very charismatic and they like to use that."

Girl: Their lifestyle is not the same as the mainstream, and the government finds them harder to control. They do sometimes participate in activities that are looked down upon such as tricking people out of their money, panhandling, and pick pocketing. They generally do not like for people who are not gypsies to know anything about them. People hate them because they don't understand them, have had some bad experiences with them, and therefore, fear them."

Just as in the opinions expressed by Americans, the feelings towards Romani center on their criminality, their lack of morals and their resistance to assimilation. Again, what they fail to

discuss are the challenges they face as a marginalized people and the reasons behind Romani resistance to assimilation. The respondent in the quote above even relied on the cliché "some of my best friends are..." in order, it would seem, to qualify the validity of his statements and to excuse what he himself identifies as sounding racist. The boldness with which these opinions are shared as factual, the level to which Romani are presented as homogenized individuals and the buy-in to racist ideologies create an environment in which hostility and social stratification are permitted.

A study conducted by Ureche and Franks in 2007 catalogues the experiences of GRT young people from England, Britain and Ireland. There are 201 participants ages 7-30 who share their experiences of interpersonal violence. The goal of the study is to emphasize the importance of positive contact between GRT and non-GRT's to reduce the amount of derogatory words that are used toward Roma. Research shows that contact, including contact through the media (known as para-social contact) can significantly impact the increase or decrease of prejudice between individuals (Schiappa, Gregg & Hewes, 2005). The researchers were able to collect chilling narratives of interactions between GRT's and those outside their communities.

Researchers identify that "Rroma, gypsies and travelers…experienced prejudice, bigotry and institutional racism as part of their daily lives" (Shiappa, Gregg & Hewes, 2005). Many reported the experience of being denied service due to their ethnicity, "We don't like everyone knowing though. It's bad then (because) they put up signs saying 'No Travellers" (English Traveller). Other individuals describe their experiences dealing with non-GRT's at school and their parents:

> Yes, I went [to school] until some girls poured water all over me because I was a 'dirty Traveller'. My Mam went up to school and asked them what they were going to do about

it but they did nothing so Mam said I wasn't going again 'cos it was disrespectful to ignore her complaints. – (English gypsy taken out of school because of bullying. P.33)

…they kind of drag their children away like we have Aids or something. (GRT parent, P. 42)

School children experience prejudice at an interpersonal level when they are bullied, assaulted or rejected by their non-Roma peers.

These types of experiences are representative of the interpersonal interactions that Romani experience on a regular basis. Ureche and Franks (2007) identify many of their respondents found this troubling not just because of the harm young people already experience but because of where it has the potential to lead. One researcher related the worries of the Aunt of one study participant whose own mother died in a concentration camp:

She said she is worried now because people are turning more and more against the gypsies and particularly the Rroma….it is a small step, she says, from spitting at someone in the street or beating someone up to putting them in camps and killing them. (P. 6)

Having experienced first-hand the progression that prejudice can take from an interpersonal level to societal discrimination the respondent seeks to conceptualize the current situation of Romani in Europe. The respondent expresses fears that the behavior she is currently witnessing towards the Romani is only steps away from revisiting past atrocities committed against Romani and other minority groups.

The change from individual to Institutional racism is certainly a concern for many Romani in America as well as Europe. Government institutions such as the police force rely on public notices and newspaper profiles to perpetuate fear and suspicion of Romani, leaving individuals as well as towns to resist their presence. Without many advocates, Romani become easy targets for law enforcement, making their desire for invisibility harder to achieve. Reality

shows as well as a continual presence in newsprint highlighting criminal activity of the Romani, and nothing else, further contributes to their villinization and increases their likelihood of being targeted by the police.

5.6   Police Interactions in America

Historically, interactions between Romani and police in the United States have not been favorable. As I discuss in the previous chapter, law enforcement have been largely suspicious of the presence of Romani and instrumental in contributing to the passing on of stereotypes surrounding Romani in posted statements and contributions to newspapers. A 2001 article in Police: Law Enforcement Magazine features an article titled "Gypsies: King of Con" (Hall, 2001). The article, though noting they do wish to imply that not all people of the gypsy culture are involved in crime, begins with this description of gypsies in America:

> We have all heard or know about organized crime. But did you know there is an organized crime family specializing in fraud that has successfully operated throughout the world for almost 2,000 years? Their success nets them millions, tax-free, every year. Less than 5% of their victims complain and when they do, are often met with laughter, mis-reporting or ignorance by law enforcement.

This statement, despite the disclaimer at the beginning of the article, immediately homogenizes and criminalizes Romani in the United States. Additionally, while it may very well be true that some Romani engage in conning others or in criminal activity, the assertion that their cons net Romani millions of tax free dollars gives one the impression that they are secretly living a life of luxury and not dealing with poverty as many, in reality, are.

Reality shows such as *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012) further contribute to this narrative, leaving many to believe that the lavish weddings enjoyed by Romani women with custom made dresses are typical of their lives. These shows also portray sketchy

business practices and interactions with the law, raising their visibility to other law enforcement and leading some to be distrustful of Romani who appear to be living in poverty, believing it is merely a part of their "con"

The article in Police Magazine goes on to report that each Romani group has its "criminal specialty (Hall, 2001). Gypsies are listed as "experts at false identification." and are said to be largely without the ability to read or write. "Gypsies choose a lifestyle of thievery, one that is as natural to them as eating and sleeping." The article then discusses the various cons gypsies are engaged in and how to fight against them. There is in fact a "South Florida Gypsy Crimes Task Force" that has been developed to focus their efforts on gypsies committing crimes in their area. While this may seem a reasonable step in gypsy crime if it is indeed running rampant to the extent reported, by reframing this perhaps one can see where the issue lies.

It would be unlikely that a task force called the "South Florida Black Crimes Task Force" or the "South Florida Asian Crimes Task Force" would be something allowed to exist. Without question those things do exist within police departments but are operated in a manner where profiling is meant to be done covertly. For Romani, racial profiling is not only done outright but is applauded and, as the article states, has gained national recognition. This recognition places Romani seeking to legitimately support their families, in a position of fear and has led to the evacuation of Romani from cities. It has also lead to laws being passed that prevent their ability to conduct business, own property or simply reside in certain areas.

A national association exists that specifically trains policeman to target Romani and Travellers in the United States. The National Association of Bunco Investigators held a conference in 2015 on Elder Exploitation and Nomadic Organized Crime that offered two days of workshops identifying the criminal world of Romani and Travellers. The workshops offered

include, "Introduction to the Criminal Gypsies and Travelers," "Fortune Telling Fraud," and "The Travelers: English, Irish and Scottish: Nomadic Bands of home repair con-artists…" (NABI, 2015).

Among the Romani women I interviewed, many identify negative interactions between police and Romani. Gertie, a Romani woman in her 50's from Southeast United States describes the life of her family and its relationship to the police:

> G: If someone in the town complained about you, you got run off by the police. Basically the same thing that they would be run out of towns.
>
> **Interviewer: That was because of who they were or because of the type of work they did?**
>
> G: Because of who they were and it was because they told fortunes.
>
> **Interviewer: Do you think there were things that happened [with the police] to your family they didn't talk about because it was difficult for them?**
>
> G: Uh, probably not because they didn't get caught very much back then.
>
> **So do you think, were they normally run out of town or do you think they were able to leave town before they got run out?**
>
> G: They traveled a lot, they stayed like a step ahead of the police.

Gertie describes the experiences of her family that occurred in the early half of the 20th century. It was during this time that newspaper articles warning residents of Romani presence were not uncommon. This notoriety caused residents to be on the lookout for Romani presence and led to targeting by police who let Romani know they were unwelcome in many towns. Ruby, a women in her 40' from the Southeast, describes a similar scenario: "Yeah I mean that they were run out of town that the police, the muskers, would shake them down for money when they found out that they were running a business without a license." Ruby was able to recall narratives about Romani interactions with police related by her parents and grandparents.

The targeting of Romani seeking to support their families with non-traditional means and in non-traditional lifestyles is both a historical occurrence and a modern one. The work of organizations such as the Association of Bunco Investigators and the "South Florida Gypsy Crimes Task Force" is alive and well. Louisa, in her 30's, describes the interactions many of the men who work jobs traditional to Romani have had with police:

> They know the gypsies are ignorant so they know they will pay whatever it takes to get them out. They used to do that to them all the time. Then when we was in Minnesota they were arrested on theft by deception charge. The next day   they dropped the charges and released him but at the time my husband had 5,000 dollars   on him that the police kept just because they felt like it,… we never seen a dollar of that money back. That was like to pay for the men. That was supposed to cover all the   material and pay all the men.

Louisa reports many experiences of being unfairly targeted by the police based on their identity only to later be released without consequence but not before it cost them jobs, time they could be working or traveling, or money. Louisa also commented on the situation for Romani and other minorities:

> It's just a really racist town in Florida, one of the police officers…
> in that same town shot a Black guy [multiple] times and when they asked him why they
> shot him that many times, he said well I ran out of bullets, like if he'd had more he would
> have shot him more. It's for who you are not what you done, its who you are.

Many Romani fear not only for their livelihood, but they are fearful their children will be profiled and sent to jail on trumped-up charges. Louisa was able to conceptualize these fears by situating them within narrative of Black interactions with law enforcement.

There can be little doubt that the Romani encounter significant prejudice from police in the United States. With their goal of living largely invisible lives, media portrayals serve to only bring them to the forefront in a criminalized and fear-inducing manner. The situation for Romani

in Europe is all the more dire due to their heightened visibility. In addition, it is the common

practice for local councils to pass laws making the Romani way of life largely illegal, effectively

outlawing portions of their historical identity and making them targets for law enforcement.

5.7   Police Interactions in Europe

One could argue that in Europe, Romani criminals are created and punished

simultaneously by the government. As I discuss in an upcoming chapter, Romani lifestyles are

becoming more and more "illegal," impacting Romani identity in a significant way. As already

recounted, media in Europe, be it newspaper, news stations, radio broadcasts or posted notices

serve the police by creating a culture of fear surrounding Romani which helps to justify their

actions. The Romani in Europe hold an understandable mistrust towards police in many

communities (Heaslip, 2015).

An article by The Guardian identifies that it is rare for women to call police for help,

even when victimized because the community would look down on this as a betrayal, possibly

leading to the individual being ostracized (Bindel, 2011). Even if the police were called, few

believe that police would be of much help, as one women interviewed in a study on the

intersectional oppression of Romani women identifies, "I gave up calling the police… when we

call them, they often say, 'Let it be, Gypsy business' (Kushi, 2016)." Mistrust of police by

Romani has many historical underpinnings (Beaudoin, 2014). Even in situations where police

reach out to Romani communities, a large amount of distrust remains. These feelings were

conceptualized by a Romani women who participated in a study on Romani identities

(Beaudoin):

Are we under surveillance? Are we feeding information to the police? Why do they

want to partner with us? What role are we playing in giving them access to Roma

Community members that they want? What role are we playing in gathering

information? For deportations? (P. 261)

Another Romani woman, participating in a study on vulnerability within the Gypsy/Traveling

community also identifies with these fears:

We also had a fear of the law, a very deep fear of any police officers or any people like

that, because it has been inbred in us to fear the law and not to trust anyone from the

local community.(Heaslip, 2015, P. 92).

The respondent from Heaslip's study has a narrative corresponding to respondents from

America. Romani hold deep seated fear and mistrust towards the law that has been passed down

in their community.

A Romani women in her 20's from the same study identifies that Romani mistrust is not

unwarranted. Romani see that they are being targeted by law enforcement and surveilled for no

apparent reason:

Two sites I spoke about you've got cameras, you wouldn't get a camera

outside the front of the house so why do Travellers. It's like you go home tonight and

they put a camera outside your house. That cameras watching every move we make and

it ain't nice. (Romani Woman, age 20, pg. 88)

Just as in America, Romani in Europe believe they are being unfairly targeted, especially when

they are routinely watched and forced from their homes (Lane, Spencer & Jones, 2014). One

Irish Travelling youth reports to Ureche and Franks (2007) that being Traveller is itself enough

to warrant the notice of the police, "If they know then they use it against you. The police they do

it worse than anyone." Romani are targeted because of their ethnicity and made to feel as if they

are somehow guilty, simply by existing. As one respondent states, "You're a "T" so you must be up to something" (Irish Traveler, P. 41).

Targeting of Romani by police whether in America or Europe is just one outcome of being targeted by negative media, especially one that routinely vilifies Romani and works in conjunction with law enforcement and other government officials. The reluctance of police officials to allow Romani to successfully establish themselves vocationally or physically and the continued fear-mongering disseminated through mainstream media is only one example of acculturative resistance experienced by Romani. Another major area of resistance occurs within public (called private in Europe) school systems.

