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## Challenging Essentialized Representations of Romani Identities in Canada

Julianna Beaudoin, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Randa Farah, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Anthropology

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Challenging Essentialized Representations of Romani Identities in Canada

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Anthropology  
Collaborative Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
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## Abstract

Roma are one of the world's most marginalized and exoticized ethnic groups, and they are currently the targets of increasing violence and exclusionary policies in Europe. In Canada, immigration and refugee policies have increasingly dismissed Roma as illegitimate or 'bogus' refugee claimants, in large part because they come from 'safe' European countries. These policies are reinforced through Canadian media discourse that primarily situates Roma as abusers of the refugee system. This dissertation on Romani identity challenges these demeaning and essentializing representations by focusing on three areas most relevant to Romani identities: first, historical representations; second, the role of media in reinforcing stereotypes; and third, Romani activism that contests popular conceptions surrounding Roma. Based on research and fieldwork, I propose that Canadian policies, stereotyping, and Romani activism produce a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: on the one hand, they accentuate and sometimes create internal differences, and on the other hand, they demand that the Roma respond with a unified collective voice. The production of these differences and similarities correspond to specific historical and social contexts of Roma in Canada. This dissertation examines these issues by analyzing Romani relationships with institutional organizations (including the refugee determination system) and conflicts over public representations in the media.

This dissertation is based on anthropological approaches, including participant observation and other fieldwork methods with Roma in the Greater Toronto Area from 2009-2013. This work expands on my previous research with Toronto Romani community members beginning in 2007. I conducted interviews with Romani refugee claimants, Romani community members and leaders, service providers, lawyers, journalists, and other people involved in Romani issues and advocacy work. I also conducted archival research on the history of the Roma in Ontario, as well as media discourse analyses of select newspapers in 2012. In addition to qualitative data, I have included statistical analyses of Immigration and Refugee Board data, dating 1996-2012, on Hungarian and Czech acceptance and success rates. This work demonstrates that Romani identities are historical, complex, multi-layered, and ever changing, and that their struggles regarding identities and representations have real life consequences.

## Keywords

Roma/Romani studies, identity, representation, history, media, advocacy, Canada, refugee/immigration policy

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## List of Abbreviations

AI – Amnesty International

Bill C-31 – “Protecting Canada’s Immigration System”, which received Royal Assent on June 28, 2012 and came into effect on December 15, 2012.

CBSA – Canadian Border Services Agency

CBSC – Canadian Broadcast Standards Council

CIC – Citizenship and Immigration Canada

DCO – Designated Country of Origin

GAR – Government Assisted Refugee

ERRC – European Roma Rights Centre

HRW – Human Rights Watch

IRB – Immigration and Refugee Board

MAU – Monitoring and Analysis Unit

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

RAB – Refugee Affairs Branch

RCC – Roma Community Centre

RCMP – Royal Canadian Mounted Police

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

US – United States

## Chapter 1 - Introduction

### 1 Defying expectations

Roma are one of the world's most marginalized and exoticized ethnic groups, and they are currently the targets of increasing violence and exclusionary policies in Europe. In Canada, immigration and refugee policies are increasingly dismissing Roma as illegitimate or "bogus" refugee claimants, in large part because they come from European countries. The idea of bogus Romani refugees is popularized in mainstream media, which primarily portrays Roma as abusers of the refugee system. This dissertation seeks to challenge the homogenizing and demeaning representations of Roma in Canada by focusing on three areas relevant to Romani identities: first, historical representations of Roma; second, the role of mainstream media in reinforcing "Gypsy" and related stereotypes; and third, Romani advocacy and activism that challenges hegemonic and popular conceptions of Romani community and their histories.

Based on research and fieldwork with Roma in the Greater Toronto Area, I propose that Canadian policies, popularized stereotypes, and Romani struggles against racism produce a seemingly paradoxical phenomenon: on the one hand, they accentuate and create internal differences. On the other hand, they demand that Roma speak and respond as a collective and as having a unified voice, in which their shared experiences and goals are emphasized. The production of these differences and similarities correspond to the specific challenges that Roma face in Canada, occurring primarily through engagements with institutional organizations (including the refugee determination system) and conflicts over public representations in the media. This work demonstrates that Roma identities are historical, complex, multi-layered and ever changing, and that struggles over identities and representations have real life consequences.

As a means to set the stage for the subsequent discussions in this work, the following anecdote provides some insight into some of the multi-faceted dynamics, pressures, and relations that Roma encounter and experience in Canada. This incident also helps frame discussions in relation to consequences of these identity processes. By illustrating how

assumptions and expectations regarding ethnic (and other) identities may be erroneous, we can begin understanding how and why Roma defy and challenge essentialized notions of identity on many levels; the following example also serves to remind us of the necessity of context when discussing Romani issues.

The year 2013 kicked off with a minor encounter at the Roma Community Centre (RCC) in Toronto involving two Hungarian asylum seekers hoping for assistance with their refugee applications. As with many community organizations, the RCC often operates as a first-stop location for many newcomers who need assistance with a range of things, including immigration and settlement information. Thus, this incident with the two visitors might not sound out of the ordinary if one is familiar with the Canadian refugee determination system or knows that many Romani refugee claimants come from Hungary. For example, there were 1,882 new refugee claims submitted by Hungarians to the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) in 2012, and 3,697 total pending Hungarian asylum seekers at the end of the year<sup>1</sup>. In fact, Hungary was the single largest country of origin for refugee claimants for each year 2010-2012, with a general awareness that many of these claimants are Romani<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, the RCC—having been for most of its existence the only organization in Canada specifically dedicated to assisting Roma—has been particularly focused in the last few years on creating an independent and welcoming place for Romani refugee claimants to help them navigate the refugee process. It is understandable, then, to question what sets this incident apart from the 20,000+ Hungarian refugee claimants that have entered Canada since 1996. The answer can be found in the details of the encounter, reproduced and described below, as posted to the public RCC Facebook community wall by the RCC’s Director, Gina Csanyi-Robah:

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<sup>1</sup> New cases are labeled “referred” in official reports, and all of the refugees who are waiting to have a hearing and/or on a decision regarding their status at the end of the year are deemed “pending”. These numbers can be compared to finalized cases, i.e., the number of applications that have been dealt with/closed in any given timeframe. These definitions are further explored in Sections 3.2.4 and 5.3.1.

<sup>2</sup> Although the IRB does not make ethnicity statistics public—only the country of origin—there is consensus that most Central and Eastern European refugee claimants are Romani. Tóth (2010) provides extensive and detailed context that supports this understanding, and Walsh, Este, and Krieg (2008) describe that most of the refugee claimants from Hungary are “members of the Roma community” (905).

Life's irony never ceases to amaze me. Today at the Roma Community Centre, an ethnic Hungarian husband and wife came in to ask for our help to fill out their refugee claim papers. Their asylum claim is based on the persecution they have faced while living in Croatia for 25 years as an ethnic minority. My staff asked if we should help them since they are not Roma.

I replied by saying that we must help anyone who comes to us asking for help, regardless of who they are. I hope that 2013 brings enlightenment to everyone that we are actually a singular race—a human race—and that we all demand a peaceful co-existence by any means necessary. (Public statement 2013<sup>3</sup>)

This incident subverts our expectations of the people involved: the Hungarian refugee claimants in question were not Romani. Rather, they were ethnic Hungarians seeking help from Roma. Gina points this out as ironic, referencing the experience of many Roma as victims of violence and other actions by many Hungarian nationals (causing Roma to flee Hungary and claim asylum in Canada). In fact, there are well-documented and rapidly increasing neo-Nazi groups in Hungary that openly call for the extermination and/or expulsion of all Roma from Hungary (UNHCR 2013; Westhead 2012). The two Hungarians that came to the RCC were not involved in such actions against Roma (they were claiming asylum in Canada based on their own experiences of persecution outside of Hungary), but nonetheless their presence complicates a number of assumptions and relationships between Hungarians, Canadians, and Roma from different countries.

In turn, various community members posted their reactions to Gina's statement on the RCC Facebook wall:

Life is full of ironies like that. I hope that 2013 will bring enlightenment to everyone. (Public statement 2013)

We have the same issues as First Nations people. Except we have nowhere to run. So we stand and fight. I hope 2013 is the year where we have more understanding of each other and what we can do if we collectively combine our energy into something more positive. (Public statement 2013)

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<sup>3</sup> For clarity, some quotes in this work have been given minor edits in punctuation and grammar. Extensive quotes reproduced in this work include a categorization (e.g., Interview, Public statement, Correspondence) and year. I do not provide the specific date in order to protect anonymity. Further details on informants, permissions, and fieldwork methods are provided in Chapter 2.

If we go back far enough, we will find we are all descended from some clumsy apes that fell out of a tree and were too lazy to climb back up again. (Public statement 2013)

I believe that only one race exists—the human race—but the Bible teaches otherwise! ‘The chosen people’ who are better than any other race—this is where racism started! (Public statement 2013)

--See where the ‘chosen people’ ended up, burning in the ovens of Auschwitz along with Roma. (Public statement 2013; response to above comment)

They are Hungarians, just like the majority of the Roma who fled their homeland to refuge in this Canada. Please let me know if I could be of any help to them! (Public statement 2013)

Good words. Thank you, Miss Gina. (Public statement 2013)

Exploring this introductory example, we can see, on the one hand, how the RCC is focused on, and partially unified by, assisting fellow Roma who are fleeing persecution from Central and Eastern Europe, while also developing and implementing Romani-positive projects for all Roma in Canada. On the other hand, we can also see how Roma in Canada are facing incredibly diverse and complicated realities and identities that, at times, are *seemingly* conflicted and disjunctured, such as witnessed by the varying community reactions to the Hungarian asylum seekers.

Many different factors converge here that demonstrate the complexity of identity and representation processes that exist—challenging presumptions of a single or essentialized Romani identity—and influence contemporary Romani experiences. This dissertation uses the concepts of community and ethnicity, explored further in Chapter 2, in order to situate these dynamic Romani identity processes. The following chapters exploring history, media, and advocacy build on this framework to illustrate examples of how Roma produce diversity even as they reinforce collective understandings of their community. In essence, difference within a group is not mutually contradictory. This perspective grew organically from my fieldwork, as I listened to Romani informants express many thoughts and experiences seemingly at odds with perspectives shared at different times, between different community members, and more.

For example, in the Facebook discussion above, some of the Romani staff expressed confusion regarding whether they should be helping non-Romani clients. However, we can also see leadership and communication by Romani community members (such as by Gina), which are significant actions when understood in coordination with the fact that Roma who speak up have often been targets of discrimination and attack. Romani communities have been historically (and repeatedly) targeted through governmental policies, institutional racism, and more, all of which influencing their ability to seek representation and social equality<sup>4</sup>. In the same Facebook exchange, we can also see general support by the community to Gina's statement, some offering to lend whatever help they could. There were also individuals making connections beyond the Romani community, to fellow Hungarians, Indigenous groups in Canada, Jewish people, and the human race overall ("we are all descended from apes"). Some of these specific responses illustrate not only some of the tensions that exist between Roma and some of their allies<sup>5</sup>, but also demonstrate how Roma seek shared experiences with others (looking beyond assumed ethnic boundaries, often drawing on context such as history, education, and shared experiences/goals). This exchange also subtly refers to how Roma simultaneously react to external pressures (e.g., refugee policies, societal discrimination) and to internal pressures from the community regarding their own varied motivations, priorities, perspectives, and beliefs. For example, the RCC must deal with pressures such as competition for scarce resources (as must most NGOs, community, and/or advocacy groups), public and governmental discourses that undermine Romani refugee legitimacy in Canada, and policies that are seemingly designed to purposefully exclude Roma from the refugee system.

The aforementioned Facebook exchange, including its subsequent community reactions, therefore highlights some of the interesting and complicated ways in which Roma are directly and indirectly enmeshed within identity processes in a Canadian context. Leve's

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<sup>4</sup> Speaking up despite fears of violence in a theme that is explored in each of the ethnographic chapters examining history, media, and advocacy, respectively.

<sup>5</sup> Allies is broadly defined here as non-Romani persons who work with Romani organizations, perform positive actions related to Romani issues/concerns, and/or have shared experiences from which Roma draw from or can benefit. I heard the term "ally" frequently used among Romani informants and interviewees.

conceptualization of an “identity machine” (2011) is useful in this context, defined as “an apparatus that establishes not only the categories of identity recognized and claimed in democratic states but also, indeed, their very ontological foundations in liberal conceptions of self, citizenship, and social relations” (Leve 2011:513). Romani efforts regarding their identities (as will be demonstrated throughout this work) have been influenced by (and in turn influence<sup>6</sup>) governmental and public definitions of self, complicating and challenging the idea that all Roma can/should be designated in a particular bounded manner. I examine how Roma reflect upon some of their experiences with state and social processes in Canada, and how these entangled relationships shape Romani identities—a concept in this dissertation that refers to a constant process of making and unmaking.

One of the most urgent issues that Romani interviewees repeatedly emphasized was the interactions they had with exclusionary governmental policies. Razack describes how Canada has forged a specific (and imagined) national mythology that casts specific Euro-Canadian archetypes as the only kind of acceptable citizen, ultimately rendering “all others as external to the nation” (2000:182–183). Fostering this sense of national homogeneity and consensus is thus necessarily racialized, as well as justifies more restrictive border controls that further positions immigrants and refugees as Other (Razack 2000:183). Xenophobic attitudes towards Roma are currently operating in conjunction with growing anti-refugee sentiments; this has created a maelstrom of exclusionary policies contradicting Canada’s reputation as a pro-immigration, humanitarian, and refugee-accepting country. We are witnessing a tightening of policies designed to negatively impact refugees from all over the globe. For example, it recently came to light that Jason Kenney, then the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and

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<sup>6</sup> Although it is relatively easy to comprehend how governmental policy affects people, the relationship between people and policy is not a one-way street; people influence policy in a variety of ways (see Shore, Wright, and Pero 2011). For example, policy is created by people, and is thus affected by individual contexts. Concerning Roma, the case can be made that Roma have influenced Canadian policy through their migrations, experiences in the refugee system, and their advocacy efforts. The Canadian government has recognized this influence by repeatedly singling out and positioning the Roma as a form of bogus-refugee-scapegoat in order to justify their revised refugee determination system.



Multiculturalism (2008-2013)<sup>7</sup>, had requested that staff at Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) find ways to cut down on the number of “high needs” refugees, specifically those that had health problems including trauma from torture (Shingler 2013)<sup>8</sup>. As quoted in CIC’s own memo regarding these instructions, “implementing quotas for refugees with these needs could be perceived as a reversal of Canada’s humanitarian tradition” (Shingler 2013). In response to this, a refugee rights advocate and scholar on a listserv quickly pointed out, “How can you be a ‘refugee’, as defined under international refugee law, and not have experienced some kind of trauma due to the persecution you’ve experienced (or feared)?”

Refugees often find themselves in this kind of Catch-22 situation, entangled in Canadian governmental policies and definitions they must negotiate and sometimes challenge; I explore this process in this dissertation in relation to shifting notions of identity and belonging. Attaining refugee status apparently hinges on being both a deserving and needy recipient as well as being able to contribute economically to Canada. Janet Dench, Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) Executive Director, summarizes this trend: “What we seem to be seeing is that everything is being subsumed under the overall objective of serving Canada’s economic needs... They’re evaluating refugees on the basis of which ones are going to be best for Canada’s economy” (Shingler 2013). As of the writing of this work, it is still unclear whether such “high needs” refugee quotas have been implemented or are still under consideration<sup>9</sup>. This also serves as one of many examples attesting to the government’s lack of transparency in immigration policy creation, implementation, and motivations—a pattern that I also note in reference to my own research and fieldwork experiences.

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<sup>7</sup> Kenney was appointed as Minister of Employment and Social Development in 2013, and after some weeks of confusion regarding his role (O’Malley 2013), he was also designated Minister of Multiculturalism, leaving Chris Alexander as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

<sup>8</sup> Suggestions from the report included capping quotas on refugees with health problems and/or changing the UNHCR definition of a “medical case referral” itself in order to reduce refugees with “serious medical needs”.

<sup>9</sup> It is significant to keep in mind such a health/trauma quota already comes on the back of significant refugee health care cuts implemented in July 2012, which were also heavily criticized by doctors, medical practitioners, social service providers, human rights advocates, and more.

Issues such as these deserve critical and widespread attention. When we discuss Romani experiences and identity-making processes, we are talking about how particular groups are defined and treated within larger socio-political-economic-cultural processes. This dissertation seeks to shed light on the diversity of Romani perspectives and experiences in Canada, challenging homogenous and stereotypical representations, while providing theoretical implications for identity constructions and representations. It is also my intention to demonstrate the relevance and importance of acknowledging Romani-specific experiences and insights as they mobilize community efforts in Canada against a range of pressures facing their community.

## 1.1 Project questions and aims

My main question is how Romani identities are shaped in the Canadian context; the three foci that most clearly lend themselves to this kind of inquiry are reflected by the main ethnographic chapters examining a) historical constructions, b) media representations, and c) advocacy work and activism. Within all chapters, I focus on how Romani identities are continually made/unmade, over time and in particular contexts. Such processes are especially clear when examining Romani struggles and tensions with state institutions and with deeply ingrained and/or popular misconceptions and stereotypes in larger society: how Roma are popularly represented often serves as an oppositional force that influences their identities. Identities and representations are thus distinct, but deeply intertwined processes, additionally affected by individual and collective relationships. All of these factors change over time and are dependent on context. When discussing these processes and relationships in this work, I underscore Romani agency, participation, and action, in contrast to scholarship that ignores or discourages Romani representations of themselves<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> For example, when Fraser (1995 [1992]) first published his work *The Gypsies* as part of a “Peoples of Europe” collection, many critics expressed outrage that Roma could be considered in any way European, despite centuries of history there. And while Romani authorship of books and articles is now on the rise, the vast majority of works dealing with Romani issues are by non-Roma. Section 2.2.1 provides some examples of this.

Through examining historical examples, media stereotypes, and advocacy projects, I demonstrate that there is no single essentialized Romani identity. Rather, collective senses of identity processes emerge from a range of contexts, specifically, historical contexts, contemporary prejudices and representations, and various visions of a better future. I propose that diversity within the Romani community is reproduced and not diminished, even as collective conceptualizations of Romani identity as an ethnic group are solidified. Roma are thus distinct, in that their claim to a shared ethnicity is not based on territory, language, or religion; this makes it sometimes difficult for them to obtain particular rights in a world order based on nation-states where rights are founded on belonging to a state, a national/ethnic identity and/or citizenship. For Roma, shared histories of persecution often unite them: Romani identities are constantly shaped by contexts over time, emerging from relationships and struggles among Roma of different backgrounds and from larger society. This confirms what theorists and studies have shown (e.g., Hall 1994; Hames-Garcia 2011; Said 1989): individual and collective identities are constitutive of each other, and individuals are foremost socially informed and tangled within myriad relationships.

Chapter 2 provides the theoretical and conceptual background for the dissertation, including definitions of identity, ethnicity, community, authenticity, and stereotypes. The subsequent ethnographic-focused chapters repeatedly draw upon these concepts, which are critical for understanding the seeming paradoxical processes whereby Romani internal differences are emphasized even as collective Romani identities are reinforced through shared experiences and goals. These differences and similarities often correspond to the specific challenges that Roma face in Canada. Historical (mis)information regarding Romani ethnicity and migration (examined in Chapter 3), media processes and reproductions of stereotypes (examined in Chapter 4), and Romani actions and visions of community activism and advocacy (examined in Chapter 5) all provide valuable insight into how Roma challenge others' representations even as they influence their own.

This project was born from my interest in exploring the experiences of Roma in Canada mainly due to the paucity of anthropological work on Roma here, especially relating to questions of Romani identity. Moreover, many Roma expressed to me over the years

their frustration at being excluded or dismissed from discussions regarding their own history, cultures, images, and more. I thus felt it was important to emphasize Romani agency, perspectives, and voices in this work. Therefore, I have strived to ensure that Romani perspectives, contexts, and consequences are the foci in the main discussions.

All of the topics raised and discussed here revolve around issues of Romani identity and representations, something at the forefront of many academic and anthropological discussions over the last few decades<sup>11</sup>. It is important to remember, especially when specifically dealing with colonized peoples<sup>12</sup>, that “to represent someone or even something has now become an endeavor for certainly and decidability as fraught with difficulties as can be imagined” (Said 1989:206). Changing technologies, politics, and environments have only increased the complexity of difficulties in working with colonized or marginalized groups. Often, such groups have been the focus/subject of anthropological and other academic discussions on alterity, subaltern voices, and other forms of post-colonial theory—all of which harkens back to anthropology’s initial goal as a discipline to study the Other. Fabian, similarly discussing how the Other is reaffirmed as a productive idea (rather than contributing to negative Othering), notes “that the issues and problems raised by the concept of anthropology’s other are difficult, complex, and as numerous now as they were then” (2006:139).

This dissertation stems from my long-time involvement with the Romani community in Toronto that began in 2007 for my Master’s research. Before that, my interest in Romani issues began during my Bachelor’s research in 2002 in Oulu, Finland. I am not an unbiased researcher simply recording undisputed facts—in fact, few scholars today believe that research is ‘objective’, acknowledging how subjectivity shapes all research and scholarly endeavors. I began this project interested in researching possible discrimination against Romani refugees in Canada using anthropological perspectives to examine the related legal, bureaucratic, and policy systems. However, the more I learned

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<sup>11</sup> In 1987, Said (1989) already noted that “it is hard to remember a time when people were not talking about a crisis in representation” (205).

<sup>12</sup> Romani informants repeatedly raised colonialism as a significant process that affected their experiences and understandings of identities; this is detailed in Section 3.3, as I explore how Roma recall their histories.

about the Canadian refugee system, while hearing almost constantly about persecution against Roma in Europe, the more I realized that documenting Romani experiences *only* as refugee claimants—though incredibly important and under-represented in academic and legal arenas—would not capture the entire story I wanted to tell. My research goals have thus been complicated—and enriched—through my own changing experiences and roles. I have been a volunteer and friend, immersed within a changing Romani community organization that is negotiating many external and internal tensions. I have been a researcher, listening to varied and different stories and experiences. I have been a consumer of media, reading and watching repeated “Gypsy”<sup>13</sup> stereotypes based on historical distortions and misunderstandings. And I have been an immigrant to Canada myself, struggling to make sense of changing refugee policies that seemed clearly designed to exclude people who, according to international law, have the right to seek refugee status.