5.8   School Encounters of Prejudice in America and Europe

Romani have been widely criticized for their lack of education or involvement in government run educational settings. As modern times have continued to evolve, Romani have become all too aware of their need for an education, either because traditional means of gaining a living are no longer accessible or because an advanced education would assist them in their traditional endeavors. Sadly, schools are among the most difficult environments for many Romani. American Romani tend to fare better than those in Europe though, as identified in Covert (2015) Romani women have faced prejudice as a normal part of their educational experience both historically and in modern times.

Little research currently exists documenting the experience of Romani in American public school systems. The information for this section about Romani interaction with American school systems was collected from qualitative interviews with Romani women. Of the 15 women interviewed, ages 22-80, 13 reported some form of discrimination in school growing up. Vaidy, a

respondent in her 40's from northeast United States identifies that older relatives had been

kicked out of school because of their ethnicity. She also identifies that she herself had been

bullied and made fun of in the classroom due to her identity as a Romani.

Anne, a woman in her 40's from the Southeast United States, identifies that both her

older relatives as well as her own children were unwilling to put their children in public schools

because of the prejudice they faced.

> No they just said that Gorjas didn't understand them because you know back then, and
> even now you know my daughter lives in Chicago, even now they don't put their kids in
> school, They marry young so I can understand why Gorjas felt that way but the older
> generation just felt that they were being picked on for their ways of believing.

Often reluctant to engage with individuals from the mainstream because of prejudice, their

reluctance has been further cemented by encounters with discrimination from teachers and

students. Rachel, a women in her 20's, identifies incidents that she encountered in elementary

school:

> I went to an elementary school, a public school. That was pretty good there were a
> couple of kids who were very antagonistic towards me when they found out who I was. A
> lot of   them were, just said oh cool when they went back to whatever they were doing. I
> did punch a white boy once for calling me a dirty gypo. I didn't get in trouble 'cause the
> principle knew he was racist.

Rachel goes on to recount many experiences of micro-aggression as well as outright prejudice

throughout her school career. This increased as she entered highschool where she became the

target of intense, racially motivated bullying.

Allie, a women in her 40's from the Midwest, moved to the United States from Europe at

the age of 26 in order to attend college. Allie used her experiences growing up in Europe to

inform how she should conduct herself in the classroom.

> I was pretty much on the down low, people didn't know where I was from and my accent was a lot less American then and people couldn't place me and I let them think I was from wherever I was from. You know they would come out with all kinds of things and I was just like uh huh. It wasn't until the end of my second year and I was in a class and someone brought up gypsies and something in Europe and I commented positively of course and kind of all hell broke loose.

When first coming to America, Allie downplayed her ethnicity and hoped to remain unnoticed by her fellow students. Compelled to speak positively about those she was closely connected with, she immediately encountered that which she had worked so hard to avoid.

Allie then describes the lack of understanding that her classmates had about the reality of being a Romani, who they are and what their lives are like.

> It was the most bizarre experience, most of them in the class didn't seem to know what they were talking about and it shocked me a lot because in Europe you mention the word Gypsy and everyone has, most people have negative ideas and it seems in the US most people have half romanticized idea and half the gypsies in America are hippies wanderers smoking week but the bad gypsies are in Europe. And so it was this weird dichotomy I experienced growing up to be a gypsy. Everyone knew by your name growing up where you were form, you didn't really hide it. It was just a weird experience Undergraduate people seemed more interested in learning maybe in learning about the reality of it.

Allie identifies the difference between being completely recognizable in Europe and being largely invisible in America. She found that many of their negative ideas about "gypsies" who were bad were directed at Romani in Europe where many of them had romanticized ideas about any that may be living in America.

Though not explicitly stated, one need only to look at the types of media portrayals surrounding both American and European Romani to draw conclusions about how these specific stereotypes can to be directed toward groups. While negative press related to European Romani exists in excess, the limited amount of media portrayals directed at Romani in the U.S. are

balanced out by popular songs glorifying the "Heart of a gypsy" (Caillat, 2014) or Pinterest (n.d.) boards dedicated to Quotes about "wandering souls." Anne believes that, at best, many individuals are ignorant of the lives of Romani and the connotations surrounding the term "gypsy" while others, such as those Vaidy encountered, carry significant prejudice they are unafraid to express in academic settings.

In Europe, the educational situation is far more dire and is more easily tied to the ways in which Romani are portrayed in the media. In a study conducted by Lane, Spencer and Jones (2014) with Romani from England, Scotland, Whales and Northern Ireland, it is found that 9 of 10 Romani children sent to school experience bullying and 2/3 report experiencing a physical attack of some kind. Harding (2014) reports that GRT children face significant challenges when compared with their White peers in Great Britain. Racism and bullying are a common part of the Romani school experience and social exclusion frequently occurs with peers at school.

A study by Strauss (2012) conducted 275 qualitative interviews with both Romani and Sinti individuals about the education situation of Roma and Sinti in Germany. One fourth of the respondents identify they have experienced discrimination in school. Those interviewed who attended school in the 1950's and 1960's identify they experienced a significant amount of discrimination from teachers while those who attended school more recently report a significant amount of demotivation by their teachers.

> (…) and after that, the teacher was just so mean to me that she even badmouthed Sinti in class and said, 'the Gypsies stink, and they're dirty'. And then I didn't want to go to school anymore, because it hurt me so much that I just sat and cried. (Sinti women in her 30's, P. 83)
>
> But on the other hand, there were some who were, who had a bias, a real aversion. It was noticeable, too. True, they didn't say it directly, but you just noticed it. The teacher preferred other students. Then you just noticed that.(Sinti man, age 21, P. 84)

Former students relate their experiences with teachers from outside of their communities. The Sinti woman respondent identifies overt experiences of discrimination in her classroom while the Sinti man identifies more covert experiences of discrimination.

Other studies in Europe identify that bullying and even violence by other students is a common experience of Romani in school (Russel, 2016). A 13 year old girl reported that a fellow student threatened to stab her when she revealed her ethnic heritage. She also reported that she had been verbally assaulted and that some students had threatened to come to her house. A study by Harding (2014) identifies that GRT children fare much worse in school than White children and face racism, bullying, and physical abuse at school. Another Romani identifies that the term "gypsy" was not one they were familiar with until they went to government run schools.

> They put me into school and that was when people first started calling me a Gypsy, smelly and stuff. And I couldn't understand it. I didn't know what a Gypsy was. I really realized that we weren't liked. That we were completely different - different person to what country people were.-Romani Man (Russel, 2016).

This respondent discovered that not only had they been labeled by an unfamiliar term, but that the label carried many negative connotations, making him a target for harassment.

As I discuss in chapter 4, the advent of shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Poppelwell, 2012) in Europe brought an increase in the violence and bullying Romani experience in school. Without quantitative data to support conclusively the link between various types of media exposure and the ways Romani have been treated in Europe, one can only draw connections between the excessively negative representation of Romani in European media and this treatment. As I discuss in the literature review, studies show that negative minority portrayals on television have been shown to significantly increase the stereotypes held by

majority groups and subsequent discriminatory behaviors. (Fryberg et.al, 2008; Leavitt et al., 2015: Mastro & Greenberg, 2000).

5.9   Segregation in European schools

Another significant issue faced by Romani in Europe without evidence in America is school segregation. An article from August 2016 identifies that Roma children in Hungary continue to be segregated from their White peers (Serdult, 2016.). The quality of segregated schools are said to be lacking and fall short of the quality of schools attended by non-Roma children. Serdult reports this from a Romani father:

> We felt the quality and infrastructure of the school was not good. She had the best possible marks in the segregated school: 5s (the Hungarian equivalent of an A+). Her grades fell to 2 when she moved to an integrated school. The level of education between these schools is not the same, the grades reflect this. She had to catch up tremendously. It was difficult to adjust as she was not well received in the new school. Her marks are now back up to 5s.

Parents and students face inferior conditions in segregated schools but, in their efforts to integrate they face significant resistance from non-Roma parents. Serdult identifies that segregated schools are actually currently on the rise rather than declining. Other studies show Roma children in Yugoslavia, Albania (Kushi, 2016) as well as Slovakia (Higgins, 2013) attend segregated schools.

An article from 2013 in the New York Times (Higgins) relates the struggle of Slovakian schools in trying to integrate Roma into mainstream institutions. Slovakian school officials seeking to conduct this integration successfully have looked to the educational desegregation struggles of the United States to inform this process. In some schools already seeking to integrate Roma students, Roma are still treated differently than their White peers. They are

placed in Roma only playgrounds and during lunch they are given bagged rations unlike the White students who receive hot meals. Their parents have, at times, been banned from the schools and classes are chosen based on the ethnicity of the student (Higgins, 2013). Roma children taking part in integration have difficulties trying to catch up after being educated in sub-par conditions and many Roma parents fear the integration due to the discrimination they have experienced in the past. Resistance has also come from the teachers themselves, as Higgins reports, "These people are interested in only two things: money and sex…They are lazy and don't want to learn" (Vladmir Savov, English Teacher). The quote from this English teacher characterizes the deeply held prejudices towards Romani that lead many teachers with integrated classrooms to discriminate against Romani students and their parents.

It is challenging for Romani to accept that their children will attend sub-par, segregated schools. In Norway, many Roma come from Romania seeking a better life. Sadly, they find discrimination as well as extreme poverty. Romani in Norway report being spit on, having their things set on fire and being run over by cars. They often experience physical violence and are frequently told to "go home" presumably to Romania. They are vilified by the press. Despite this, they are hopeful that their children could be a part of integrated schools that would give them an opportunity to have more than their parents:

> If we have to live so poorly, we at least want our children to have better lives. We want them to go to Norwegian schools and be integrated. We want to contribute, earn money and pay taxes. We can do any jobs; clean, pick up garbage and anything else. (25 year old female in Norway originally from Romania)

Sadly, the hopes of many Romani parents may not be realized while Romani in Norway continue to be vilified by the media, encouraging distrust and contempt for the immigrants seeking a

better life (Apelseth, 2013). Kathleen, Irish Traveler, and mother of 6, reports to The Guardian the impact that media has had on her children at school (Bindel, 2011):

> Now every week I go to the school and the parents are talking about that [reality] programme. They won't let our kids mix with theirs because they say we stink and don't talk properly. Settled kids won't even play sports with ours in case they touch them.

Because of the negative ways Romani are being portrayed through the media in Europe, Romani children such as Kathleen's are experiencing an increase in discrimination by non-Roma parents and encounters with prejudiced attitudes from parents and children.

Public and governmental opinions have a significant impact on the willingness of the public to allow Romani to receive an equal and integrated education. In the United States, Romani face discrimination from students as well as administrators who hold previously conceived notions about Romani. In Europe, Romani children face bullying but also violence, threats and segregated schooling. Within all of these stories and studies, one is able to find a wealth of anecdotes regarding the role that newspapers, government issued statements, television and radio reports have played in disseminating and encouraging negative public attitudes. Not only has this decreased Romani ability to secure a proper education, but one can hypothesize its role in the increase of interpersonal racism and targeting by law enforcement. The impact of these issues is significant on Romani's ability to successfully assimilate or accommodate the dominant culture in a way that allows them to hang on to their roots. Women especially have been significantly affected by this form of acculturative resistance by the majority, in some of the most violent and personal ways possible.

5.10   Gendered Violence in America and Europe

In 2015, I dedicated an entire study to the experience of Romani women in the United States and will not reiterate the entirety of the study at this time however, I will compare their experiences with those of women in Europe. Just as in America, there is an intersection between gender, violence, race and ethnicity among European Romani women (Ceneda, 2002). European woman experience significantly more ethnically motivated violence as well as social exclusion. Portrayals of Romani women are most often used to represent the life of the Romani, most significantly through shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012: Poppelwell, 2012).

Among all types of violence perpetrated against Romani women world-wide, one has come to the forefront. Studies have conclusively proven that Romani women were forcibly sterilized in countries such as Hungary, Czech Republic and Slovakia. (Albert, 2011). During the Holocaust, many Romani were killed, as many as 95% of Czech's Romani population alone was killed during that time, however, many Romani women were forcibly sterilized as a way to control the Romani population (Thomas, 2006). The practice became common in Eastern Europe in the 1970's, a time when women were often sterilized during cesarean sections without consent. Some women were coerced into the procedure through promises of money or threats of having their government benefits cut off or having their children taken away (Albert, 2011: OpenSociety, 2011). Some reports identify that this practice continued into the 90's (Kushi, 2016: Open Society) while others identify sterilizations as recent as 2002 (Albert). A report from the U.S. state department regarding their investigation into the Czech Republic reports sterilizations as recent as 2004 (Thomas, 2006).