Roma are rarely recognized or acknowledged as ‘legitimate’ or ‘valuable’ immigrants (here I am purposefully using these words to underscore all of the trappings such adjectives confer), much less as long-standing Canadian citizens and nationals. The limited attention that *is* focused on Roma often exclusively deals with their assumed criminal activity (reaffirming negative stereotypes) or their position as beneficiaries (reaffirming either dependency and/or victimhood). As scholars researching Romani issues have similarly posited (e.g., Acton and Mundy 1997; Guy 2001; Hancock 2010; Hayes and Acton 2007; Lemon 2000; Lemon 2002; McGarry 2010; Pogány 2004; Stewart 2013), Romani identities are significant in daily life and within local communities, transnational communities, and immigration/national policy frameworks. Often, Romani perspectives have much in common with the kinds of experiences that immigrants and refugees overall face in Canada, especially as Canadian definitions of belonging are increasingly restricted. Reconfiguring notions of belonging using national immigration policy has real ramifications for all Canadians, not just refugees or Roma. It

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<sup>13</sup> Similar to Heuss’ use of the term “Gypsy” vs. Roma, “the term ‘Gypsy’ is used either where it is a reference to source use or where the image of ‘Gypsies’ fabricated by the majority and its institutions is meant. The term ‘Roma’ is used to denote the actual members of the minority concerned” (2000:53).

is not a coincidence that Canada is closing its doors to refugees at the same time as they are trying to redefine citizenship<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, many Romani-Canadians do not believe that these issues affect only them, as related below by Livia<sup>15</sup>, a Canadian-Romani community member:

I think there are values or identities that people perpetuate as being Canadian—the Canadian identity, right? And I think that those have real repercussions for Roma rights work. And have real repercussions for migrant rights work, because migrant rights are about Canadian colonialism. I think [attitudes] like, “Oh, Canadians are such peace-loving, easy-going, socialized healthcare” miss, or make it very difficult, to promote or to do Indigenous rights work internationally here. So, I think it’s very important for us to interact with these perceived identities in order to promote human rights. (Interview 2012)

In this quote, Livia raises a question of perceived versus enacted Canadian identities, and explores how she understands migrant rights as related with colonialism—and by extension, human rights. She calls into question the contrast between a perceived Canadian reputation with the actual, lived realities of people, especially in regards to minorities (such as Romani and Indigenous groups) who live within the Canadian border.

Despite lip service to the contrary by officials, many informants repeatedly raised the idea that Canada is becoming more restrictive and selective in its refugee policies. For example, Chris, a former Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) Member with decades of refugee experience, succinctly described this situation:

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<sup>14</sup> There are many different ways that citizenship is being reconfigured. Some examples of this include: 1. An official “crackdown” to revoke citizenship from supposed “frauds” in the last year (Gora 2013; Hall 2013). 2. The re-definition of “permanent resident” by introducing “a two-year period of conditional permanent residence for spouses and partners who are in a relationship for two years or less with their sponsor and have no children in common at the time of the sponsorship application” (CIC 2012). 3. Much harder citizenship tests, resulting in a significant increase in failure rates (especially for family class immigrants) (McKie 2013). 4. The newfound ability to deny entry for visitors based on “public policy reasons”, giving further power to the Citizenship and Immigration Minister (Payton 2012). 5. Automatic deportation for non-Canadian criminals serving a sentence over 6 months (CCR 2013; Payton 2012). 6. Changes to the point system, specifically mandating a minimum language proficiency and reducing the value of work experience in order to prioritize certain classes of immigrants (Levitz 2012). 7. The revoking of citizenship of dual-citizens who are determined to be engaged in “terrorism acts” (Palmer 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Informants identified by first names only are pseudonyms unless otherwise specified; further details about informants are in Section 2.3.

And you know, we've never had such a difficult minister [referring to Jason Kenney]. We've never had a minister who seems to take such initiative and strategize to such an extent to not have refugees in Canada. I mean, it doesn't matter in the past—liberal or conservative governments: nobody has gone to this extent to try and stop refugees. It's really unprecedented, to the point where the minister has delegates in Hungary, handing out leaflets saying "Don't come to Canada, you guys are not refugees". I mean, how can you—the Cabinet Minister—do something like that? It's completely unheard of. (Interview 2012)

That someone with such extensive experience within the IRB system is calling the current trends "unprecedented" in regards to how Canada is trying to stop Romani refugees from entering demonstrates the severity of the situation. It illustrates not only the very real obstacle official policies, discourse, and other factors impose through obstructing entry as interdiction measures, but also some of the ramifications people experience. For example, national discourse is thus altered regarding who is considered included and/or excluded from Canada. This exclusionary trend has been exacerbated and justified by security concerns post-9/11, economic uncertainty, and crime rates. Chapter 4 further explores such processes, which commonly and negatively correlate with immigration concerns in the public imagination and media despite a lack of evidence.

Restrictive policies are often paralleled by physical barriers. Considering how commonplace the creation of walls and boundaries have become as part of the definitions and (un)makings related to identity, I find it useful to consider the words of the poet Robert Frost, who here describes the danger of erecting firm boundaries:

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know /  
 what I was walling in or walling out /  
 and to whom I was like to give offense. /  
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall /  
 that wants it down<sup>16</sup>.

Borders have become such a seemingly natural occurrence that the only acceptable debate seems to be how firm they should or should not be—not whether they should exist

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<sup>16</sup> His poem, "The Mending Wall" was first published in his 1914 collection of poems entitled *North of Boston* (not included in the Bibliography).

at all. For example, open borders movements (along with similar groups such as No One Is Illegal) represent only a very small percentage of people worldwide, despite otherwise compelling arguments<sup>17</sup>. Although Frost's poem is making an argument through a somewhat humorous non-dispute between neighbours regarding apple orchards and pine territory, ultimately, its narrator's critical perspective questions our tendency to rely on past actions as sufficient justification for continuing them.

He will not go behind his father's saying /  
and he likes having thought of it so well /  
He says again, 'good fences make good neighbors'.

This, then, is the crux of many of border and citizenship issues: the premise that a perceived history of a strong border makes a strong nation is so deeply ingrained there is little consideration of any alternatives. Consider the last time any nation's leader or politician made a call for more porous borders, or suggested removing them altogether. Although specific arguments can be heard regarding easing immigration requirements for certain categories of people, such propositions almost always go hand-in-hand with strengthened or tightened requirements for others and heavily focus on the economics of immigration (i.e., how it can benefit 'us'). And so, as Canada revises its policies regarding who is allowed within its borders, it is necessary to emphasize that any definition of citizenship is exclusionary by nature, simultaneously reproducing, reinforcing, and creating definitions of who is considered included—and excluded—from belonging to the nation-state.

Such boundary studies are a traditional bailiwick of anthropology (Barth 1969; 2000; 2007), and neo-Boasian conceptualizations (e.g., Bashkow 2004) can contribute to a better understanding for how boundary processes work in relation to identity; Chapter 2 explores this discussion and its related concepts. How Canada responds to and defines refugees is related to other concepts, such as sovereignty and governance, both of which influence and have major impacts on citizens and Others alike. Immigration systems are

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<sup>17</sup> Most frequently, publications on open border issues revolve around economics, such as Kennan (2013) and Smith (2012), although there are works focusing on the morality, legality, and other aspects of making a case for open borders. Nonetheless, even many pro-refugee and immigration advocates do not call for or debate the possibilities of completely open borders.



fairly obvious demonstrations of these intersecting planes, yet refugee systems are sometimes only framed as a self-contained side-bar to larger immigration matters. Such a perspective is narrow-sighted, as refugee issues extend far beyond their specific policies. Accepting, rejecting, and defining refugees are processes that incorporate citizenship laws, sovereignty issues, domestic policies, and more. How a nation-state defines and implements refugee status serves as a critical example for its own national self-identification. State policies also inform us about political discourse and relations with other sovereign states. Examining these kinds of representations and more, especially through the respective chapter themes of history, media, and advocacy, lets us gain further understanding regarding how people relate to such governing agents, as well as to each other and other groups.

Part of the challenge in discussing the idea of boundaries for any group regards how to reconcile disparate and differing identities within a single label or identity (examined in Section 2.1). Sharp examined this in his own work, wrestling with the general dichotomies of identity processes for the Nama as they asserted their ethnicity in a South African context (1997; 1994). Even as Sharp and Boonzaier (1994) argued the continuity of Nama identity through time was not actually true (one aspect of the dichotomy), Sharp emphasized how identity processes are composed of varying components including social realities, imagined identities, and imagined conceptualizations (1997:10). Therefore, my discussions exploring the (sometimes opposing) perspectives of Romani identity processes do not trivialize or undermine any Romani rights for political or other representation based on shared/collective identities.

Another goal of this project was to challenge representations of homogeneity in identities, histories, media portrayals, and movements. The intention of such a challenge questions categories overall, especially considering the multiple ways that identities (such as imposed by government or ascribed by individuals) can be negotiated and lived out in varying and dynamic situations. There are disjunctures, contradictions, juxtapositions, inclusions, and exclusions all happening concurrently on various levels, by multiple actors, in different circumstances: there is no “one size fits all” label. For example, despite popular notions, Roma are not all foreigners or newcomers to Canada, as many

have long family histories here. Yet they continue to be positioned simply as outsiders, which in turn affects their experiences and senses of self. A “Canadian” label extends beyond residence or legal status, and thus can include *and* exclude Roma. Thus, labels have implications for all people, especially for but not limited to non-majority groups who are in some way excluded from the centre of identity definitions and enactments (e.g., all “visible minorities”<sup>18</sup>).

Very early on in my research, I worried about the disparate responses and views regarding identity expressed by various informants. One question in particular, “what does it mean to be Romani/Gypsy?”, remains largely without consensus. From a newcomer Romani refugee claimant, I was told that it means little—it is a label that others have imposed on her and her son without any action or agency on her part. From another Romani newcomer, I was told that it is the essential foundation that guides her life, regarding family, ideology, and more. From a Romani-Canadian, I was told that it is something he strives to live everyday through music, art, teachings, and more. From another Romani-Canadian, I was told that it has been an embarrassment and something to be hidden. At first, I struggled to see how I could incorporate all of these perspectives and more without undermining the belief of many Roma that a collective identity is critical and necessary for understanding the various processes and situations in which they are immersed and acting upon. However, I came to the realization that this example serves as further proof that this kind of zero sum game does not work when discussing identities. That some people experience the same identity or label differently (even to such extreme variations) only means that it is all the more important to understand the contexts and processes at work in each circumstance.

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<sup>18</sup> This is an official category of the Canadian government. “This category includes persons who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour and who do not report being Aboriginal” (StatCan 2012).

## 1.2 Between “a certain shared experience” and “making an impossible list”: Bridging Romani perspectives

One of the main difficulties in any work detailing the experiences and beliefs of a group is the definition of that group. In this case, the questions—who are Roma? What makes someone Romani? What is Canada/being Canadian?—cannot ever be fully adequately answered (partially evidenced by the scores of academic literature existing on this very debate, as well as continued arguments of Roma and Canadians themselves on the matter): this is because the answers depend on each person’s context, feelings, and perspectives. As Hames-Garcia (2011) points out in making his “case for multiplicity”, certain identity aspects emerge, are created, and/or are submerged all depending on who the actors are in any given circumstance—this does not make some aspects more true/false than others, nor create a situation where enacting one aspect negates another. Yet the blurred lines that do exist between these questions are often a cause for much discussion and argument between Roma and non-Roma alike. Such debates do offer insights towards how people actively, passively, or otherwise engage with reshaping their identities in different circumstances.

This section’s title comes from two of the ways that Romani community members articulated a sense of what it means to be Romani even while acknowledging influence by external forces such as Canadian policy and Canadian identity processes. The first, “a certain shared experience”, is given below, described as pertaining to how being Canadian has affected Livia’s experience as a Romani activist.

Julianna: You just referred to Canadian society—what does that mean? Is there a particular Canadian identity?

Livia: No. I think it’s really important...particularly if you identify as a white anti-racist activist like I do, to constantly be challenging the idea of a Canadian identity. So, no, I don’t think that there is. But I think it’s important for us to challenge whether or not who is represented by that, as consciousness-raising, all the time. You know, I do think there are cultural similarities from having a certain shared experience. Like for example, someone just described middle-class culture to me as “imagine if both your parents were teachers and what your life would be like if you had been brought up with your parents as teachers and that’s what having the

middle-class lifestyle means”. And I was like, “Oh. Okay. That would be different, okay, I get that”. [*Laughs*] So yeah, I think that there are certain privileges that are from growing up a white person with access to education in the Canadian context, but I don’t think there’s a common Canadian identity.

Julianna: So does it mean anything, to be Canadian?

Livia: Well, it means I have access to good passport...[I’m able to] recognize the privilege that comes with the Canadian identity, right? I don’t have to worry about being deported, I can travel almost anywhere, I have access to basic healthcare, I was able to get student loans. I am essentially in the global 1%, even though I made just \$3,000 over the Canadian poverty line last year... You need to be accountable to the government for being Canadian, but other than that [*trails off*]. (Interview 2012)

Livia first resisted the notion that any kind of Canadian identity truly exists, then noted that there is a process of cultural similarity from experiencing similar situations or experiences, especially with reference to class issues. She concluded by identifying the most pertinent aspects, to her, of the Canadian identity experience as related to practicalities (passports, healthcare, etc.). Livia is very cognizant of her own arguments, making a sophisticated argument that identities emerge and are contingent on particular contexts.

The other half of this section’s title, “an impossible list”, is a reference to another Romani community member’s perspective on how Canada affects Romani definitions and identity processes. The exchange below, between myself, James, and his wife, Monica, happened after I posed a question involving a past incident between the IRB and the RCC. During one of the first large “waves” of Romani refugees in the late 1990s/early 2000s, the IRB requested a list of characteristics from the RCC that would assist in identifying ‘authentic’ Romani cases, such as skin colour, language, clothing style, etc. Many Romani community members understood that the IRB was not interested in an actual

understanding of what it means to be Romani, but rather an efficient means of being able to disqualify refugee claims<sup>19</sup>.

James: Oh yes, that was back when I was working with— [*interrupted*]

Monica: [*laughing*] How could they do that?

James: They wanted, like, a language, or—

Monica: That would be really hard.

James: It's impossible. It's impossible.

Monica: I mean, can you make a list of things that would describe an Italian?

James: No, of course not. (Interview 2011)

As evidenced by both participants above, the very idea of making a checklist of attributes that could accurately and comprehensively identify Roma (or anyone, really) is both impossible and laughable. This is especially true for Roma because it is well known in the community that Roma vary widely in almost all possible human ways. Due to their long history and traditions of adapting to local regions, they have no single physical characteristic (such as skin, eye, or hair colour<sup>20</sup>), no single religion<sup>21</sup>, no single language<sup>22</sup>, no single livelihood/skill-set, or no single cultural rule or norm that each and

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<sup>19</sup> Such disqualifications are not uncommon, as the IRB process depends on the fulfillment of a refugee definition and the credibility of the refugee's story. If ethnicity is the basis of the claim (which fulfills the refugee definition if persecution targeting that ethnic group is proven), then ethnicity may be questioned and contested. Walter, a lawyer who has worked extensively with Romani claimants, described to me an incident when a Board Member actually ruled that the claimant was "too black" to be Romani and rejected the refugee claim (Interview 2010). Walter was actually quite happy with the ruling, since it made his job much easier when appealing the ruling, which was eventually granted. However, the fact that such rulings take place at all is worrisome, especially since there are well-founded grounds to believe that Romani clients are often served by incompetent representatives who are not able or willing to appeal such decisions. This is part of the subject of an ongoing project (Rehaag, Beaudoin, and Danch, unpublished data).

<sup>20</sup> This is perhaps now infamously better known because of the recent news cycle regarding the Irish and Greek Romani families who had police take away their children simply because they did not "look" Romani. One of the girls was frequently referred to as a "blond angel" who was "kidnapped by Gypsies" (Borev 2013; Doughty 2013). In reality, many Romani families have blond and blue-eyed children, and all of the children focused on in these newspaper stories were eventually proven through genetic testing to be Romani (Kirby 2013; Labropoulou et al. 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Some Roma claim Kali Sara (*Sara e Kali*), or Saint Sarah, as their traditional patron saint or basis of religion, but Roma can be found practising every major religion (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hindu, etc.).

<sup>22</sup> Romani/Romanes is the root language that forms the basis for different Romani dialects, but they can vary widely, and it is also widely acknowledged that many Roma do not speak it at all because of regional

every one follows. Yet, a shared identity does exist, one that does regularly exclude non-Roma (sometimes called *gadje*<sup>23</sup>) with fairly rigid boundaries; often, this identity process relies heavily on shared experiences of persecution, although other aspects also inform a collective sense of Romani identity. It is interesting to examine how these processes are enacted, expressed, and affected by individuals' and collective histories, the media and the general public, and community motivations and actions such as advocacy.

It is important to emphasize here that the two examples above are not oppositional to one another, despite the fact that one describes cultural similarities based on “a certain shared experience” and the other dismisses the very idea that a list of any set of characteristics could be sufficient for defining any identity. Livia is likewise resistant to the idea that something like “Canadian” as an adjective or noun can substantially carry any definition beyond its related documentation that is enforced and recognized by authorities like the state. Therefore they can both be understood as arguing for the necessity of context when examining any label at all, especially one as complicated and nuanced as a Romani one, which must necessarily consider both their diversity and similarities. Sharp reminds us that “it is important to remember that (even distorted) representations are part of social reality — a level of reality which incorporates the ideas, beliefs and models that people hold about ‘what is real’. However ‘mistaken’ they may be, these ideas and beliefs can, and do, have significant material and social consequences” (1997:7). According to Stewart, any generic identity (especially those based on folkloric images of a unified Romany people) encompassing Roma can be considered fantasy (2013:423). Furthermore, such a homogenous identity label “ultimately acts as a smokescreen for the real work of identification that has been carried out by police forces and state officials who...have put so much effort into determining who is and who is not ‘a Gypsy’” (Stewart 2013:423). Yet, this seeming disjuncture or tension resulting from identity

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policies (for example, forbade it upon death) and thus was lost in certain generations or families. These points are discussed later in the dissertation.

<sup>23</sup> This term is sometimes used pejoratively, and its use is debated by Roma (some use it, others do not, some use it in very specific circumstances, etc.).

processes may have beneficial consequences. For example, from the perspectives of young Romani activists, there is “a potentially liberating insight: the history of the Gypsies is as much a history of those who classified people as ‘Gypsy’ as it is of those thus labeled” (Stewart 2013:423). Gelbart, a Romani scholar, similarly emphasizes her own work as “Gadjology”, a script-flip intended to provoke critical questions by instead focusing research on non-Romani perspectives, actions, and ideologies (2011). The same sentiment—that differing definitions are actually “liberating” for Romani advocates—was echoed by many of the informants I have spoken with in Canada. These seemingly contradictory perspectives are not limiting, but rather enlightening. When we can move beyond a binary classification system and consider the many ways of being Romani in different contexts, then we can understand more fully some of the repercussions of categories as applied to people.

Both Livia and James, whose excerpts make up this section’s title, are Roma who were born in Canada. However, newcomer Romani perspectives are also critical for understanding how Romani identities are created, defined, and influenced. The fact that newcomer Roma are escaping immediate violence (and thus have perhaps different priorities) further complicate this process. Elena, a newcomer Romani refugee claimant from the Czech Republic, explained her views regarding Romani identity:

Here in Canada, there’s multiple countries, there is no difference between yellow, black, white—it’s all human beings. 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.

And many [Canadians] who don’t know too much about the Gypsy, they ask “But you are white. You don’t have dark skin or something. Who can tell you are Gypsy?” And in Europe, just how you are—right away they know. What *you* see my father, you might see his blue eyes, but *they* know. Even if you start to talk, they know, probably by the accent or something. They know. (Interview 2011, emphasis based on tone)

Elena did not perceive any disjuncture in her views, despite the two above statements seemingly arguing different things. For example, in the first statement, she describes how non-racist Canada is (“all human beings”), yet in the second she recounts how she has

continually faced incredulous questions from Canadians who do not believe she is actually Romani, due to her lack of “dark skin”. However, there is no disjuncture because both experiences are true for her. Canada, comparatively, offers a place where people do not single her out and/or harass her family on a daily basis by those making negative presumptions regarding her ethnic identity, as in Europe. Conversely, she faces an uphill battle in convincing Canadians (for example, IRB personnel) that she is ‘truly’ and/or ‘visibly’ Romani in her home country and thus singled out for persecution. For example, she references her father’s blue eyes as a supposed non-marker of Romani identity for non-Roma. Here, Elena is not negating any others’ experiences in Canada as minorities or as Romani individuals who have been singled out because of their ethnic identities. Rather, her words demonstrate the complex realities reflecting how cultural and systemic processes (like racism) become ingrained and expressed in different contexts, as well as how they are perceived differently by different individuals (despite, perhaps, still sharing a form of collective identity).

Following this train of thought, a Canadian-Romani informant, Lily, stated the following regarding Canadian beliefs, reception, and actions regarding ethnic minorities:

Lily: Well yes, [Romani] is an ethnicity, and people don’t understand that it is an ethnicity. I think that as long as Roma have been silent—you’ll notice any ethnic group, for instance, Aboriginal groups who were very silent, they were all on the reserves, they were not allowed to speak out, they were totally colonized and trampled, so they did not really have a voice across the country. And now they do, and things are starting to change. You can’t have those assumptions about people anymore. And the same with the black people in the states, African-Americans, and African-Canadians, and I would say, the same with Palestinians, who, you know, have been actually and who were, I think, fairly well-educated considering the circumstances, and who are very politicized as well. I would say the same thing about South Africans in South Africa, before the apartheid state was smashed. When you have people who are colonized and pushed into the most dire circumstances, when they have a voice, what happens is, there are assumptions made about those kind of people, and those assumptions of course are made on— *[long pause]*

Julianna: A vacuum of information?



Lily: Yes! And it's what the colonial power would have you believe about an ethnic group, or in the case of Roma, what the dominant culture has you believe about the ethnic group, that is then conveyed to people who don't know any better. They might be well-educated, they might be politically aware, they might be all kinds of things that you would otherwise respect, but if the power dynamic, the power dynamic— [pause] It's about silence. 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 takes generations to start changing things, for example, right now we're getting a more powerful voice but it's not nearly enough. (Interview 2012)

Lily's words encompass some of the key historical, media, and advocacy issues that this dissertation discusses. Here, it is especially interesting to pay attention to her focus on how Canada operates regarding the people within its borders. What does it mean to belong to a nation that does not allow your voice to be heard (and purposefully tries to silence you)? How does this affect the process through which you identify with your community and larger society? Another issue Lily brings to the forefront of the discussion is a positive connection—albeit through the generally understood negative framework of colonialism—to Indigenous, Native, and/or Aboriginal groups, as well as other oppressed groups. This ended up being a common occurrence and connection that Roma frequently made—usually as a learning experience or hopeful model for their own group (for example, one of the reactions to the very first quote at the beginning of this chapter is another example of this).