There has been no confirmed end to these practices and little to no accountability has been expressed. Representatives from the Czech Republic minimize the sterilizations as "procedural shortcomings" while other countries fail to acknowledge the extent to which these procedures took place, sometimes in the tens or hundreds of thousands (Albert, 2011: Thomas, 2004). Recently, some accountability has taken place however, efforts to bring restitution have failed (Van der Zee). Van der Zee (2016) collected the stories of women who had undergone these experiences. Elan, a Romani women in her 40's shares her story in a play that highlights the experiences of Romani women who have undergone forced sterilization. "To be able to have children is so important for a women. When they took that away from me, I felt worthless, I completely lost my self-esteem." Elan is able to put into words what was taken away from her and from other women who experienced these procedures, both personally and emotionally.

The portrayal of forced sterilization in the media is significant to not only the recognition of their experiences but the ways in which it is addressed or stopped. Despite efforts to bring notoriety to this occurrence, the language utilized about these procedures has the ability to minimize the violence of the action, to clinically justify it or to justify it based on popular social beliefs as many in the Eugenics movement were able to accomplish (Hirsch, 2012: Thomas, 2004). The way Romani have been historically treated by the media has contributed significantly to the care that society gives about the elimination of their future children and the continuation of their race.

In the United States, forced sterilization has historically been linked with the Black community as well as those in poverty or those deemed "defective" (Open Society, 2011). There is no concrete evidence at this time that Romani women in the U.S. have experienced forced sterilization, though the U.S. cannot be said to be without guilt in the targeting of Romani

families. In my 2015 study, I recount the story of Fey, a woman in her 60's living in the North West. Fey told a story of her experience with forced assimilation as a child growing up in New York. The children of her community were taken, placed in orphanages and adopted out to White families where they were given new names and were prevented from speaking about their heritage. There is no evidence in existence that can confidently link her experience in any way with media portrayals of her time though, it is interesting to note, that many of the newspapers of the day highlight the lives of Romani only to identify their proclivity to steal children all the while the government was perpetrating that very crime against the Roma community. As previously stated, it is often the silence of the media on such matters that has the potential to harm as much as the stereotypical accounts.

Romani women face considerable stress as they exist at the intersections of race, gender and oftentimes, poverty, worldwide, a fact that will be considered in further depth in the coming chapter. The cultural violence Romani women experience, including the objectification of women who are very much a marginalized minority, has been exacerbated by the negative media portrayals they face in the modern world. These media portrayals serve to erase the challenges faced by Romani women, highlighting instead facets of their lives that are unrealistic at best, and damaging at their worst.

5.11   Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I pose two questions for consideration and investigation: Have negative media portrayals significantly impacted the lives of Romani in the United States and Europe and, if so, in what way?

Have negative media portrayals lead to an increase in barriers to assimilation for Romani in the United States and Europe?

I believe that the first question can be answered with a resounding "yes." The state of Romani lives can be linked to the ways in which the media has been utilized against Romani in a significant way. Romani have experienced a wide breadth of discrimination in the United States as well as Europe. This discrimination, though not solely the result of media portrayal, has been exacerbated through the intervention of media, thus significantly impacting the lives of the Romani. Media has been used as a tool of propaganda against the Romani, as justification for prejudice, as a vehicle for racism and has failed to serve as an advocate for marginalized Romani.

I answer my second question partially through this chapter and I complete the answer to that question in the sixth chapter of this study. I believe I show that negative media portrayals have led to an increase of both prejudice and discrimination and, subsequently, a resistance towards Romani attempts at assimilation wholly or partially. In this chapter I identify that law enforcement, educational organizations, interpersonal interactions and gender specific prejudice all serve as barriers to Romani engagement with mainstream society.

In the coming chapter, I continue to answer this question by looking at increases in the negative outcomes experienced by Romani as a result of these social barriers. I discuss the types of negative outcomes they experience and how this impacts their mental health, economic well-being, social power and personal identity. In doing so I will answer my third set of questions:

Do Romani who experience prejudice and barriers to assimilation experience a negative impact on their social, economic, physical and/or mental health? If yes, how do these outcomes effect their overall lived experience as immigrants and/or minorities?

Does Romani identity serve as a buffer against the negative outcomes produced by media portrayals? How do Romani define themselves and how do the opinions of dominant cultures, influenced by media portrayals, impact this definition?

As a part of this answer I look at how lack of access to social resources also significantly impacts the overall lived experience of Romani. I then identify how the prejudice and discrimination Romani encounter has a significant impact on their ability to affectively cope by impacting their identity as a group and as an individual. I look at Romani identity, how they define themselves, how outsiders impact this definition and pose a threat to Romani identity. I also explore how intragroup conflict and the intersection of gender impacts the establishment of Romani identity and how this significantly impacts Romani ability to successfully combat the prejudice and discrimination they encounter and the role of mainstream media in this process.

6   NEGATIVE OUTCOMES OF PREJUDICE, MEDIA PORTRAYELS AND THE ROLE OF ROMANI IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT

In February of 2016, French Police evicted over 350 Gypsies from a shanty town constructed on an abandoned rail line. Gypsies, having no alternative, constructed over 130 makeshift homes, which were evacuated and destroyed during the police raid. Gypsy presence is widely resisted in France. The Express reported that the Prime Minister of France has declared that gypsies "cannot integrate" into French society successfully and has identified gypsies as "foreigners." (Perring, 2016). Gypsies in France not only struggle to find the most basic of

necessities for themselves and their families, they are met with resistance from mainstream

society in many countries throughout the world. The resistance they encounter increases the level

of negative outcomes they experience, significantly impacting their physical health, mental

health, social mobility and economic well-being as well as their identity development, a factor

which should serve as a buffer against the effects of discrimination.

In the previous chapter I identify the resistance that many Romani encounter to

their attempts at assimilation, or engage with the mainstream culture, in the form of prejudice

and discrimination. In this chapter, I identify the impact of this resistance by examining how

Romani in the U.S. and Europe experience prejudice and discrimination and how this impacts

Romani both socially and psychologically. I discuss two concepts that have the potential to serve

as mediating variables, impacting the extent to which Romani feel and are impacted by societal

resistance: traditional lifestyles and identity formation. I examine how media portrayals have

impacted the ability of Romani to use their insular lifestyles or identities to buffer the impact of

prejudice and racism with a strong ethnic identity. I consider not only how media and societal

prejudice have negatively impacted traditional ways of life but how media and societal prejudice

has impacted the ability of Romani to own their own identity.

6.1   Resistance to Assimilation

Petrova (2013) asserts that there are many misconceptions surrounding Romani

acculturation, many do wish to integrate but are often pushed out by mainstream society's

prejudice and the Romani's unwillingness to entirely relinquish their culture. Many Romani find

it difficult to secure occupations outside their traditional ways of making money and are resisted

when they try to reside in permanent homes due to racism (Apelseth, 2013). This type of

resistance to Romani assimilation and their subsequent encounters with discrimination and

prejudice has many negative outcomes for the individual socially, emotionally and psychologically.

A case presented by Ureche and Franks (2007) involves a young girl's complaints of stomach problems, weight loss and feeling tired when faced with returning to school. She reports she often feels scared and isolated at school. She is symptomatic of anxiety and/or depression and a direct link between these symptoms and the bullying she has received at school exists. She identifies that boys have been following her to the bathroom, calling her names and telling her to "go back where she came from." The resistance of those in the dominant group to her participation in a major social institution, school, has resulted in an experience of significant negative outcomes. The resulting symptoms and resistance to returning to school are evidence of the effects on her psychological well-being. A Romani professional from the UK who participated in the Children's Study identifies what many Romani children encounter at school:

> Our children go to school from a low age up to ten years old. They come out of school and they can't even read. Why? What are they doing? They put them at the back of the class and take no notice of them. (Kathleen, professional, Yorkshire, P.32)

School is not the only place where Romani, seeking to engage with the dominant group, are turned away or isolated. Romani report discrimination in school, on the street, as they seek employment, in restaurants and local pubs. When they are able to secure work they are often underpaid or exploited (Jones, 2014). Romani who seek to become "housed, living in permanent homes, are also exposed to racism from their neighbors and this has a negative impact on their well-being" (Jones).

Though, as Berry points out (1997), the individual must choose the method of assimilation they wish to follow, they must also be allowed by the dominant group to follow this

course of action. Without some form of permission or acceptance, a minority or immigrant group will not succeed in fully or even partially assimilating. Widely criticized for their unwillingness to engage with the societies they inhabit, Romani are met with reluctance as they seek to fully or partially assimilate. This reluctance by the mainstream has resulted in Romani experiencing distress mirroring that of the young girl reluctant to attend school.

In addition to the emotional impact of assimilative resistance in the form of prejudice and discrimination, Romani who encounter an increased resistance to their attempts at assimilation have shortened life-spans (Jones, 2014). Romani are two times as likely to experience depression and three times as likely to experience anxiety as those in the dominant group (Jones, 2014). Data exists to support that Romani in Europe experience resistance to their assimilation, and its resulting affects, in their daily lives but the picture in America is much harder to piece together.

With little research available surrounding the lives of Romani and their first person-accounts of attempts to assimilate in America it was difficult to piece together the effects of the prejudice and discrimination they encounter. In my 2015 study I establish that prejudice and discrimination are a part of the Romani experience in America. I establish in chapters 4 and 5 of the current study that American Romani face resistance to their presence interpersonally, at schools, through law enforcement and in the media.

I utilize interviews with Romani women to provide insight into the possible effects of this resistance and to provide evidence of negative outcomes resulting from this resistance. In Fey's narrative one is easily able to identify resistance to the Romani way of life. As previously related, Fey was a part of a forced assimilation program. In a rare occurrence, the dominant

group sought to forcibly bring Romani children into the dominant culture, forcing them to leave

behind their cultural roots:

> Fey: No, when we were in the orphanages we were punished for speaking Romani which was the language, our main language.
>
> **Interviewer: So they essentially didn't want you to have any connection with that part of your   life at all.**
>
> Fey: My name was changed, it was (name omitted). My name was changed to (name omitted). I was a white girl.
>
> **Interviewer: Did you feel like that's who you were?**
>
> Fey: Never. I was only a kid but never. Which of course you know was a problem…

Fey was faced with the situation of having to choose one culture over another. This dichotomy

of identities, the pressure to choose between cultures felt from their communities and the

outside world was not unique to Fey. Peaches, a woman in her 40's in the Southeast describes it

this way, "But for the most part, my life was divided into two sections, I was Romanichal but I

was leading a Gorja life you could say." Peaches adeptly describes the experiences of living in a

state of double-consciousness.

Research has shown that living in a continual state of double consciousness, facing

pressure from multiple directions can have significant impact on one's identity, self-esteem,

self-concept and core beliefs about the individual's group (Lyubansky & Eidelson, 2004). Of

the 15 women interviewed at least 10 identify an experience of "Double Consciousness" at

some point in their lives as they sought to navigate their identity as a Romani and their

participation in mainstream society. The stress and subsequent consequences of this state of

double consciousness can arguably be said to be the resulting impact of assimilative resistance

by the mainstream.

Others among the women interviewed emphasize the resistance they have encountered in America and their comments convey a feeling of discouragement, despair, fear and, a hopelessness regarding the ability for Romani to successfully integrate into mainstream society without recourse. Ruby, a woman in her 40's from the Southeast, places this in a historical context:

> Well because years ago you know gypsies were ostracized they were run out of town for practicing fortune telling, dickering, and so, there is also a lot of stereotypes and a lot of non gypsies, gorjas, believe things like gypsies will steal your children, and you know they will cheat you out of your money, they will steal from you. So, it just it was always something, I think that years ago they lived in fear, so, I think that was just perpetuated from generation to generation.

Ruby identifies that resistance to the presences of Romani has been a historical occurrence in America. She acknowledges that the fear created from encountering resistance has been passed down generationally and continues to impact acculturative strategies of Romani today.

Looking back to Chapter 4 of this study, we have reviewed the evidence that media portrayals were used against Romani historically in America as a means to create distrust towards them, report their whereabouts and spread discriminatory ideas about their presence. These portrayals led, as Ruby discusses, to Romani being historically ostracized and unwelcome in settled towns. The fear that Romani have passed from generation to generation is evidence of the resistance they have encountered and the discrimination they have experienced.

Louisa, a woman in her 30's from the Southwest United States describes what the situation is like for many in modern America:

> We just knew we was completely different it's like, we're in the same world but we are on a different planet. Everything that happens in the economy doesn't affect us. Were in our own little world, we try not to let anyone know who we are because no one is going to come help us. We are discriminated against if they find out who we are. Like everybody else gots rights, Black people have rights, Gay people have rights, Animals have rights we aint got no rights anywhere in the world, in any country. And something

else, they know the gypsies don't have no education so they know the gypsies don't know what their civil rights are. Like the White people can say, well, I have rights, gypsies don't know they have rights, they don't know they are Americans, they don't know they have civil rights. I keep mine on my refrigerator so that they know that we have rights. But, it's in the book of congress that a gypsy is not allowed to hold a government position.

Louisa describes the despair with which she views her position in the world. The desire to have rights, to exist as others do and the disappointment that not only do Romani lack rights world-wide but they are unfairly targeted and discriminated against. Louisa describes her state of being as a defensive one, demanding that she have the same rights as others in America. Louisa gives evidence that she has experienced distress related to her social position, further evidence that she has experienced forms of discrimination and prejudice in her lifetime. Louisa and others interviewed intimate that their lack of rights is highlighted by the ease with which they are so easily portrayed as racist caricatures on reality television, bringing to the surface the conflict between the desire of some to assimilate and the reality of the mainstream's attitude towards Romani.

As discussed, evidence exists to support the notion that resistance to assimilation has been encountered by Romani in the form of racism and prejudice. Portrayals in mainstream media have served as a catalyst, in some cases, for these encounters. We discuss in this section some of the negative outcomes for Romani who experience resistance from mainstream society. In the coming section, we delve even further into these outcomes by exploring the state of mental health among Romani world-wide and draw connections between these negative experiences and the role of the media. Unfortunately, no information was found providing a clear picture of the state of mental health among Romani in America thus I will rely on research conducted with European Romani for a better understanding of how mental health is impacted by societal resistance, racism and prejudice.

6.2   Mental Health

As previously stated, European Romani are twice as likely to experience depression and three times as likely to experience anxiety as those in the dominant society. Among Britain's GRT (Gypsies, Romani, Travellers), a rise in suicides was found in 2013. Suicides among the GRT are three times the normal population and are found to be most frequent among Romani males ages 25-29 (Zabara, 2013). These statistics compare strongly with those of young Black males in the United States whose third leading cause of death is suicide (SPRC, 2013). Romani in Sweden are found to have suicidality rates seven times the national average among men and six times the average overall. A study by Civil Rights Defenders has linked this in part to the impact of having to hide their identity from the mainstream and being made to feel "less" than others (2016).

The hiding of Romani identities in schools and workplaces as a result of systematic racism is a significant contributor to poor mental health among the Romani (RSG, 2012). The Roma mental health advocacy project finds that the powerlessness and vulnerability of Roma to impact their position within the dominant group has resulted in poor mental health (RGS, 2012). Romani have been found to be significantly impacted by their lack of control over how they are treated or represented in society. Their lack of social position which limits their control is found to have a significant impact on the psychological well-being of Gypsies and Travellers (Van Cleemput, 2010). Romani are also impacted by the hostility and discrimination they regularly encounter (Zabara). A study by Yin-Har, 2011 explores the impact that social exclusion has on the mental health of GRT's:

> Members of Gypsy and Traveller communities report (personal communication) that they feel their culture and way of life is not valued or respected, but is instead demonized or ridiculed. These cultural threats have a potential impact on self-esteem and mental wellbeing.

Yin-Har describes the plight of the GRT community as one that is frequently resisted and belittled by mainstream society to the detriment of their overall stability and well-being.

Romani in Europe experience negative mental health outcomes as a result of direct discrimination. This may come in the form of direct discrimination from the general public but may also occur within institutions that are meant to provide appropriate services (Rechel et al., 2009):

> In general it is very difficult to work with Roma. All physicians say that. Firstly because there are barriers and mistrust, and secondly because they cannot explain what the [health] problem is. And because they really seek help only in crisis situations, when it is in principle difficult to provide quality care. Of course there is, how to say it, I don't want to call it discriminatory attitude, but it is derogatory [...] They [the Roma] feel this attitude and of course they don't like to go there to be humiliated, as would every other human being. (Health care worker, Bulgaria P.6)

This Bulgarian healthcare worker sheds light on the reality that Romani are in need of addressing health concerns but, they are often unable to access appropriate services because of the prejudice and humiliation they encounter.

Studies meant to address potential mental health disparities among Roma children can be themselves agents of discrimination (Lee et al., 2014). A study on the MH disparities between Roma and non-Roma children in Bulgaria found that on parent-reported measures Romani children were found to have high prosocial behaviors and few differences between non-Roma children. When teacher-report measures were considered, Roma children had a higher prevalence of all disorders tested. The authors of the study acknowledged that the Romani parent may have been trying to avoid stigma while the teacher may have discriminatory attitudes towards the children.

Given the literacy rates among Romani in Bulgaria, a Romani parent manipulating a self-report measure to the extent that they would be able to ensure scores among their children

were equal to those of non-Romani children except in the area of pro-social behaviors seems counterintuitive. Though mentioned, the study failed to accurately discuss the likelihood that the teachers had bias in their report, making the findings of their study unusable at best and extremely harmful at worst. Not only does this study exemplify the direct discrimination that Romani may experience from educators but also from those within the mental health or academic community themselves.

Romani report experiencing depression or "nerves" (anxiety) and find themselves struggling to cope within ghettos where they work and live, (Ceneda, 2002: Zabara). Some Romani have a history of personal or familial trauma that remains unacknowledged and unaddressed by the countries in which they live (Strauss, 2012). A significant number of Romani in the UK who were found to be seeking assistance with their mental health issues sought assistance due to issues resulting from traumas relative to their social positions including war, the Holocaust, bullying, racism and rape (RSG, 2012).

Though many Romani experience negative mental health outcomes as a result of the direct discrimination they experience, there is a resistance to seeking appropriate help for symptoms of depression. A study by Van Cleemput (2010) finds among Romani interviewed there exists a pride in addressing one's own mental health issues rather than reaching to outside sources. In a study conducted with 269 Welsh Gypsies and Scottish and Irish Travelers, one woman describes her reasons behind not addressing depression directly (Van Cleemput et al, 2007), "You can't just sit and let yourself be depressed. You have to get on and do things. I think 'oh my children, they've lost their father and I have to carry on" (P.208). For this respondent, addressing mental health problems head-on was not an option.

For many Romani, fighting through mental health problems on their own is essential to one's survival, socially as well as economically. Another Gypsy women from the same study describes her experience with depression:

> If you can't fight it yourself you're dead, you get worse, if you just think you haven't got it, just let go, try and control yourself, it's better… try and clean and leave it out of your head, because if you try and think, turn my depression off, you don't think I've got depression. I don't need to see the doctors, I don't have depression love, I say, I'm fine. (P. 208)

Due to their experiences, many Romani believe they should address any problems that arise individually or within their community. The inability to do so may cause additional stress as they may perceive this inability as a failure to retain control over their lives, placing them in a vulnerable position (Van Cleemput et al, 2007).

Roma communities possess a stigma towards mental health services and lack of trust towards mental health providers because of historical precedent of Romani children being deemed mentally disabled and needlessly placed in classrooms for children with mental health challenges (RGS, 2012). A focus group of Romanian Roma participants conceptualizes the stigma associated with mental health in the Roma culture:

> … Mental health problems must be hidden. There are two major taboos in the Roma culture, sexuality and mental health …. Roma usually do not know anything about mental health problems, they fear mental health illnesses….

The focus groups characterizes the overarching attitudes towards addressing mental health issues in the Roma community, attitudes further exacerbated by their lack of support and available resources in mainstream society.

Romani in Central and Eastern Europe have experienced significant trauma due to their social position leading many to experience negative mental health symptoms. Heaslip (2015)

conceptualizes the ways in which the trauma of the Romani's social position has negatively

impacted their psychological well-being:

> These feelings of being vulnerable link to an outsider identity within society,
> perpetuating a feeling in which Gypsies and Travellers feel a lack of belonging within
> society which they perceive to belong to the Gorgi (non-Gypsy) world. This in turn
> leads Gypsies and Travellers to continue to self-segregate as a mechanizing of coping
> with the feelings of hostility from the settled community, in order to retain a sense
> of belonging, of being wanted which is important for one's psychological well-being.-
> (P. 96)

Heaslip identifies that the social position of the Romani is a direct result of their treatment by

society which encourages them to self-segregate as a mode of protection. This limits Romani

ability to choose assimilation if they wish and, limits their ability to freely select from the

various models of acculturation. Data for the extent to which this trauma has impacted Romani

is lacking due to the fact that many Romani are without appropriate access to mental health care

(Ceneda, 2002). A study by Rechel et al. (2009) identified that Romani in Eastern Europe have

an overall poorer status due to poverty, low education, and lack of access to appropriate

services.

6.3   Access to Social Services

The lack of access to appropriate health services is a significant issue for those Romani

who are willing to seek support to address their mental health needs. This also serves as

additional evidence of acculturative resistance among the dominant group, preventing Romani

from engaging in social institutions and marginalizing their efforts to address the negative effects

of their social stratification. Heaslip (2015) identifies that the social position of Romani,

exacerbated by their portrayal in mainstream media, places them within a vulnerable context and

prevents them from accessing appropriate resources which can have life-long consequences:

> A core determinant of health vulnerability at a population level is the social status of the group, as social hierarchies promote intergeneration inheritance of social status resulting in a highly systemic and deterministic fashion (Furumoto-Dawson et al. 2007). For example, any material and psychosocial stresses imposed by social inequalities impacts upon healthcare over the entire life trajectory.

Heaslip acknowledges the multiple intersecting factors that contribute to negative outcomes for Romani. He identifies that these outcomes have the potential for life-long occurrence.

Not only do the psychosocial stresses experienced by Romani due to social inequalities negatively impact their mental health but they also have the potential to impact their physical health over a lifetime and, because of their vulnerable social position, may place them in a position where they are unable to access appropriate resources (Ceneda, 2002: Rechel, et al, 2009: RGS, 2012). The inability of many Romani to access these resources leads them to draw heavily from the resources available to them. Among these are the large amount of support they experience from their families. Access to this type of support makes the traditional traveling life essential to their emotional survival. Sadly, government regulations and biased media campaigns have begun to erode this way of life for many Romani across Europe.

6.4   Traveling and Family Support

Romani who experience resistance to their assimilation, discrimination and subsequent harm to their mental and emotional health have two resources from within their community that could potentially serve as a buffer to stress associated with their navigation of acculturation and the harmful effects of media-disseminated prejudice. The first of these is the lifestyle of traditional Romani who have both their traditional ways and the support of their families to buffer the impact of outside influences.

6.4.1   *Traveling and Familial Support in America*

Little exists discussing the rise or decline of the traveling lifestyle among Romani in the United States. Though some literature exists identifying that the loss of the traveling lifestyle has meant that Romani no longer see each other on the road (Heaslip, 2015), it is difficult to ascertain to what extant the traveling lifestyle has impacted the strength of Romani identity among American Romani. Of the 15 Romani women I interviewed, only two are actively engaged in the traveling lifestyle. During the recruitment phase of my study I reached out to many more but their traveling schedule made it difficult for them to find time to participate. Among those interviewed, several did provide evidence that engagement in the traveling lifestyle provided one close access to family and support systems. Gertie, a woman in her early 50's described her mother's motivation for moving their family frequently:

> **Was there any other reason you moved so much growing up…?**
> Gertie: …well my mom got to a point where she didn't want to stay away from her family anymore.
> **OK so she moved to be near her family?**
> Gertie: Yes.

Gertie highlights the significant impact that the desire for the support of family had on her geographical location, though it may have led to many moves throughout her lifetime.

In the Romani community, as in most, family is important to their way of life not only for emotional support but because of the ways in which Romani structure their communities. The decline of the traveling lifestyle has impacted the way in which Romani not only talk to each other but also the ways in which the elders are cared for:

....you know it was everything to the older generation that families stay close and take care of each other, be there for each other financially emotionally, the younger generation would take care of the older generation when they were sick. Geographically we are spread out now and we don't communicate as much and older people go to nursing homes. (Ruby, 40's, Southeast USA)

The loss of traveling together means that what was once a valued part of the community's identity has been lost and the support they once received from within the community is lost to some degree as well.

While Gertie and others interviewed did not identify that those who no longer traveled considered themselves less Romani, Gertie did identify that those who have fully or partially assimilated feel "guilty because you have broken with the cultural norms." Thus, for those Gertie is describing, distress related to decisions of acculturation comes from within. Gertie's own experience with this has made her sensitive to the lives of others:

I think it makes me more compassionate to people of different races because I'm realizing that just because people live their lives and seem to assimilate…their ways and their culture might be different and it might be hard for them as far as understanding American culture.

Gertie identifies that just because a minority group may seem to have given up their lifestyles and assimilated into the lives of the dominant group doesn't mean they no longer struggle with identity, miss their old ways or have trouble coming to terms with their new ways of living.

Phoebe, a women in her 40's from the Southeast United States has identified that many Romani today "stay in one town a little more than they used to. They find their businesses are more settled than they used to." The impact of this, she identified is:

…they are not as close knit now. I think some things have been lost and some things have been gained…By staying in one place, I think a lot of the extended families and the

old traditions, old times, the olds one from way back are not as prevalent as they used to be.