Both Elena and Lily—though approaching their views of Canada from very different experiences and backgrounds—share similarities in describing how systematic and subtle certain kinds of discrimination can work (e.g., assumptions of ethnic identities, colonial ideologies passed on through generations), as well as how overt actions like persecution and threats after speaking up can alter how people see themselves. Again, neither of these excerpts is oppositional to the other, despite seemingly different messages. Rather, it is, as Lily began to explain, about finding one's voice, both as an individual and as an ethnicity/group, of which neither need be contradictory or holistic.

When discussing some of the complicated reactions and beliefs of any member of a group, as this work does, it may be tempting—but utterly erroneous—to ascribe such thinking to the rest of that group. Take anthropologists (or any other occupation) as an example: there is no consensus among all members within the discipline, despite the fact that its inclusion/ascription requires actively opting in. The case may be argued that no one is simply born and recognized from there out as an anthropologist, and furthermore, that the act of voluntarily taking on that identity later in life is not necessarily affiliated with sharing a core set of beliefs with other anthropologists. Interestingly, I found a similar comparison and/or warning in one of Darnell’s works regarding the “fuzziness” when examining shared senses of solidarity: “The problem of social cohesion among an amorphous agglomeration of individuals sharing a profession cannot be tied to any single unifying characteristic. We anthropologists imagine ourselves to constitute a community, but most of us do not know one another or ever expect to do so” (2006:213). As one is thus hard-pressed to create any kind of meaningful, firm boundary for even a chosen, professional identity such as anthropologist, why does there remain a persistent notion that people belonging to an often involuntary assignment such as ethnicity (in this case, Romani) hold fast to a uniting or shared identity and/or worldview? For example, being born with a vaguely-defined physical attribute (such as skin colour) does not coincide with any shared worldview for any group<sup>24</sup>; ethnicity (related to but more complex than a simple perception or labeling of physical/racial attributes) also neither creates nor depends on a single mindset of all of its members for its label to both exist and have meaning. Although Chapter 2 examines this further, it is worthwhile emphasizing here that ethnicity is not a consistent or fixed kind of category in any way; how people define various ethnicities depends entirely on the specific temporal, geographic, personal/individualistic, socio-cultural, and other contexts.

The issues raised in this introduction emphasize the complex and problematic processes within which Roma are engaged in Canada. A minor encounter involving Hungarian refugees at the RCC who defied our expectations as to who seeks refuge—and how

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<sup>24</sup> Discrimination and persecution by external agents are frequently the result of perceived physical differences, but this experience depends entirely on context; all individuals’ experiences of this differ.

communities respond to such needs—helps us understand that homogenizing and essentializing bounded groups of people without context does disservice to all involved. There are consequences for Roma when they are racialized and stereotyped; this affects all levels of identity making and unmaking for Roma and non-Roma. I believe it is necessary to thus plainly state that Roma, simply, are human beings—an obvious fact, but powerful, especially considering there are those who believe otherwise<sup>25</sup>—and this research thus does include issues that may be contentious to some Romani and/or non-Romani individuals. Nonetheless, it is important to examine and bring to light some of the tensions that exist around and/or within the Romani community as they confirm *and* challenge identities, as such tensions can demonstrate the significance and weight of Romani experiences and struggles for recognition (especially in light of fear of persecution). These topics are not in any way intended to negatively reflect or represent the Romani community as a whole. It is these points that I encourage the reader to keep in mind as Chapter 2 explores critical concepts that frame the rest of the dissertation.

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<sup>25</sup> It is not an exaggeration to state that some people do not believe Roma are fully human beings. Beyond examples of heinous crimes committed by neo-Nazis who actively target Roma for extermination and who frequently use non-human adjectives and identifiers, there are those who believe Roma are sub-human and treat them accordingly. See Section 4.3, dealing with media discourse/examples, for references.

## Chapter 2 – Theoretical landscape

Do I contradict myself? Very well, then I contradict myself, I am large, I contain multitudes. (Walt Whitman, 1855, “Song of Myself” in *Leaves of Grass*)

This chapter provides context for some of the theoretical concepts that I found valuable in examining my main questions. As stated in the introduction, this dissertation focuses on how Romani identities are shaped in Canada, especially focusing on how Romani identities are continually made/unmade, over time, and in particular situations. Roma are actively engaged with representations of themselves, especially in relation to tensions with state institutions and society (often in opposition to popular portrayals of Gypsies). Identities and representations are thus sometimes separated for the purposes of analytical clarity, despite being recognized as deeply intertwined processes, affected by individual and collective relationships. Both of these processes change over time and are dependent on perspective, emphasizing my point that there is no single essentialized Romani identity. Individual Romani experiences may even clash with other individuals’ perspectives. Such scenarios are further complicated by individual and collective identity processes which can downplay—or assert—specific characteristics. Whitman, in the epigraph above, is not concerned about such supposed contradictions in his own self; he understands that within us all, multitudes exist. In the same way, this dissertation is not concerned by any perceived disjunctures between Romani identities or representations. Instead, differences between individual identities provide insight into how collective senses of identity emerge from diverse historical contexts (examined in Chapter 3), contemporary experiences and stereotypes (examined in Chapter 4), and future-looking projects such as advocacy (examined in Chapter 5).

The concepts and processes explored in this chapter provide background on the seemingly paradoxical processes whereby internal differences can be emphasized even as collective identities can be reinforced through shared experiences and goals. This chapter is broken into three sub-sections. The first explores some of the necessary concepts for understanding the makings and unmaking of individual and collective Romani identities in Canada, including definitions of ethnicity, community, governance, and a background

on the refugee system in Canada. The second section explores Romani identities specifically, providing a contextualized understanding of the concepts related to representation processes. In particular, I explore the concepts of authenticity and stereotypes with relevance to Romani narratives and examples. Finally, the third section covers my own experiences and the methodology I used.

Roma are under- and mis-represented; their experiences highlight some of the on-going struggles, inequalities, and challenges that immigrants and refugees generally face in Canada. I posit that the idea of a boundary (or “wall”) has been erected and reproduced in various ways, creating the myth that Roma do not belong to Canada (using Razack’s (1999; 2000) conceptualizations regarding definitions of being “Canadian”). Roma are often positioned as foreigners or outsiders to Canada, despite having ancestors who lived here prior even to Canada’s existence as a nation-state<sup>26</sup>. Therefore, in popular conceptions, there is a perceived and erroneous distinction made based on cultural dissonance between Roma and Canada. In the introduction of a science fiction novel, Le Guin<sup>27</sup> begins by describing such a so-called boundary between two worlds:

There was a wall. It did not look important. It was built of uncut rocks roughly mortared. An adult could look right over it, and even a child could climb it. Where it crossed the roadway, instead of having a gate it degenerated into mere geometry, a line, an idea of a boundary. But the idea was real. It was important. For seven generations there had been nothing in the world more important than that wall.

Like all walls it was ambiguous, two-faced. What was inside it and what was outside it depended upon which side of it you were on. (1974:1)

Le Guin’s conceptualization of a seemingly minor or unimportant wall being instead both significant—as a lived idea and reality—and as “two-faced” and a contextually-

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<sup>26</sup> Canada officially became a nation in 1867 when the British Empire united its colonies together in the Constitution Act, although the British Empire retained political control over many aspects of the new country. Chapter 3 explores the historical evidence demonstrating Romani presence in the 1800s.

<sup>27</sup> Ursula Le Guin, famed science-fiction author, is the daughter of noted cultural anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber (himself a student of Franz Boas), and her works purposefully intertwine social science notions of identity and social structures, often also critically examining concepts like gender and race. *The Dispossessed*, the novel quoted here, won both the prestigious Nebula and Hugo awards.

dependent object builds on Chapter 1's reference to Frost's perspective on "unnatural" walls. Anytime, it seems, a wall is created, it becomes impossible to dis sever definitions of belongings from that of exclusions. In the case of Canada, any policy or discourse intended to keep Roma outside of the Canadian border (or simply keep them distinguished from the 'majority' within its borders) simultaneously defines what it means to be Canadian, even if such policies do not seem overtly relevant to the majority of its citizens. Indeed, asking informants to define what it meant to be Canadian garnered as ambiguous definitions as when I asked what it meant to be Romani. There is clearly significant ambivalence regarding Canadian borders and belongings, referring to Anderson's issue with such national "imagined communities" (1991). Hoerder's work examining "the study of Canada" to "Canadian studies" similarly finds it troubling to nail down precisely Canadian identity as a nation-state, citizen, area of study, or more (2010). Countless articles and research projects critically questioning "Canadianness" continue to be undertaken (e.g., Bannerji 2007; Byers 2011; Howard-Hassmann 1999; Hutcheon 2007; Moodley and Adam 2012; Mahtani 2006; Sojka 2007; Winter 2011), demonstrating the persistence of its ambiguity as well as the need to constantly evaluate such identity processes in different contexts<sup>28</sup>. It is here that anthropology can especially contribute to these studies, as it contains the ability to provide perspective on how people experience their worlds simply through listening to people's narratives (Bertaux and Thompson 1993; Briggs 2007; Gubriem and Holstein 2009).

Representations of both Canada and Roma often contain many assumptions. Confirming any precise notion of Canadianness is complicated even further when we reflect on Canada's past. For example, despite popular notions or beliefs, Roma today are not *only* newcomers: many have long and rich histories here. Certainly, many proponents of stricter immigration, refugee, and citizenship laws (for a reinforced Canadian wall) neglect to consider fully their own ambivalence in regards to belonging to Canada;

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<sup>28</sup> Another medium through which this kind of examination has been critically undertaken includes performance theatre. See Appleby et al. (2011) for an explanation of and full script for the play *Hold the Boat (Or, The Canadian Way)*. They state that "Canada, like many nations, has a 'brand' identity: it is seen as an all-welcoming country willing to accept one and all—an overly-generalized image we wanted to challenge" (2011:99).

anyone without First Nations or Native American histories can be positioned just as easily on the opposite side of such a geographically imposed wall. As Geschiere explores, the notion of autochthony when intertwined with citizenship is a perilous relationship, depending on varying senses of belonging and exclusions (Geschiere 2009; Geschiere and Jackson 2006). This, then, returns us to a demonstration of one aspect of Le Guin's emphasis on context and perspective: which side of the wall are you viewing from, and how do you envision the purpose of the wall? As Chapter 3 examines, Roma are frequently and unambiguously positioned as historical outsiders, existing outside a supposedly well-defined Canadian wall. Such a forced and simplistic perspective on this complex relationship is also relevant for many other "visible minorities"<sup>29</sup> in Canada as well, which Chapter 4 explores in relation to media. One notable and recent example of this includes the reception and actions towards "boat people" in general (Beiser 1999; Gale 2004; Pugh 2004), and specifically the Tamils arriving on the *Sun Sea* in 2010 (Krishnamurti 2013; Neve and Russell 2011; Rygiel 2012). Razack has also thoroughly investigated how Canada regulates its borders with racialized policies; these policies are then further reinforced through individual performances that are part of a "national story of belonging, a story in which people of colour are marked as degenerate and white subjects are the bearers of culture and civilization" (1999:159).

Such positionings can be partially understood through critical explorations of how the state has monopolized legitimate movements or migration overall (Torpey 2000). Indeed, the restrictions and subsequent permitting of certain people to move or migrate is not an inherent nation-state right or definition; nothing is intrinsically natural to a state or nation-state, being as they are both concepts created, enacted, and altered by human beings. For example, Mountz explores this governance of geography through detention and asylum practices and demonstrates how such state-controlled mobility processes contribute to exclusion ontologies (2010; 2011a; 2011b). Rather, the ability to move across place has been purposefully co-opted by the state in its own version of narratives and identity, to the extent that, nowadays, people usually do not even question the right of

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<sup>29</sup> Roma are frequently positioned as "visible minorities" or as "non-white", but this is not the case for every Roma. See Section 1.2 and/or Footnotes 18 and 19 for more explanation.

any government to enact or impose laws regarding their own (or others) movements. Torpey's analysis of the development of passports as a control apparatus demonstrates how the idea of a nation-state is institutionalized "as a prospectively homogenous ethnocultural unit" (2000:1). This is relevant to the complex issues we witness with Roma, who are a diverse group often represented homogeneously and juxtaposed with a particular conceptualization of Canada—also a diverse group often represented homogeneously (albeit in different ways than Roma), as per "imagined" (Anderson 1991) national identities.

It is then worthwhile to question why Roma are so frequently singled out or denied access to various kinds of belongings (depending on the specific region). As McGarry summarizes, Roma "have a legitimate claim to under-representation, [and] they have been historically excluded from political rights, seen as unfit to rule and have experienced mistrust with non-Roma" (2010:34). He goes on to describe that "the need to create organizing structures of representation in the domestic and transnational political contexts on the one hand affirms Roma's lack of voice and, on the other, acts as a conduit through which Roma can articulate their interests" (McGarry 2010:34). These points highlight the supposed conflicting or paradoxical nature of relations when we specifically examine Roma within Canada, as well as highlight again the variability of identity significance and interpretation depending on situation. Taking this a step further, it is important to acknowledge the fact that when Roma are able to create their own structures (as explored in Chapter 5), these same questions regarding representation and legitimate movements do not cease to exist. The same influencing factors, such as inequalities and power imbalances, do not disappear: instead, it is all the more critical to examine and understand what is happening within and outside of Romani-run or focused groups as they navigate historical, media, political, and other kinds of landscapes.

## 2 Conceptual frameworks

'Identity' is an abstract and slippery concept that merits explanation of its use in this work before I proceed any further. Brubaker and Cooper state that "if identity is everywhere, it is nowhere" (2000:1), in their argument for eschewing the use of identity,



overall, as an analytical concept. They have many good points, and I agree that identity is “riddled with ambiguity, riven with contradictory meanings, and encumbered by reifying connotations” (Brubaker and Cooper 2000:34). However, as with scholars such as Yuval-Davis (2010) and Csergo (2008), I believe that identity—albeit an abstract, complicated, and socially constructed term—remains a valuable concept in research, and that “groupless scholarly language...is neither possible nor necessarily beneficial” (Csergo 2008:395). In this way, we can understand identity as relatively useless, as per Brubaker and Cooper, but only when not given detailed and specific context. This section is therefore an attempt to situate how and why identity is framed to understand its usefulness as a term in this project.

Furthermore, some scholars argue that there is a significant difference between ‘identity’ and the idea of identity politics. The transition from examining the concept of individual identities to forms of collective identities necessitates an exploration of the terms in relation to their boundaries and dynamics. Identity generally refers to who a person is (whether believed by themselves, believed by others, etc.), usually in relation to perceived or believed similarities or affinities with others; it is not uncommon to hear of the “hat analogy”, wherein different hats reflect the different identities a single person may apply in different circumstances. Identity politics, in contrast, is much as it sounds: the interplay of multiple identity dynamics as negotiated and (re)defined by varying agents in response to political or social interests. The term “identity politics” was coined in the 1970s, and references the collective activism borne by experiences by members of specific minority groups (Diamond 2012:64). However, the term gained wider circulation in the 1980s as a response to the social injustice, widespread prejudice, and even assault people faced because of their identity characteristics (for example, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, nationality) (Diamond 2012:64). As such, identity politics thus often means working proactively for specific and/or full legal and social recognitions (Diamond 2012:64).

However, by the 1990s, post-structuralists and others argued instead that the ‘identity’ within identity politics should not be understood as an intrinsic, changeless, or absolute truth regarding the self. Diamond explains how such a view understands identity as “a

construction of language, a necessary construction perhaps, but not an essence or a changeless truth. A politics based on identity...is far too narrow; it ignores the divisions of subjectivity, the unknowable aspects of consciousness, the vagaries and uncertainties of desire” (2012:64). Such a generalization of people based on their identities contributes to a capitalist exoticization of identities for corporate profit, as well as imitates the general intolerance of difference by those who persecute people based on specific characterizations or behaviours (Diamond 2012:64). Both of these tendencies are experienced by Roma who continue to be romanticized for profit (such as in television and film) while simultaneously vilified and persecuted; their identity politics includes these dynamics as they assert their own definitions and experiences in Canada.

Another consequence of postmodernist identity conceptualizations is summarized by Bernstein: “Thus, identity politics hardens rather than redefines differences in status identities that are the basis for inequality” (2005:56). Described as “ultimately essentialist”, identity politics—when understood as narrow and political activism—often fail to actually address the cultural base of power inequalities (Bernstein 2005:56). “Rather than being too cultural, identity politics is not cultural enough” (Vaid 1995, quoted by Bernstein 2005:56). Likewise, only examining activist or political Romani identity conceptualizations, although extremely important, would not reflect the full spectrum of Romani identities, experiences, and perspectives that exist in Canada.

Thus, some of the main concerns regarding the use of identity as a term include: its abstract nature, its omnipresence (devaluing its use as an analytic tool), its use as a fixed point or characteristic, its politics (whether intra-group or in relation to governmental dynamics), its colonial or exoticizing tendencies, and/or its contradictory definitions. However, I believe there remains a great deal of usefulness in focusing on identity, partially evoked by Whitman’s opening quote to this chapter (“I contradict myself...I contain multitudes”). Simply because something is contradictory does not mean it should be dismissed; identities are large and contain multitudes, as does every person. And since anthropology examines people in the past and present, it is in our best interest to continue examining identities, especially in relation to complex power dynamic processes (Hall 2006; Hall 1996) that include historical knowledge productions, media reproductions, and

advocacy efforts by individuals and communities. Yuval Davis states that “research on particular aspects of the daily experiences of particular groups of people in particular times/places can draw our attention to issues relating to the theorization of identity in a way that abstract, floating, generic reflections can never do” (2010:265). Therefore, it is important to ground these discussions on identity and related representation processes.

The following excerpt is reproduced from an email that was circulated in a Romani listserv<sup>30</sup>, which will help situate or ground these arguments within a Romani-specific perspective. Identities are clearly critical topics for people who are actively engaged in negotiating their rights (e.g., contesting external agents such as the government), as well as negotiating their own boundaries and definitions.

The word “Gypsy” has been ascribed to us by outsiders. We didn’t come up with that on our own. The word came from ignorance and has defined us by its use. Our own identity has been dictated to us by those who think they know us. They want us to be “Gypsies” because they have defined what that word means. They can control us, manipulate us, suppress us, and get rid of us.

Who are we? What is OUR definition of ourselves? What do we want? I think a part of the problem is that we have many different groups and individuals working on various projects, though I believe the end goals are very similar. [Name redacted] had a wonderful idea to bring a group of scholars together to learn about each other and see how we can support each other. Can we take this idea one step further?

If there are indeed 250 or so members here, what are each of us doing? Are some activists while others are teachers? Are there groups or individuals? Who are we and what are we doing? How can we communicate with each other? What are the goals of each group or individual? How can we help each other? Are there groups that could combine forces or alliances? I would love to know who else is here and what projects they are working on. If I can help anyone, I offer any assistance I can. Let us consider each goal of the members of this group

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<sup>30</sup> Excerpts from listservs have been reproduced with the permission of the author/writer. Some listservs are private (needing invitation to be a member) and others are semi-private (some threads are reproduced automatically on public pages online). Regardless of whether statements were public or not, I have always endeavoured to protect the identity of the writer.

and create a working body of people who can and will act to achieve our goals. (Correspondence 2012)

In this email, we can see an individual reaching out to a larger group to recognize the colonial aspects and consequences of labeling within identities *and* identity politics, and reacting to the need to work proactively for recognition of a new collective voice or concept. Many different varying levels of identities are raised and questioned, all with critical and insightful reflections regarding their possible benefits or negative consequences. This demonstrates even the maligned term “Gypsy” to be anything but a static identity, or even an all-encompassing or stifling definition; it provides a springboard for a thoughtful engagement with the lived struggles of a marginalized group, suggesting how to build on past efforts of mobilizations.

## 2.1 Making and unmaking individual and collective identities

As mentioned earlier, identity is a process, not a concrete thing, which is made, unmade, interpreted, and reinterpreted, all while being able to also rally people against injustices or around collective goals. Marginalized groups find it especially imperative to be able to express their own identities (whether individually or collectively), while actively contributing to their definitions (not being passive subjects who are defined by others).

Identity’s ambiguity is often reinforced through definitions that refer back to the term itself, such as “identity construction is the process of developing personal and/or social identities for the self, either by individuals or groups” (Rummens 2000, cited by Walsh and Krieg 2007:170). Identity overall is generally understood as something that provides “a definition, an interpretation of the self that established what and where the person is in both social and psychological terms” (Guibernau 1996:72; see also Gilroy 1997:301). This then helps the individual produce order in his or her own individual life while also helping place the individual within a group or collectivity (Guibernau and Rex 2010:4). Stated another way, identity is the interplay of one’s experiences of the world and his or her worldview formed in particular historical and cultural settings (Gilroy 1997:301).

Identities and boundaries are related concepts, and the literature on these topics is abundant: from Barth's understandings of how group boundaries in general are formed and reinforced (1969; 2000; 2007), to understandings of cultural boundaries (Bashkow 2004), and more. Others include national studies of boundaries (Cohen 2000; Fassin 2011), academic boundaries (Merry 2005), forms of legality or governance (Mountz 2010; Sandvik 2011; Vukov 2003), categories of various kinds (Zetter 2007), intersections of social status and ethnicities (Kumar et al. 2011; Levine-Rasky 2011); and gender and/or sexual categories (Kelly and Wossen-Taffesse 2012; McElhinny 2010; Razack 2005). This popularity may be because boundaries capture "a fundamental social process, that of relationality" (Lamont and Molnar 2002:169) in our search for understanding the distinction between symbolic and social boundaries. Symbolic boundaries can be considered ways through which social actors "categorize objects, people, practices, and even time and space", and the "tools by which individuals and groups struggle over and come to agree upon definitions of reality" (Lamont and Molnar 2002:168). This is linked with how people separate into groups and generate feelings of similarity and group membership: "an essential medium through which people acquire status and monopolize resources" (Lamont and Molnar 2002:168).

Moving even farther away from static categorical or bounded notions of identity, I appreciate Hall's approach to identity of a postmodern subject "conceptualized as having no fixed, essential, or permanent identity" (2006:250). In this sense, identity can be understood as a "moveable feast: formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems that surround us" (Hall 2006:250) and that "it is a matter of 'becoming' as well as 'being'" (Hall 1990:236). Within us are potential contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, all historically defined, since a "fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is a fantasy" (Hall 2006:251). We need to acknowledge this tension in order to understand what happens when people encounter resistance to others who conceptualize identity as more or less fixed categories.

There are further factors to consider when examining individual and/or collective identities. For example, if "identity is sustained by remembering and what is remembered

is defined by the assumed identity” (Gillis 1994:3), then one individual’s conceptualization and enactment of their own identity is necessarily enriched and complicated by recollections and/or memories. It is important to distinguish that “collective memory refers to recollections that are instantiated beyond the individual by and for the collective. Unlike personal memory, which refers to an individual’s ability to conserve information, the collective memory comprises recollections of the past that are determined and shaped by the group” (Zelizer 1995:214). This definition of collective memory is useful here, encompassing the multiple and varied processes of “sharing, discussion, negotiation, and, often, contestation” (Zelizer 1995:214).