The other side of the decline of traditional ways is that as Romani become more spread out and settled, they become more open to outside relationships than they would have been had they still been traveling with their families. Josephine, a women in her 30's, still involved in a traditional traveling life, identifies that though she has friends outside the Romani community, she has less contact with them because her traveling lifestyle does not allow for consistent interaction.

While Phoebe sees the loss of the old ways as both a positive and a negative, Ruby identifies that the loss of the old way is not a negative at all. In her view, Romani are much better off living a settled life with occupations that are able to provide better, consistent support to their families. "You have two uneducated parents living in poverty. A trailer park is not a good environment for a child I feel like and there are a lot of factors working against you." Ruby sees the development of a settled life as advantageous economically and educationally.

Some of the factors that Ruby alludes to are not only the potential for poverty but also marginalization that comes outside the community. While government restrictions in America have not impacted the traveling lifestyle to the extent that they have in Europe, media portrayals and targeting by the police have significantly impacted them. Louisa, a woman still engaged in the traveling lifestyle, identifies that the increased profile of the Romani on television and other media has increased the level to which Romani are visible at the various sites they try to camp at, leading them to be turned away, limiting the places they are able to reside. Additionally, as previously identified, police have become increasingly wary of travelling Romani and utilize media sources to warn communities regarding their presence and work which makes it increasingly difficult for Romani to find work in areas they have not built a consistent presence.

6.4.2 *Traveling and Familial Support in Europe*

The familial structure of many European Romani provides emotional and psychological benefits by providing practical support and security (Lee et al., 2014). Traditional ways of travelling and residing in close proximity to one another provide Romani with a tight-knit support system often as close as their next door neighbors. In a study conducted with German Sinti and Roma (Strauss, 2012), Roma identify the significant role that family plays in buffering the harmful effects of the outside world:

> My family, family, means: safety, trust, being there when things are bad for somebody or being there when things are good for somebody, too. Family is simply sticking together. (Sinti male, 59, P. 23)

A strong part of the Romani identity in Europe, and a way of keeping families close together is through "traveling", the lifestyle of many traditional Romani, of moving frequently for work, to avoid discrimination or simply for the freedom of experiencing new places. Additional benefits of the Travelling lifestyle were described by Van Cleemput et al. (2007):

> Perceived benefits of a travelling lifestyle also included proximity to extended family members in an otherwise hostile ''world''. This was felt to be important, both psychologically and in terms of practical support and security. Travelling also allowed the possibility of moving away from potential trouble. Some participants described how they had returned to living in a trailer in order to escape hostility or victimization from housed neighbors. (pg. 207)

Van Cleemput identifies that the traveling life provides Romani with social and psychological benefits. Additionally, it gives Romani the ability to resist pressure to assimilate and provides them with significant social support.

The ability to navigate the conflict between the dominant society's acceptance or rejection of their presence and the desire of many Romani to travel within their own

communities is a significant contributor to depression, stress and "nerves" among Romani (Doherty, 2013). Many in mainstream European society devalue the Romani's chosen way of life (Heaslip, 2015). The traditional life of traveling and setting up homes in travel parks or other available spaces is not considered equal to other ways of living, leaving many without housing accommodations.

Many changes to the economy as well as laws have begun to erode traditional means of traveler life (Doherty, 2013). In the UK, Romani are criticized for their unwillingness to assimilate, in newspapers and other forms of media, in reference to their living in non-traditional ways. Once they stop traveling however, not only is their presence in settled neighborhoods resisted but, they fail to receive protection as a minority. In order to be considered a GRT in some areas, Romani must travel at least three months out of the year. Those who do not follow these guidelines are no longer protected by law (Bromfield, 2016). Bromfield identifies that the pressure to assimilate into settled neighborhoods or keep up their traveling lifestyles is forcing many Romani to "choose between their ethnicity and their future."

Many Romani are finding that the traditional ways of being are fading and with this loss of the traditional ways, the strength of their identity has also begun to fade. Romani lose their sense of connection to one another impacting the ability of their strong, ethnic identity to buffer the harmful influence of portrayals by the dominate society and the prejudice they routinely encounter (Heaslip, 2015). Romani that choose the settled life often find they are separated from their support systems and, the housing they are provided from local councils is unsuitable for habitation and unsanitary (Yin-Har, 2011). Heaslip's 2015 study identifies the emotional and psychological vulnerability that Romani are faced with when they are forced to make these choices or are restricted through local laws or opinions voiced in local media:

> There was a sense from the community that due to the multiple restrictions on their lives (inability to travel, and restrictions on site) that their ways of living are being eroded with little choice or say to halt the progression. This is moving them further away from living authentically (as they would wish) towards a more inauthentic but settled lifestyle which is resulting in them experiencing feeling vulnerable. (P. 124)

Heaslip describes a situation in which Romani are not allowed by the dominant society to choose their preferred model of acculturation. Instead, though they are resisted by mainstream society, their ability to maintain a separate life is removed, thus increasing their overall experience of vulnerability.

Traditional, travelling Romani resent the interference of the government and/or media in influencing how they live their daily lives. They report lacking autonomy over where they live and how they live and few governments are willing to provide culturally appropriate accommodations (Van Cleemput, 2010). In a study on the health related benefits of experiences of Gypsies and Travellers, one Romani man expresses his frustration at the involvement of governments who seek to change his way of life (Van Cleemput):

> We haven't asked anybody to change their ways. Do you know what I mean? Why should they ask us to change ours? See what I'm saying. And that's what the government's trying to do. They're trying to make you change your ways. (P. 207)

The respondent identifies that it is the interference of the government rather than his own will that is forcing him to choose how he will live among and interact with mainstream society.

Not only does the loss of the traditional lifestyles impact Romani ability to closely access their families and support systems and allows some Romani to insulate themselves from the influence of the outside world, it also impacts their very identity as Roma. The redefining of who is and isn't Roma based on their engagement with traveling lifestyle is another method by which media and the dominant culture place discriminate against the Romani.

As already stated, a choice between living a settled or traveling life becomes choosing opportunities for their families or no longer being defined by their rightful identity. These ideas may originate to some degree outside the community, especially through laws such as those already discussed but they also become internalized. Romani who no longer travel may see themselves as an illegitimate Gypsy (Toth, 2005). Others are able to continue to take an ethnic view of their identity but find themselves becoming "invisible" to one another as they choose a settled life. Romani who no longer travel together not only lose their sense of community but lose the interaction of cooking from the land or meeting around a community fire (things that have come to be outlawed in some areas) (Heaslip, 2015).

A study by Van Cleemput (2010) identifies that confusion within the UK exists regarding who is an who is not a "gypsy" due to the fact that many now live in permanent housing. If anything, this exemplifies that many in the mainstream define Romani by both stereotypical schemas and by their actions rather than their ethnicity, an unfortunate side effect of media portrayals, as previously identified. Those who are able to overcome poverty or low social status, leading some to abandon the travelling lifestyle, are no longer considered part of their group by society or the media (Oleaqu, 2014). The impact of the mainstream media on Romani who no longer travel is not the only way that Romani identity is affected by dominant groups. Another reason Romani experience negative outcomes when encountering prejudice or resistance is the fading of a strong ethnic identity that they may have once held, an identity that has now been significantly impacted by influences outside of their community.

6.5   Romani Identity

A fourth set of research questions emerged as my research unfolded and I chose to include them as they provide a more robust picture of how Romani are being impacted by the

influence of mainstream media, societal resistance and prejudice. These questions included:

Does Romani identity serve as a buffer against the harmful effects of prejudice from media

portrayals and discrimination outside their community? How do Romani define themselves and

how do the opinions of dominant cultures impact this definition?

Research with American minorities show that an individual's identity may be resistant to

the harmful effects of prejudice and discrimination if they possess a strong, ethnic identity. This

identity increases their overall sense of self-worth and serves as a buffer against the outside

influence of prejudice (Crocker & Major, 1989; Jones, 2004; Parham et al., 1999). While one's

identity may serve as an important buffer against the effects of prejudice or discrimination,

Romani must contend with many factors that serve to negatively impact their strong sense of

identity and thus, reduce the extent to which they are able to minimize the harmful effects of the

resistance and prejudice they experience.

6.5.1   Outside Influences on Romani Identity

In the United States, though often invisible to the average person, Romani have a keen

sense of the view that outsiders take of them and their existence. This has been highlighted in

large part by mainstream responses to media portrayals but is often developed through their own

interpersonal experiences. In the U.S., the Romani identity is largely un-acknowledged and

therefore little space is left for Romani to have a voice to define themselves. This may be as

simple as space on a survey or census questionnaire. With no space to identify oneself as

Romani, individuals are sometimes made to identify themselves in a way inauthentic to their

identity. In addition, the potential threat for prejudice or the responsibility of educating and

explaining to someone who the Romani are or are not also influences the decision to not only

remain silent about their identity, but may also lead to internalized feelings of being "othered" as

a Romani or of somehow being "less." Allie, a woman in her 40's from the Northeast United

States recounts her experiences with identification:

> **If someone were to ask you to identify yourself racially or ethnically, what is it that you normally say?**
>
> I don't know that's kind of a complex questions, most people don't understand Roma or Romani and they kind of give you that look or they say Romanian and then you have to explain you know gypsy but please don't say that , I don't really like that word. So it really   depends on the setting and on any types of census and survey data its always other because there is no other choice but most of the time now I do identify as Romani but I don't always explain.

What Allie relates is a common experience for Romani who wish to accurately identify

themselves, rather than hiding, and are forced to do so in terms defined by the mainstream.

The experience of Allie is the experience of many Romani, including myself. Oftentimes,

the only way to identify yourself to the mainstream in a way they will understand is by using a

term many Romani consider to be derogatory and one associated with all negative stereotypes

held about Romani. Rachel, in her 20's, identifies how these stereotypes have impacted the ways

that Romani expect to be perceived, "The stereotypes have definitely negatively impacted how

we are perceived, what people expect of us." Mainstream expectations for Romani become all

the more salient when Romani are forced to identify themselves with a term that carries the

weight of mainstream prejudice.

As I discuss throughout this study, Romani in America face many stereotypes about

themselves that they must combat. These stereotypes have the potential to become internalized

and to have a significant impact on their identity as well as their belief that they will be accepted

by their community or by the mainstream. An article written in the Harvard Crimson highlights

some of the views held by Americans, views harmful to the Romani community even when

seemingly intended to be in their defense (Lacalle, 2009):

> The problem is perpetuated because Gypsies place such a low value on traditional
> Education. Many Gypsies teach their children the traditional music and dance of the
> Gypsy people, but literacy is not highly valued. This means that Gypsies cannot respond
> articulately to the negative stereotypes that are circulated in the media of the countries
> they inhabit. Because of these unique circumstances, both Europeans and Americans
> should be sensitive to how they treat the subject of Gypsies.

It is not difficult to identify what is problematic about these ideas. Romani are painted as a group

completely disinterested in education and without the means to stand up for themselves. These

ideas, written at institutions at the top of the American University system disseminate age-old

stereotypes about the Romani.

> Pheobe describes the ideas that Americans hold about Romani identity:

> Absolutely, absolutely. I don't think that this country is as much aware even that it's a
> real culture because I don't think that it's a much noticed here. I don't think that other
> European countries in Europe around and more of the forefronts I don't think it's much
> as an issues here. I think that if they believe they exist at all, and if they are real, I think
> probably the majority have a negative connotation, I think you know "gypsys, tramps and
> thieves" I think just these old stereotypical thoughts that probably if there were to others
> to replace then they may have different thoughts but I don't think it's on the fore fronts of
> their minds so much.

Phoebe believes that if people think of Romani at all, it is in a stereotypical fashion. She also

believes that if countering images were presented there would be a potential for the mainstream

to think differently of Romani, helping to eliminate these stereotypes

Research shows that not only do those who encounter stereotypes about themselves have

the potential to experience a significant amount of psychological distress (Jones et al., 1996) but,

these individuals are at risk of internalizing these stereotypes which leads to damaging effects on

one's self-image (Crocker & Major, 1989; Jones, 2004; Parham et al., 2000). This can occur even when the group or individual recognizes these stereotypes to be harmful or erroneous and even when these stereotypes are transmitted through media such as television (Manzo & Baily, 2005).

Another means of outsiders possessing control over the ways in which Romani identify themselves and the strength of their positive self-identity is in the labels they use to define themselves. As previously identified, while many Romani prefer not to use the term "gypsy" it is often necessary to use that term to define oneself to those outside the Romani community as a point of reference. One Romani man from Ohio posts on Facebook (2016) his feelings about the mainstream's insistence of using a term many within the Romani community find offensive:

> I think we do a disservice to ourselves when we refer to our family and ancestors as gypsies when talking to others. I mean for one, it's a slur and the longest living misunderstanding of our origin, but also since people don't get what a gypsy is and plenty of bastards are making money off of that between TV and retail, we should make them know what a Romani is. (Romani man, Ohio)

The man from Ohio believes that the use of the term "gypsy" removes the ability of Romani to choose how they will be defined and relinquishes that power to individuals who profit from it.

The man from Ohio highlights the impact of appropriation on the Romani community and their identities. The appropriation of being "gypsy" though seen as racial slur, is still offensive to many Romani and again, leaves them without the ability to control how they and their communities are defined, leaving their own identities to be something that comes in conflict with the mainstream's view of themselves. A women from the United States, also seeking to highlight the impact of appropriation posted the following story on Facebook (2016):

> There is a store in the town that I'm living in right now that is called gypsies gift shop I decided to stop by because it was something that I haven't done yet I wanted to see what it was like… The lady that runs the shop kept asking me over and over what are you looking for what are you looking for I told her I wasn't really looking for anything that I am Roma. I'm what people call a gypsy and I was coming to see what these people are using the name for and she looks at me with a straight face and says oh well   we call it that because and I'm going to tell you I'm pretty sure that was a gypsy in a past life because I just love jewelry I looked at her for a second I realize that she was serious and I said oh my God what's wrong with you and she looked at me like I hurt her feelings and I said that's strange and not appropriate and I walked out. (Romani woman, USA)

The story described is a characterization of what Romani throughout America and Europe experience when they witness the appropriation of Romani culture. Those who engage in it give little thought to impact it has on Romani lives and identity.

Cultural appropriation of the Romani identity, even in a stereotypical form, impacts the strength of Romani identity by constantly placing Romani on the offensive and, as previously discussed, reducing this identity to a set of behaviors rather than ethnicity. These ideas which may become internalized by Romani themselves may impact their sense of being a "real" Romani, increasing the overall impact of the negative outcomes they experience.

6.5.2   Outside Influences on Romani Identity Formation Europe

In many ways, the experience of European Romani is very much the same as American Romani, though significantly more research can be found to support the existence of these experiences. Romani in Europe are consistently "othered" by media and interpersonal interactions, (Ceyhan, 2003) placing them at risk, like American Romani, of internalizing the feeling of being "less than." A case study of Romani identity in Turkey looks at 36 Gypsy and Roma people, how they define themselves and what impacts their identity. One respondent identifies their experiences with individuals outside of the community, "Non-Gypsies that live in

Edirne look at us something like whatsoever, I think, they look down on us, they despise us."

(Aynur, Gypsy woman, age 37, P. 110). The respondent was all too aware of how she was

perceived by those outside of her immediate community.

Another individual involved in the study who was not Romani identifies the treatment

that European Romani experience from mainstream society, another example of how Romani

have been "othered." "How American people excluded the Black people, we excluded them, so

they feel coldness towards us, 'whites'" (Birol, Roma male, age 36, P. 142). In addition to being

"othered" Romani in Europe face a barrage of stereotypes and stereotypical portrayals in the

media that may also impact their identity development and self-image. These include age-old

stereotypes such as stealing (Ureche & Franks, 2007), "If you tell the wrong person (you are

gypsy) you get a lot of stick. It's always our fault is something gets nicked" (Irish Traveller, 14,

P. 17). These stereotypes also include ideas about Romani being magical. The following is a

quote written by the author of a study on Romani women in the Balkans (Kushi, 2016).

> A child growing up in Albania, for instance, is never immune to cultural indoctrination against the Roma population – "the gypsies". No matter how progressive a family may be, they will either implicitly or directly introduce their children to many negative stereotypes the culture throws at the Romani. At a very early age, society warned me to never open the door for a gypsy. Gypsies stole little children and dabbled in evil dark magic, my neighbors would so convincingly tell me.

The magical properties of the Romani were memorable part of the author's childhood narrative,

evidence that these stereotypes were pervasive in her culture.

Romani, in many respects, must be compared with the mainstream in Europe. The

"white" culture is the default culture and Romani identity is situated in comparison to that

culture by the mainstream (Heaslip, 205). The comparison of Romani groups to the mainstream

results frequently in Romani being viewed as homogenous. This view impacts their ability to

define themselves (Heaslip, 2015). One researcher describes the conflict that exists in wishing to

not be defined homogenously, a common assumption of Romani (Jovanovic, 2014), while also

remaining somewhat insular from the settled community, which, in her view, perpetuates

stereotypes against Romani (Heaslip):

> What was interesting was this expressed wish to be seen as individuals and not a
> homogenized group, yet this discourse of Gypsy/Travellers is perpetuated especially as
> the community is a closed community and chooses to stay within its own kind. Therefore
> a lack of integration between the Gypsy and settled community can only further
> perpetuate stereotypical, homogenized views.

An alternate view is that Romani should be able to define themselves without having to sacrifice

portions of their identity for the comfort of the settled community or in relation to that

community. Sadly, the ability of Romani identity to serve as a buffer against the harmful effects

of prejudice is jeopardized as the struggle to define Roma between the outside community and

Roma themselves places identity at the center of their struggle.

Just as in America, a struggle exists between the Roma community and the dominant

society about how Romani are labeled. The majority of Romani have a very specific idea of how

they wish to be labeled (Strauss, 2012) though there is no consensus, as I discuss towards the end

of this chapter. Regardless of the label used, those in the mainstream continue to associate titles

with pejorative meanings with Romani, taking the ability to choose and define their labels and

placing Romani at risk of internalizing these negative associations.. A study interviewed 275

Sinti and Roma (Strauss, 2012), many of whom were able to identify a time when the term

"gypsy" was used against them in a pejorative manner:

> Actually it happened many times. It's almost the same thing every time; people come
> when they hear that we're Sinti, they say, 'You dirty Gypsy. (Sinti Male 37, P.82)

> Well, they just always said, the 'Gypsies are dirty, and they steal,' and 'they never would have thought that I was one,' and it was just really bad for me, because I didn't want that. (Sinti Woman, 30's, P. 82)

> …then my teacher said, 'You're a Gypsy, you won't amount to anything, none of you will ever amount to anything anyway'. (Sinti Man, 57, P. 83)

One author describes the use of the term "gypsy" in this way (Beaudoin, 2014): "The word Gypsy is often used to reaffirm—by non-Roma—the position of Roma as 'undesirable' outsiders or as people who do not belong."

Another way in which those outside the Romani community can impact the defining of Romani identity is by defining who "is" and who "isn't" a Romani based on arbitrary criteria. One that has already been discussed is traveling but another is based entirely on the way Romani "look." A study completed by a Canadian author about Romani recorded the responses of Romani who had immigrated to Canada from Europe. Study participants related their experiences with the phenomenon of being defined by outsiders (Beaudoin, 2014):

> And many [Canadians] who don't know too much about the Gypsy, they ask "But you are white……who can tell you are Gypsy?" [In Europe], right away they know……Even if you start to talk, they know, probably by the accent or something. They know. (Elana, New Refugee to Canada, P. 21)

Romani are expected to be physically identifiable by many, though their looks widely vary. Those without the Romani "look" may be more able to "pass" into mainstream society but they may also be denied their Romani identity by outsiders if they do not look enough "Romani" for outsider's approval.

Romani, like many minorities, are undoubtedly impacted by the defining and portrayals of those outside their community. Not only does this occur on an interpersonal level, but as seen in Chapter 4, is often disseminated through the media. The constant conflict between the way

Romani define themselves and how they are defined by the dominant culture is a significant source of stress but, despite this, many Romani are able to maintain a strong sense of themselves. The defining of Romani identity within their own community is influenced by a variety of factors and, contrary to the opinions of those outside the community, is far from homogenous.

6.6   How Romani Define Themselves

A major conflict that has the potential to increase negative outcomes for Romani is the way in which Romani identify themselves when faced with pressure from those on the outside. I have already discussed the potential impact that the opinions of outsiders may have on Romani identity. Despite this impact, a strong association with Romani ethnicity still has the potential to serve as a buffer against the harmful effects of discrimination and prejudice. Research shows that the right to self-definition is important, particularly in minority/immigrant groups (Strauss, 2012).   A study by Strauss finds that Romani identify themselves in a specific way and are cognizant of how they wish to be defined by those outside the community. Clear rules exist regarding what is and is not acceptable in terms of portrayal and the specific verbiage that is utilized.

The act of "coming out" as Romani is a significant point in the lives of Romani world-wide (Beaudoin, 2014). It is significant to not only the strength of their identification with Romani identity but also to their relationship with those outside their community. Many Romani believe they should have the ability to control when and to whom they "come out" regarding this identity and believe that this control has, to some degree, been taken by stereotypical portrayals in shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* (Herman, 2012; Poppelwell, 2012). These shows have heightened their visibility in negative way or led some to feel forced to identify themselves as a means of countering negative portrayals (Covert, 2015).

6.7   The Definition of Romani Identity in America

Sadly. Many Romani do form their identity in relation to the opinions of mainstream

society. Though in objection to their stereotypical beliefs, Romani identity is sometimes formed

as a response to the isolation they have experienced. Beaudoin (2014) defines how outside

influences have impacted the way they define themselves:

> Romani efforts regarding their identities… have been influenced by (and in turn
> influence) governmental and public definitions of self, complicating and challenging
> the idea that all Roma can/should be designated in a particular bounded manner. (P. 16)

Beaudoin believes that a shared Romani identity does in fact exist but that it is very much

informed by the persecution they have experienced, and continue to experience:

> …the very idea of making a checklist of attributes that could accurately and
> comprehensively identify Roma is both impossible and laughable….Yet, a shared identity
> does exist, one that does regularly exclude non-Roma…. With fairly rigid boundaries;
> often, this identity process relies heavily on shared experiences of persecution. (P. 20)

Beaudoin believes that the binding element of Romani identity is their shared past of

persecution.

Peaches, a woman in her 80's from the southeast United States conceptualizes her

experiences with the opinions of those outside of her community in this way:

> It's weird that it seems like there's such a mystery behind being gypsy and Romanichal
> and we're just like every other family. I think the difference is there is such a mystery
> around it, everyone feels like there is some big hidden secret. In the history that I can
> think of we are the only ones who have been isolated like that, we don't have a
> country…I mean our original country.

Despite the confusion and isolation that Peaches recognizes from those outside the Romani community, growing up, one's identity as a Roma was talked about in a positive light as something to be proud of though it often went unacknowledged in the main-stream.

> We discussed that, being proud of who you are. We are proud of who we are but at the same time, we are no different from anyone else we're just like the Gorjas, But we are proud of who we are. We don't think that that's been recognized as a race, the good parts of it.

For Peaches, Romani identity was "normalized" as being like anyone else in the community, far from the "othering" of Romani that those outside the community have been known to engage in.

Josephine, a woman in her 30's, also identifies that Romani have viewed themselves as people who are proud of who they are and what they value, "They are still a very proud people who put their families first." Fener acknowledges growing up she believed, like Peaches that despite their differences, Romani were just like everyone else:

> …everybody's family is different no matter what nationality you are, Italian Jewish, everybody is different, we have our own culture and as a child you don't know it's any different, and you just understand that's your family

Fener was taught and believes that there is a "normalcy" to their differences that made them a part of the greater community:

The differences between themselves and others outside their community didn't make for a feeling of otherness for American Romani like Peaches and Fener, instead, it made them feel that their differences were the parts of their identity they could be proud of, proof of a strong ethnic identity that did indeed have the potential to serve as a buffer against the poor media portrayals and prejudice they have faced as I discuss in chapters 4 and 5.

The experiences of other Romani however, have been negative. Many feel they lack the ability to define themselves because of the influence of outsiders. Some believe that Romani lack control over how they are defined and their ability to be offended by racial slurs. A Romani man from Ohio posts online (Facebook Post, 2016) about how Romani are not even allowed to define for themselves what is a racial slur against their community:

> We can't own the word gypsy in the same way other races get to own their own racial slurs because people don't know about Roma, so they don't know it's a bad word or that it's not a lifestyle. (Romani Man, Ohio)

Some Romani remain unsure about whether or not they would like to reveal their identity out of concern for how it will be accepted. Romani have carried with them a belief that their identity is something that needs to be hidden. Covert (2015) reveals that many Romani have lied about their ethnic identity at some point in their lives and continue this lie throughout their life time, further evidence that Romani are often unable to own and define themselves for fear of repercussions.

The answer to the question, "How do Romani identity themselves?," is that many don't, at least not out loud. Some define themselves as a people who need to stay quiet about their identity. They see themselves as secret and as a minority at constant risk of harm. While some may believe that things for Romani have gotten better overall in America (Covert, 2015), others, such a Fener, a woman in her 40's from the southeast United States indicates she still encounters a stereotypical response when she does reveal who she is and as a result, rarely shares.