Moreover, memory studies (Assmann 1995; Green 2004; Halbwachs 1950) consider how events and experiences are registered (carried), retained (shaped), and revisited (re-employed). This is particularly relevant regarding considerations of Romani identity when focusing on areas such as commemorations (Gillis 1994), archives, monuments, and more. As Olick and Levy specifically question regarding collective memory, “in what different ways can the remembered past constrain the present, and under what circumstances are such constraints transformable?” (1997:922). As different Romani individuals share their different memories and histories—or shared experiences—their sense of collective Romani identity is transformed and/or altered. This is particularly relevant when considering advocacy projects focused on recognition of past events (such as the Holocaust).

Memories and identity are interrelated, in that one implies the other. Identity is “formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems that surround us” (Hall 1994:598). The intersection between one’s experiences in the world with his/her worldview simultaneously forms with respect to one’s particular historical and cultural settings (Gilroy 1997), and as such, has great impact on individual and collective memories. At the same time that the Popular Memory Group in Great Britain was reorienting “oral historians towards the social and cultural contexts shaping memories of the past” (Green 2004:35), there was a parallel approach happening that emphasized “the fundamental constitutive role of language and cultural discourses in shaping individual interpretations of experience” (Green 2004:35). This

approach focused more on the wider social and cultural frameworks in which individuals remember. Along with the idea that “everything gains meaning, importance, and relevance through systems of language...[and] meaning cannot be separated from context or from the language used to make sense of both” (Pascale 2013, xiii), this contributes to how I witnessed Roma expressing their perspectives as they recalled events or circumstances in relation to their identity (examples of ethnographic narratives are explored in Chapter 3).

### 2.1.1 Ethnicity and community

Ethnicity is not the same as race; rather than being solely reliant on physical traits as race is, ethnicity refers to cultural identity. As with identities, there is neither a simple, single understanding of ethnicity, nor any set way to understand the hugely divergent and different ways in which people utilize it. Ethnicity is an etymologically recent term, and so this discussion may benefit from some historical context regarding its emergence, especially being as ethnicity is now one of the most highly studied and analyzed categorizations across disciplines and institutions (Cohen 1978:379–80; Eriksen 2002:1; Smaje 1997:307–08; Wilkinson 2011:344). At its most elemental definition, ethnicity is a categorical process that distinguishes groups of people based on characteristics including, but not limited to, phenomenology, language, religion, physical traits, ancestry, culture, and social norms (Eriksen 2002; Fenton 2003; Guibernau and Rex 2010).

Ethnicity as we understand it today arose out of a race paradigm shift: although coined earlier, it was in the 1960s, a time when new nation-states were forming and asserting independence, that ethnicity as a term grew out of anti-racist vocabulary in order to emphasize the *positive* feelings of cultural group belonging (Guibernau and Rex 2010, 1; Spoonley 1998). We can compare this to definitions of “race”, generally understood as an involuntary category of rigid, external ethnocentric characteristics mainly focused on physical/phenotypical attributes. However, it is important to emphasize that the idea of “race”—often posited as involuntary or fixed—has been quite flexible as a concept as well, being often based on lifestyles and histories (Brubaker 2009:26), as with ethnicities. Ratcliff notes, “it might be argued that ethnicity, rather than being essentially primordial, has more to do with situation or context...we have highly complex and multi-dimensional

ethnocultural identities” and that “different aspects of our identity (not necessarily rooted in heritage) emerge in different social contexts” (2004:28).

Ethnicity, as defined by Weber, is “those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type or of customs or of both, or because of memories of colonisation or migration” (1968 [1922]:389). Weber distinguished ethnic groups from biologically conceived “races”, and did not believe that shared ethnicity in and of itself inevitably led to group formation (rather, it could *facilitate* group formation), and also strongly emphasized the sense of the history in shaping ethnic groups (including memories of common past) (Guibernau and Rex 2010:2-3; Weber 1968 [1922]). This is important because such an understanding leads us away from primordial theories that sets out ethnicity as a “given” (Guibernau and Rex 2010:7) and instead points toward how ethnicity is a constructed term that depends on perspective. Thus, ethnicity can be a form of individual and/or collective imagined and/or enacted identities.

This is not, however, to say ethnicity—and its very real effects, including racism—are only abstracts or imagined. “Who we are is partly a product of our heritage, who we think we are and also how others perceive us. Boundaries are arguably the outcome of these negotiated constructs” (Ratcliff 2004:29). Ratcliff describes how skin pigmentation (as one example) does sometimes determine and constitute an immutable fact that influences whether people experience the full force of racism restricted to those who possess (or appear to possess) specific phenotypical characteristics (2004:29). In other words, despite race and ethnicity being flexible categories, there are circumstances wherein physical characteristics are non-negotiable<sup>31</sup>. However, even these circumstances are dependent on context. Sharp also redirects definitions and discussions of ethnicity away from presumptions of knowable “truths”, explaining that while “it is perfectly true that races do not exist ‘in nature’, it does not follow that people are race conscious simply by instrumental design or by mistake, or that races are not part of common social reality”

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<sup>31</sup> Ratcliffe’s relates an example wherein a ‘white’ person can associate with ‘black’ persons, but cannot assume a ‘black’ identity (2004:29).



(1997:8). Rather, such groupings are an example of the kinds of symbols that people use to construct, constitute, and reflect realities; in this way, however race and ethnicity are enacted, “it is misleading to think that ‘reality’ and ‘representation’ can be neatly separated” (Sharp 1997:8).

Therefore, which characteristics stand as markers of difference, and who is doing the deciding, are matters of perspective. Who is considered to be a member of any group varies depending on time, geography, worldview, and much more. These processes are even more complex when specifically invoking, defining, or challenging the circumstantial and varying power dynamics on individual and/or collective levels. The relevance of the complexity of these processes is embodied within Darnell’s description of how difference and similarities are frequently assumed and/or simplified regarding First Nations peoples when contrasted with majority groups: “I have never found that I had to go far away to encounter profound difference underlying superficial similarity. In southern Ontario, the majority of Native peoples live in cities rather than on reserves, more often eat pizza than moose, and speak English as their first, often only, language. What makes them distinct is far deeper than these surface markers of cultural identity” (2012:35–36).

I would like to relate one of my own fieldwork experiences, one that initially made me quite embarrassed, but upon reflection, helped me gain a better understanding for the diversity and flexibility of ethnic identity boundaries for Roma in Canada. Many members in the Romani community know me and greet me with hugs and kisses. Upon greeting two friends one day (Kate and Andre), both of whom I already knew, I was chagrined later in the day when Andre privately requested that we greet each other more formally. Kate had hugged me hello, which I had unthinkingly then reproduced with Andre. I had forgotten that Andre was, as he described himself, more “traditional” Romani. This meant that he held to certain cultural norms, including the fact that it was not proper for him to embrace women not related to him. There are in fact innumerable such traditions or cultural norms that are prioritized differently by various members of the Romani community. This goes beyond mere behavioural tendencies, in that Andre’s ethnic identity as Romani was reinforced through such beliefs. Yet, he simultaneously

shared a collective Romani ethnicity together with Kate and many others (including Romani men who greet women with hugs). They saw each other as equal members within an ethnic Romani community despite varying performances and beliefs regarding what that actually means in practice. For some, a strict Romani/non-Romani division is an act of affirming a positive ethnic identity, while others may find affirmation only in their reflections about shared history and/or persecution, not in contemporary cultural norms. As Darnell noted above, we cannot look for single cultural aspects, such as living in a certain region, eating a certain food, or speaking a certain language, and nor can we look for only specific or single ethnic feature. Rather, it is about personal understandings of existence and social continuity in individual and/or collective senses of identities. Such a perspective enables us to challenge any belief system wherein Romani ethnicity is based on a single characteristic; Lemon points out this tendency, saying, “it remains commonplace to define ‘Gypsy culture’ only by features or practices that seem to isolate Gypsies from a majority” (2000:3). Performing ethnic (or any other) identity regarding differences is an incredibly complex dynamic dependent on specific contexts, keenly summarized in the question “what kind of people do you think we are” (Theodosiou 2010); thus is it simplistic and erroneous to assume firm or arbitrary boundaries.

In response to a news article about how the Romani community supposedly desires to abuse the social service system in Hungary, one Romani individual stated: “Actually [that] is not what the Roma want there. They want an opportunity to work, to be equal, not to be pushed and marginalized *based on ethnicity*” (emphasis in original, 2013). Roma do experience some things differently because of their ethnicity and the racism that accompanies it, but the critical point here is that their conceptualizations and experiences overall are neither islands nor idiosyncratic processes. By seeking to understand their varied experiences and perceptions regarding ethnicity, we are reflecting on human societies overall, which often prompts us to question our representations and understandings of community, groups, and boundaries.

Similar to identity as a concept/process, ‘community’ has also been defined as a non-useful or explanatory idea or term, sometimes deemed “a concept guilty of being ‘traditional, pre-modern’ (Urry 1987) and unscientific” (Day and Murdoch 1993:83). Day

and Murdoch (1993) explore the possible causes and effects of the discarding of community as a term, and Puddifoot (1995) goes into further detail regarding its waxing and waning in popularity as an analytical and/or conceptual tool. Many of the same problems exist for defining community as with identity and ethnicity: it is seen as a simultaneous catchall term, as well as a term that allows no generalizations beyond any specific ethnographic studies (Puddifoot 1995:358-359). At its most general, community can be considered as feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests and goals (OED 2013), which leads us back to imagined communities.

More concretely, community can refer to physical proximity (such a defined neighbourhood or district), and/or a group of people living together having further characteristics in common as well. Community thus has the potential for vast inclusion and exclusion based on countless characteristics, perceptions, or ideologies. This is especially relevant when considering Romani identities, widely considered to be “politically self-aware ethnic communities” wherein “ethnic group identity and shared interests are inextricably linked” (McGarry 2008:454-455). Such an understanding is flexible, dynamic, and necessarily dependent on the surrounding context of the definition and applications of conceptualizations of ethnic communities; this is especially important considering the wide range of perspectives as will be explored by Romani informants regarding their representations. For example, there are Romani individuals who do not associate with any other Roma in their area; they are Romani, but not part of what I would describe as the Romani community. Comparatively, the Parkdale community (a neighbourhood, and thus a geographic definition) includes many Roma, who then have further shared experiences based on their location, but these aspects may be shared with non-Roma in Parkdale as well. When I refer to a Romani community, it thus relies on ethnic identity processes in addition to community definition aspects (such as living in the Toronto region and/or involvement with the RCC). Roma often self-referred as belonging to the “Romani community” in Toronto, which I have adopted here as a phrase; however, it does not negate the fact that multiple communities exist, all with shifting boundaries and meanings. Belonging to “the community” was a significant aspect of many peoples’ identities, which is why my foci on history, media, and advocacy are framed in the context of Romani community identity processes.