> I think for the most part I still don't tell people what race I am, if someone wants to know I will say Italian you know cause if you do tell them they don't believe you so what's the use of telling them. I don't know how long it took, I told my husband   right   away when we first started dating I thought he needs to know if we are going to be serious and I got the same reaction from him. He was like well what's that you know do you dance around the campfire, yeah I'm going to dance around the campfire and then I

am going to cast a spell on you, how about that? I put a curse on you. It's you know, craziness.

Fener, who is married to a non-Roma, doesn't appear to take much offense to these ideas as she went forward with her marriage despite her husband holding these views on Romani. Could this be evidence that she, and maybe others, have come to expect that the denigration of the Romani identity is simply an expected part of their experience? Maybe.

Finally, many Romani define themselves as a people who must live in two worlds, in a duality of existence. Covert (2015) discusses at length the experience of "double consciousness" that Romani in America experience. The stress from this double consciousness is the outcome of the resistance to assimilation that Romani encounter. It is the stress that Romani feel when trying to navigate two worlds and successfully fulfill their preferred method of acculturation, still seeking to be accepted within and outside their community. Phoebe defined this balance and how it has impacted the identities of her children:

> I mean it takes a little navigation and a strong sense of who you are to be able to go back and forth from both cultures without missing from either one. I've always tried to tell my children this: you can have the best of both worlds, you are who you are despite of who you are and no one can take that away from you. It's just kind of interesting path, the best thing you can do is instill that confidence in who they are first and foremost. It's not easy, it's not easy. Everybody feels that they are missing out or they are not as accepted maybe because they don't do one thing or another so they are navigating that path right now.

Phoebe does a great job painting the picture of the life of the Romani who seeks to carry their Romani identity with them as they engage in some form of acculturation. As she identifies, it is not easy and may lead to a fracturing of identity altogether, leaving them without the ability to utilize their ethnic identities as a buffer against the world.

6.8   The Definition of Romani Identity in Europe

Like those in America, many European Romani express that their Romani identity is something they identify strongly with and something to be proud of despite outside influences. In a study on the experiences of vulnerability among Gypsies and Travellers, one Irish Traveler identifies how his identity *has s*erved as a buffer against negative, outside influences (Heaslip, 2015):

> Even though they were bullying me, I fight back and I fight harder even though I'd lose. Every time I got hit I would hit back and I'd fight and I'd try and fight harder. That's the way with Travellers. If they're put down they'll bounce right back up. We are proud people, very proud. Proud of who we are, proud of where we come from. No matter what the outside world says, no matter what they say they will never be as good as us. " (Jimmy, Irish Traveller, P.92).

Despite this pride, some feel that the influence of outsiders on Romani will lead to an extinction of Romani identity eventually (Heaslip), "I think Gypsies will be a bit like dinosaurs…dead and gone" (Alana, Romani Woman, P. 131). In saying this, it's possible that the identity of Romani is seen as one that is in jeopardy as more and more people outside the community seek to define or appropriate it.

As I already identify, Romani define themselves as lacking control over the way their identities are portrayed, largely through the media. Additional stress arises as Romani are tied to their community as well as mainstream society, just as in America, creating a dual identity and increasing the level of strain they feel in wanting to own and define their Romani identity while also successfully acculturating (Toth, 2005).

One study on Romani youth shows that Romani in Europe have a very strong sense of their identity and how they would and would not like to be defined from a young age (Ureche & Franks, 2007). It is important to Romani that they are able to define themselves and many take

an offensive approach when seeking to educate others on what it means to be Romani (Strauss, 2012). Strauss interviewed one such individual who was able to proudly and definitively define who they are, even if it's was in opposition to what others within the community believe:

> It's sad and discouraging. I'm sorry, but it's the truth, that's how it is. When I look at myself in the mirror, I'm not white, I'm not black. … I'm sorry, that's how it is. And I don't deny it, I'm proud to be a Gypsy, a Roma woman, that's so. (Roma Woman, 20's, P. 98).

These individuals are able to draw on their identity as way of dealing with strain from the dominant society while others continue to hide their identity or lie about who they are (Strauss).

One such individual reached the opposite position of the person who found pride in their identity:

> (…) I said from that point in time on that never again in my life would I say I'm a Sintizza, and I've stuck to that to this very day, because I simply don't want to admit it, for me it's something really bad. (Sinta Woman, 30's P. 98)

The experience of this Sinti woman mirrors the experience of Romani in America and Europe who have encountered enough prejudice to decide they no longer wish to be publically identified with their true identity.

Again, just as in America, Romani identity becomes something that should be kept secret and is potentially harmful in that it may put them at risk for further marginalization. That is not to say that those who hide their identity are not proud of it, but part of their identity has evolved as a result of mainstream society's treatment. One cannot place all responsibility for the inability to draw confidentially ethnic identity on outside influences. A major contributor to this is the lack of cohesion within the Romani community which leaves some unsure of how they should be or are defined and if in fact they meet this unknowable standard.

6.9   The Impact of Intergroup Conflict

The idea that Romani communities are homogenous whether in America or Europe is a fallacy. There is much disagreement within the Romani community regarding how they will be defined and in what way they will make these definitions clear. From family to family or group to group it is somewhat unclear who is "in" and who is "out though there is consensus across the board that those who are seeking to appropriate Romani culture for their own gain and based on behaviors and lifestyles instead of ethnicity are definitely out.

We must first begin by acknowledging there is no consensus on what Romani should or should not be called. Some might argue this point but, having read hundreds of studies on Romani world –wide, I can definitively say that who is defined as Roma, Sinti, Gypsy, Travellers etc. varies geographically, by family, based on media and historical influences and for a myriad of other reasons. I have throughout this study changed on an almost paragraph by paragraph basis the adjective I used to define the group I was talking about because the studies I was referencing referred to themselves using a specific term. Sometimes I was talking about a different faction of Roma but many times I was not, and yet I tried to be respectful of the term they chose to utilize. One may say that the term Roma is all encompassing, as I have used it, and gypsy is pejorative but, as we saw from the previous section, some strongly identify with the word Gypsy and will not allow themselves to be told within or outside the Roma community that this is unacceptable. One woman from the United States describes her views on the matter online in this way (Facebook Post, 2016):

> I try to be politically correct by saying I'm Roma but everyone thinks I mean Romanian. I have no problem saying Gypsy because I'm proud to be one and I want people to know what ethnicity I am. (Romani Woman, USA)

 Others might say that Roma does not represent their history. One scholar may clearly lay out

what each term refers to and another scholar will lay out definitions reversing what was then

established. Disagreement regarding when or if these Romani identities should be reveled,

particularly within media portrayals, also exist (Jovanovic)

Though they may exist, Oleaqu (2014) identifies that Gypsies are often unaware of the

goals they share in common. Gayle, a woman in her 30's from the Northwest United States

identifies the lack of unity that is sometimes found within groups:

> There is really a lack of unity between groups there was a guy I think from the group
> [the   interviewer was] from group you are from and he was trying to organize this
> education thing and it was the first time there were a bunch of different groups from
> [various places], Spanish gypsy people and it went to hell in a hand basket, it was
> horrible like a crash and burn part of it was because even though I think he did have
> the best of intentions, he was not a very good manager of people and the other   thing
> was people started getting suspicious of everybody else's intentions and I remember
> thinking God this is so gypsy of everyone you know it was really frustrating.

Not only did Gayle use the term "Gypsy" in the interview, she clearly identifies that a lack of

unity and common efforts can occur. Unfortunately, voices of criticism within the community

are often quieted or unheard according to one study (Oprea, 2004), leaving some to feel as if

criticizing things such as the lack of cohesion within the Romani community is anti-Roma. It

may also lead one to feel that they have been placed on the "outside".

Some Romani facing the stress of acculturating, whether through full assimilation, by

accommodating the dominant culture or through other means, are left without a clear idea of

where they will or do stand in their communities once this process is complete. Those Romani in

Europe who are deemed successful beyond what is considered "average" for Romani by the

mainstream may no longer be considered "Roma" by those outside and/or within their

community (Toth, 2005).

In order to gain acceptance by the mainstream, many "pass" as White or engage in behaviors and customs common to the mainstream, leaving them to feel they have perhaps left their communities behind. For these individuals, though they do not wish outsiders to appropriate the Romani identity by simply "living the life," it can be hard to continue to view their Romani identity through an ethnic lens alone. The need to feel "Romani enough" may keep some Romani from drawing on their identity as a means of coping with the conflict they experience when trying to acculturate. Rachel, a women in her 20's from the Northeast United States identifies her struggles with feeling validated in her identity:

> I think that is a problem for me (feeling Romani enough) because even though I am Romani, I always feel like oh, I'm not enough you know what I mean but I am enough and I just need to, I feel better about it but before there was a period in college when I would kind of stay quiet about it but not anymore.

Rachel identifies her struggles with feeling that she measures up to the unknowable standard of being truly "Romani." She also acknowledges that she has now made the conscious choice to allow herself and her ethnicity to be defined only by her own standards.

I begin this section by trying to answer the questions, How do Romani define themselves and how do the opinions of dominant cultures impact this definition? And the answers to these questions are quite complicated. Romani define themselves in a variety of ways and, at times can lack cohesion. Not only do the opinions of the dominant culture impact this definition but opinions or rules within the Romani community impact the defining of identity as well. Once again, I could not end this chapter without identifying how women are uniquely impacted by this struggle because they must not only address the conflict of being between two worlds but must also identify how their gender is placed within those worlds.

6.10   Additional Struggles at the Intersection of Gender

Romani women face a myriad of difficulties and they are often on the receiving end of marginalization both within and outside their community because of their gender (Ceneda, 2002). Ceneda identifies the struggle that Romani women endure and the stress placed on them from multiple communities:

> She has few advocates and is the target of constant hostility. She is marginalized within her community because of her minority status and within her family because of her gender….. these women live at the crossroads of gender and racial segregation. (P. 12)

Just as many Roma struggle with their lack of ownership over their identity, some Romani women struggle with the lack of ownership over the intersection of their ethnic identity with their gender. The Romani community has critics from within who state that though there are Roma initiatives led by women (discussed in the conclusion of this study) many are led by men, largely in Europe. These initiatives fail to address the issues unique to women unless they fit within the overall agenda of the community. Romani women's issues of being fetishized and demeaned may go unacknowledged and progress meant for Romani women is often situated within their ethnicity more than their gender (Jovanovic, 2014). Jovanicvic believes that many Romani women's movements take on an "us and them" tone, catering to small factions of the community and making it unclear who is considered in and who is out, leaving many to feel marginalized.

Other scholars identify that efforts to discuss the issues unique to Romani women can be seen as questioning the very identity and culture of Roma, leaving some to feel as if Romani identity has little room to include Roma women. They may also feel as if the plight of the Romani women is overlooked for the "greater good" of all (Ceneda, 2002). As I discuss in the

previous section, criticism of the community may be silenced by those who feel it will place the efforts for progress at risk, thus silencing those who wish to address the issues of Romani women or the exclusion of Romani women from the greater conversation (Oprea, 2004). Many policies addressing Romani needs have been criticized as "gender blind" and Romani women are often faced with a lack of needed education, involvement in human trafficking and a lack of reproductive healthcare (Kushi, 2016).

When seeking to answer the question if Romani identity can serve as a buffer against negative media portrayals and other prejudice from dominant cultures, it can be hard to answer in the affirmative. It would seem that the intersection of gender with Romani identity is often a greater source of stress within and outside the Romani community. Covert (2015) discusses the challenges faced by women Romani scholars who are often either left out of feminist discourses or, are told they must essentially disavow their Romani heritage due to the perception that it conflicts with the ideals of the feminist narrative. Many Romani women scholars resist this idea and believe that a Romani women has the capability to have a strong identity as both a Romani and a woman (Covert). Despite this, Romani women seem to be caught at the intersection of several variables. They face double the challenges of navigating resistance to assimilation and relying on their identity to buffer the effects of discrimination with so many factors stacked against them.

6.11   Conclusion

In this chapter I seek to answer many questions and I hope to connect these questions in a meaningful way. The first set of questions I hope to answer are these:

Do Romani who experience prejudice and barriers to assimilation experience a negative impact on their social, economic, physical and/or mental health? If yes, how do these outcomes effect their overall lived experience as immigrants and/or minorities?

The answer to this question is, based on the available evidence, affirmative. As I discuss, Romani who encounter resistance to their acculturative strategies and subsequent discrimination or prejudice do experience negative social and individual outcomes. The result is harmful effects on the social, economic and mental health of the Romani. This not only affects their ability to effectively cope with the challenges they face but highlights their lack of appropriate resources. The experience of American and European Romani mirror each other though more evidence exists to support these conclusions in Europe.

Once I asked these questions and found that yes, Romani do experience a negative impact on their social and mental health, I was led to wonder if Romani identity could serve as a buffer against these effects. Being familiar with the research on positive identity formation and the internalization of stereotypes, I was curious as to what internal resources Romani may have to combat these negative effects. What I found was that Romani possess two things that could successfully bolster positive coping for Romani and these were their familial/community support and their sense of identity. While reading further I discovered that their strong sense of community was tied closely with their traveling lives and that, especially for those in Europe, this was slowly eroding. The slow dissolution of Romani ways of life and the legislating of who is and isn't a Romani in Europe led me to wonder how Romani define themselves and how much of this was tied to the opinions of those on the outside. If Romani identities were going to serve as a significant buffer they would need to be strong and would need to be independent of the opinions of outsiders.

What I found following this line of inquiry was that definitions of who Romani are vary widely and identification as a Romani can become a very contentious position. While there was evidence that some utilized their Romani identity as a buffer against prejudice and negative media portrayals, there was also evidence to suggest that some experienced increased social and personal stressors because of their identity. Having already established in this chapter that encountering resistance to assimilation, prejudice and/or discrimination has the potential to cause significant emotional and psychological harm to Romani, I recognized that many Romani have significant difficulties to navigate within themselves, their communities and in mainstream society. Media portrayals serve only to highlight and exacerbate these challenges to a significant degree.

In the coming chapter I will conclude this study. In it I not only discuss my overall findings but I devote some time identifying who in the Romani community is working to address many of the issues discussed in this paper and how they are doing it. I also discuss why the findings of this study have importance, my hope for their application as well as their ability to open doors for future researchers.

7   Conclusion

7.1   Romani Activism

In 2016, 93 Romani activists, all a part of the European Academic Network on Romani studies signed a letter in criticism of the language utilized by the Council of Europe in its inclusion plan for Roma and Travellers. Romani studies (2016) reported that the language insinuated that the many issues plaguing the Romani community, such as begging and domestic violence, were "inherent" rather than situating them within the broader understanding of Romani

marginalization. The activists believe the council is ineffective and is engaging in "victim blaming" rather than finding legitimate means of addressing these issues. Some within the Romani community are in opposition to the letter of protest because the council is seeking to address issues directly impacting women however, much support for their protest still exists (Romani studies). In either case, Romani activists have been able to take a strong stand in defense of themselves and their communities.

Petrova (2013) identifies that it has been the Roma's lack of power above all else that has impacted their social position in the world:

> The single most important concept that helps explain anti-gypsyism is weakness. Roma would not have been ignored, resented, insulted, humiliated and repressed if they had power.

While this may have been largely true historically, today, Romani have a strong and growing voice in defense of themselves and their community. Romani have begun to identify this change for themselves, though they still see room for improvement. One respondent from Beaudoin's 2014 study situates the discussion of activism in the past and the present:

> It's when people don't have a voice; when they're terrified to have a voice, because they're told, "if you speak, you're dead". And that goes on for generations and generations. To develop that voice, it takes generations to start changing things. For example, right now, we're getting a more powerful voice, but it's not nearly enough (Romani women, P. 203)

This respondent identifies that Romani have moved from a defense position in to an offensive one but acknowledges there is still work to do.

Though there are still many strides to be made, 2016 alone has seen some significant steps forward for Romani world-wide. As of August 2016, the Czech government was seeking

to rectify an affront against Romani that has been in existence for 46 years. A pig farm was built

on what was once a former Nazi camp, a place of remembrance for the hundreds of Roma who

died there. The Czech government announced that it was seeking to buy out the pig farm as a

first step in honoring what occurred on the grounds (AFP, 2016). In America, a new Romani

activist was appointed in 2016 by President Barack Obama to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial

Council. Ethel Brooks, an Associate professor and Romani activist at Rutgers University now

serves on the board as a voice for Romani's role in the Holocaust's history (Rutgers University,

2016).

Romani activism world-wide continues to grow and while the list of names is too

numerous to identify individually in this space, it is important to note that Romani are not simply

passive participants in the way they have been portrayed or treated. One Romani woman from

Beaudon's 2014 study identifies the importance of Romani continuing to have a voice for

themselves:

> I'm really not interested in what non-Roma culturally have to say about Roma,
> because I think we haven't reached a point yet where we can be relaxed about that,
> because Roma are still an object, Roma are still not ordinary people (Romani woman,
> P. 199)

Activism occurs for Romani on a large scale through movies that counter mainstream stereotypes

(Travellers' Times, 2016) and through music, including rap and dance that counter racism (Imre,

2003). Roma have also begun to utilize mainstream media sources, such as news print and social

media, a tool historically used against them, as a way to resist prejudiced media portrayals

(Maogo, 2016; Plaut, 2012). Activists have begun to draw attention to topics the mainstream

media once shied away from and are increasing the overall amount of Romani being quoted and

highlighted in mainstream publications (Plaut).

Though these forms of resistance occur on a grand scale, many Romani emphasize the importance of acting individually as well. One Romani man from Ohio identifies the first steps that individuals within the Romani community can take towards making a difference:

> One person educating whoever they can probably isn't going to affect the overall understanding of who and what we are…but if enough of us casually talk in a friendly and informative manner, it'll get the ball rolling. (Facebook post, 2016)

This man believes that taking the initiative to begin conversations can make a significant difference. Romani women interviewed in America report ways they have found to personally make a difference:

> And that's my role in this culture in that you guys gave me an education and I'm going to use it to educate people against everything you put out. That's what I do, I do talk. Last week I did a talk at the Bashan senior center, I had a class from Seattle central come over. That's my main thing now is to just let people know the truth. There are some things from our culture you might not agree with but you know what, it's our culture, it's not a stereotype to sell TV. (Fey, 60's, oversees Romani museum North West)

Others speak with excitement about the ways in which new voices within the Romani community can make a significant difference:

> I tended to not talk about being Romani to outsiders so I never intended to do that but I think there are a group of us now who believe that if we don't do that then things will be bad. So I mean if you let TLC interpret who you are then that's who you are to the public. That's why I think it is important to encourage our young people to do whatever it is that they have a mind to do. That's why we are so excited about people… getting advanced degrees and will hopefully do research and teach. (Gracie, 60's Southeast, U.S.)

Whatever role one takes within the grander conversation of Romani resistance and education, it is clear that many Romani are no longer passive actors or individuals in hiding. The purpose of this study, in one respect, is to fulfill the wish of Romani such as Gracie, looking for individuals with the social power and the knowledge to become a part of the international conversation.

7.2   Overall Findings

Throughout the data collection for this study I found myself almost serendipitously stumbling across rich and informative data, opening my own eyes to the historical lives of the Romani in a way I had not known before. This begins in chapter four as I seek to highlight the experiences of Romani in the media, both in America and Europe. While examining what was available in terms of historical data, I came across the Library of Congress' newspaper collection, containing tens of thousands of historical newspapers discussing the existence of Romani in America. To this point I have read no other studies that have mentioned, highlighted or conducted any type of content analysis on this wealth of historical data.

My fourth chapter synthesizes Romani portrayals from a variety of sources and mediums. I explore a classic, celebrated television show that blatantly engaged in Romani racism. I look at modern media examples, newspaper portrayals and focus on the ways in which law enforcement utilize media as a way to target Romani in America as well as overseas. I also identify how women, specifically, have been objectified through the media. Though one may find a discussion of one or two of these many topics in a singular place, few if any studies exist that have brought so much together to provide a broad picture of the interaction the Romani have with the media. It is from this chapter that I developed my title of "Notoriously Invisible" as no group, so well-known for its negative stereotypes which are played out in mainstream media, is so invisible to the eye of the general public as the Romani. If I leave the reader with any conclusion, it would be that singular thing. Romani are widely discriminated against through the use of media and yet, they are, as a people, invisible.

My fifth chapter explores how prejudice and discrimination are a part of the Romani experience and identifies how this is tied to media portrayals. I look at how these portrayals

serve as an impetus for social prejudice and what that means for Romani in their day to day lives. I examine efforts by Romani to engage in mainstream cultures, the resistance they encounter, and the cost of this resistance in their ability to acquire basic necessities. While the information I present related to European Romani is in no way new, I do believe there is a novelty in the comparison to American Romani. Additionally, I believe I have been able to further highlight what the lives of American Romani look like and how they also must navigate prejudice in their daily lives. This phenomenon in America is often overshadowed by the plight of European Romani but, still has the potential to impact the lives of American Romani in a significant way.

My sixth chapter looks at the how the barriers created for Romani by societal prejudice and discrimination, influenced by mainstream media, have led to significant negative outcomes socially, economically and mentally. Of the chapters I present, I believe this chapter contains the most ground-breaking information. In it, I am able to synthesize and piece together the experiences of Romani who are seeing their old ways of life erode, who face regular discrimination and who have been villainized in the media as they seek to navigate acculturative strategies by utilizing the resources available to them. By exploring the various negative outcomes for Romani who experience prejudice and resistance to assimilation I am able to understand how their social position has a significant impact on their identity, economic situation, and overall mental health.

7.3   A Part of the Conversation

When I first began this work, my goal was to expand in a significant way the work I had previously completed on the lives of Romani women in the United States. I felt that the narratives I collected from 15 diverse Romani woman across America deserved a second inquiry, as I was left with much more of their stories to tell. Beyond that, I hoped to delve further into the

lives of Romani in America and take a look at how these lives play out across screens and on paper when compared with those in Europe. Much Romani scholarship, even from American scholars, focuses almost entirely on Romani overseas. This is understandable as, observed even in this paper, their plight is significantly more dire and the information relating to their experiences is much more widely available than for Romani in America, though even in Europe it continues to lack in many ways.

As I discuss in my introductory sections, I do not believe that any one section of this paper is entirely exhaustive however, I consider the synthesis of so many narratives, collected from so many places, some found within the electronic crevices of the online world, to be a significant step in presenting this research to those familiar with it and also to those outside the world of the Romani scholar and outside the world of the Romani activist. I believe that the breadth of information and the narrative of Romani life running throughout this paper has the ability to not only significantly inform those within the Romani community, living their lives with little knowledge of the greater community they are part of but, to inform also those on the outside. I have found no other study like the one I have just completed, one that draws from so many disciplines to provide a wholistic picture of Romani identity, life and portrayals.

I believe this study has the potential to be a significant part of the ongoing conversation happening among Romani world-wide. Within it I inform scholars about the plight of America Romani. With so little understood about Romani in America, I believe it is important to not only provide countering information but to provide any information to the mainstream as well as to scholars within many disciplines about the lives of Romani in America, as well as overseas. One of the most significant parts of this study is that it provides so many points of inquiry for future scholars to follow.

As I discuss in the introduction, I am curious as to the rates at which Romani scholars'

work, particularly women scholars internationally, are published. I came across so many studies

that were significant contributions to their fields and yet remained unpublished. Further

exploration of this line of inquiry could include the ways in which women's scholarship is

accepted within and outside the Romani community. Research already exists discussing these

themes but not extensively related to American scholarship.

I attempt to address and discuss Romani mental health in chapters five and six of this

study. While I think I was able to identify and discuss this topic knowledgeably, the lack of

available data impacted the extent to which I was able to draw conclusions surrounding this

topic. As in many minority communities, stigma towards mental health services and providers

exists as a result of historical discrimination and diagnosis being used as form of oppression. As

I discuss, the impact of prejudice, discrimination or resistance to efforts towards assimilation can

result in significant impact to one's mental, social, economic and physical health. Further

research in this area, particularly in America where these issues are largely unaddressed, can

further highlight the extent to which Romani are impacted by their experiences. This research

may also shed light on what needs exist within the Romani community that are currently

unacknowledged by a variety of scholars, even within the mental health field.

A first step in following this line of inquiry is to determine what models of research those

within the Romani community would be most open to participating in and what models of

intervention would they be most open to trying. Romani communities in America have been

closed off for many reasons and yet, they are many needs in terms of literacy, health education,

mental health and poverty that can and should be addressed. Recognizing these occurrences as a

result of marginalization is just one step in the process, one I have tried to take by highlighting

their experiences but, to go further, one must look at how these issues can be addressed without bringing further stress or marginalization to this group.

Finally, through this study, I establish the way Romani have and are being portrayed by mainstream media is unacceptable. More activism needs to take place, particularly in the U.S. to combat these stereotypes that have run rampant on screens across America. Individuals, at minimum, can refuse to participate in the appropriation of Romani culture by refusing to watch or purchase anything that engages in appropriation or marginalization through their portrayals. Further, countering images should be created to balance out the stereotypical images that are currently being disseminated. Beyond scholarship, films, music, television and books need to exist to counter the images available and to replace them.

So much room for expansion exists within the field of Romani studies. The information I present here is a merely another voice in a conversation that is ongoing but, hopefully one that will bring the cause of the Romani before the general public in a way that is understandable and in a way that moves them to want to act on behalf of Romani or, at minimum, consider their own actions and attitudes. I believe through this study I succeed in telling the story of a people who have been rejected and marginalized from many directions, yet they survive and make a way for themselves.

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