## 2.1.2 Governance

It is important to consider how “identity is mutually constituted within unequal relations of power” (Belton 2013:283). Foucault introduced ‘governmentality’ as a term through his investigations of political power in the 1970s (Rose et al. 2006); it can be defined most succinctly as “the attempt to shape human conduct by calculated means” or a “conduct of conduct” (Li 2007:275). This means that order does not need to be solely maintained through direct or overt means of coercion, but includes force through pastoral power (Foucault 1983), being the everyday political management and organization of a population, as well as actions by individuals (Dean 1999; Gordon 1991). This kind of order can include “organizations, disciplines (such as psychology and statistics), experts and ordinary people [who] employ the kind of language, classifications, and practices which render reality into calculable form” (Shoshana 2011:771). This means governing agents are not confined to defined populations or territories but can act “at a distance” (Rose and Miller 1992:173). “This government at a distance, beyond the state, emphasizes that the state maintains its sovereignty not only by means of its power to enforce identities, but also because the fabric of interpretive classifications and schemas which it constructs acts as a means of social reporting which is relayed to the state authorities” (Shoshana 2011:771). This kind of reporting transforms subjects into visible entities (Scott 1998), which in turn create and conform to perceived ideal governmental rationalities (Shoshana 2011:772).

Shoshana’s work (2011) highlights a few of the critical issues that are worth paying attention to when discussing governmentality in relation to identity processes. First, although overt power can be an influential catalyst, pastoral power as described above should also be considered a powerful force. Second, the state’s actions are not confined to a geographic region and can act at a distance (for example, see Lippert’s (1999) understanding of international refugee policy as governmentality). Third, governmentality also impacts how people engage with identity processes through social reporting and individual conformations to perceived government rationalities. Thus, the power of governing agents should not be considered simplistic; hence, why it needs to be explored here as a concept.

One example of governance directly affecting and relating to Romani identities in Canada can be illustrated through the numbers and/or statistics. Such numbers are an example of pastoral power and the varied and subtle ways that governance can be enacted and perpetuated. Chapter 5 explores this point further with the specific example of how the Designated Country of Origin (DCO) list in the Canadian refugee determination system creates a self-fulfilling policy cycle: it is based on statistics originating through governmentality, which then justifies specific policies. Likewise, censuses (and their various categories) are both created and used to justify policies by the government; they are thus a popular means of examining these organizational and pastoral tendencies (e.g., Boyd 1999; Hermanin 2011; Kertzer and Arel 2002; Sarkar 2003). Census categories are also often a useful way for reflecting on how large agents like nation-states require—and produce—numbers as a means to govern. The very nature of nationalism, as Manning states, depends on a specific vocabulary of the nation that only qualified bodies may speak (2003:xv). The disqualification of noncitizens from this access (whether through expulsion, renunciation, or incomprehension) denies access to official status but also to the language itself: “the vocabulary of the nation can be understood as the structuring of a language that produces distinction between qualified and unqualified bodies, where qualification within the identity and territory of the nation presupposes an attachment to the nation in its linguistic, cultural, and political incarnations” (Manning 2003:xv). This kind of vocabulary—including official political and cultural texts, as well as statistics and policies—reinforces the idea of the governing body as sovereign grantor of nationalistic ideals, as well as demonstrates the nation’s desire to produce cohesive and harmonious senses of identity and territory (Manning 2003:xv). Understanding such governance practices in relation to immigration and refugee matters provide insight into how and why statistics and other related vocabulary is used. Using numbering techniques as part of the national vocabulary also has the consequences of creating “imagined sameness”, specifically examined in such manner regarding Nordic countries by Gullestad (2002).

Although governmentality is frequently explored in relation to purposeful, top-down processes, researchers have critiqued this tendency, suggesting that politics belong to and are embedded with domains of meaning while also reflecting those worlds (Shore and Wright 2011:1). Instead, research is called upon to ask not only “how does a policy

affect people?’ but ‘how do people engage with policy and what do *they* make of it?’” (Shore and Wright 2011:8). Another aspect of this focus is intentionality, reminding us that not all governance is necessarily intentional, but what is important is how people experience it regardless. Such a distinction is important because there are sometimes differential results depending on the manner in which governance was enacted (including unintended consequences, as per Scott 1998).

However, there are further ways that intentionality complicates identity processes, especially in relation to governmentality. This may happen through active or purposeful “decisionism”, which “constitutes one of those rare moments in government when, over and above any existing law, constitution or elected body, the sovereign exercises the right to decide. This right overrides the everyday bureaucratic and instrumentalist rationality of the state producing what Schmitt called a state of the exception” (Dutton 2010:635–636). Or, the results of an action may be harder to predict. For example, when “the interests of minority groups are invariably squeezed out by the majority and if the state does not provide adequate representation or preferential treatment then minority communities often mobilize and create their own organizing structures of representation to articulate their interests” (McGarry 2010:33). Similarly, this reaction has occurred within the Romani community in Canada, as they create and enact their own articulations of representation. Various forms of both European and Canadian governmentality have actually served as catalysts for Romani individuals and communities to reinforce, challenge, or otherwise engage with their conceptualizations and enactments of identity (such as through advocacy).

### 2.1.2.1 Refugee definition/determination

This section focuses on a specific form of governance in Canada: the refugee determination system. This includes discussion on the meaning of refugee as a concept and legal status, as well as a brief overview of the Canadian refugee determination system over the last few decades. This is relevant because as this project unfolded over the past few years, significant policy changes have occurred that were referenced frequently in interviews; these changes have deeply affected the Romani community, including refugee claimants as well as Canadian-born Roma. This context provides

background for a better understanding for the examples of governance consequences when engaged with the larger themes of history, media, and advocacy.

Refugee determination and protection is one of Canada's international obligations as signatory to the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol. However, the process of determining refugee status remains mostly a sovereign matter. There are two main ways through which Canada recognizes refugees: the first is through a Government Assisted Refugee process (GAR), wherein refugees outside of Canada are selected and approved by Canadian representatives. In other words, by the time they reach the Canadian border, they are already recognized as protected persons and entitled to the legal rights that Canada recognizes for refugees. This is the process referred to in the introduction<sup>32</sup>.

The second way that Canada recognizes refugees is the in-land determination process; this is the process through which Romani refugees in Canada receive status and the one which I most frequently refer to in this work. The in-land system fulfills Canada's UNHCR responsibilities (the GAR process is entirely a sovereign choice although it coordinates with UNHCR) and allows for all persons claiming refugee status the *opportunity* to apply for legal recognition as a refugee. Refugee claimants thus arrive spontaneously to Canada's borders (including airports and harbours) and are subject to differential treatment than GARs: they are not yet recognized as refugees, only persons applying for refugee status. This status is a liminal one, meaning that claimants are in a form of limbo as they await their hearing and decision. Official status is all the more important since it determines a number of things, such as access to provincial and/or federal resources<sup>33</sup>. Under the "old" system that was in place until December 15, 2012, refugee claimants needed to fill out a Personal Information Form (PIF) that set out their reasons for seeking asylum. This form then served as the main basis for the eventual

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<sup>32</sup> The example describing how refugee advocates have criticized the rumours regarding the process by which Canada has changed its selection of refugees (i.e., excluding those with significant medical costs).

<sup>33</sup> For example, in July 2012, health care cuts to refugee claimants were made, cutting funded services to refugee claimants. When the "new" system came into place in December 2012, along with its DCO list, further health care restriction were placed on claimants coming from specific countries.

hearing that took place before a single IRB Member<sup>34</sup>, who was responsible for hearing the case and rendering a decision (accepting the claimant as a refugee, or rejecting the claim). Hearings were assigned in three hour slots (often, more than one hearing was needed) and were held in specific IRB offices (for example, in Toronto, at 70 Victoria St). As a legal process not unlike a court system, representation was highly important; lawyers or counsels assisted claimants in filling out the complicated forms and ensuring due process was met. This is a brief summary only intended to provide context for when refugee categories and issues are raised in later discussions; for detailed descriptions of the process from 1989-2012, see Alboim (2012); Eastmond (2007); Lacroix (2004); Rousseau et al. (2002); Showler (2006); Showler (2009); and Zambelli (2012).

Zambelli (2012) offers a useful examination of the legal changes that were proposed and finally implemented on December 15, 2012 (referred to commonly as Bill C-31). Most relevant to the Romani community is the newfound hierarchy between refugee claimants who come from so-called “safe” countries, and those who come from otherwise “unsafe”/refugee-producing countries. Being a claimant from a “safe” country (DCO) now means differential timelines for claimants submitting forms and evidence, exclusion from any appeal process<sup>35</sup>, and differential rights and resources (such as health care eligibility). These changes were intended to speed up the refugee determination process, which was correctly criticized for leaving many claimants in a kind of political, social, and legal limbo for many years. For example, I spoke with a settlement worker who described this problem as follows: “No one likes to live in uncertainty for a prolonged period of time: give me a decision today, and I know my future. I go home, or I stay here and start a new life.” Many refugee lawyers concurred with this assessment, describing waiting times of at least two to three years (sometimes more) for their clients. The new system, with its restrictions for specific refugee claimants who are assumed “bogus”, is faster but still problematic; here, I would like to emphasize the way it epitomizes how

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<sup>34</sup> Before 2001/2002, the IRB system had two Board Members hearing each case, who would then confer before reaching a decision.

<sup>35</sup> Although there was a Refugee Appeal Division (RAD) prior to 2012, having been made law on paper in 2001, it was not actually implemented in any form of practice. Thus, the new system finally provides the right to appeal that should have already been in practice, while limiting specific groups’ access to it.



governance methods are imposed for specific motivations in a number of ways with varying (and sometimes unintended) consequences.

At the 2011 Canadian Council for Refugees (CCR) meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, Canadian Border and Security Agency (CBSA) and Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) officials were on hand as participants who were attempting to explain the proposed and upcoming changes soon to be implemented. One thing that I found particularly interesting during the question-and-answer period was the repeated dismissal by government officials of any concerns the audience members raised with regards to possible and/or unforeseen consequences of the new proposed policies and programs. For example, a “voluntary deportation” program was in the works that would ‘give’ refugee claimants up to \$2,000 if they agreed to leave Canada for resettlement in their home region. Many audience members questioned this program, asking whether refugees might misunderstand how it worked, and indeed, whether it would be helpful at all or even safe. This was all the more a relevant concern, as the \$2,000 was not to be actually given to the refugees themselves, but rather to organizations in their home region in order to assist in their resettlement. Upon further questioning, the officials admitted that such programming was not to be carried out by the Canadian government, but by a global organization that would redistribute and organize the funds and programs in specific regions. More questions were then raised regarding the efficiency of such a program, also noting the danger this unintentionally creates for the former refugee claimants, as they must be identified to local organizations as having attempted to seek asylum elsewhere. Similarly, people questioned the implementation of Bill C-31, which would create a hierarchy of refugee claimants in the system, change the timelines and processes, and contain a sub-set list of countries that would be deemed safe. As CCR audience members raised important and valid concerns regarding the accuracy and fairness of the system, the loss of rights to those from ‘safe’ countries, increased mandatory detentions, and more concerns, the officials present were simply left repeating their earlier statement: “That is not our intention”.

Intentional or not, the predictions from CCR audience members became true. One example, from my fieldwork in 2012, was an impromptu gathering of frustrated Romani

individuals at the RCC. They had heard rumours of the CBSA programming; they then assumed the RCC was not providing accurate information (or that the RCC's advice would not help as much as the potential \$2,000 could). As anticipated at the CCR meeting, they had misunderstood the program, leaving the RCC—an organization already stretched thin trying to meet the needs of its members—dealing with these concerns. Despite the RCC making official statements to the larger community that refugee claimants would *not* receive this money directly (and that they should therefore not withdraw their refugee claims), it is believed that some continued to trust these rumours and indeed returned home (with the expectation they could try to rebuild their lives elsewhere with some capital in hand). Thus, some Roma physically left, some retained concerns regarding the role of the RCC in providing information, and some became frustrated by those continuing to spread rumours: all of these things ended up influencing Romani members' sense of community<sup>36</sup>.

Concluding this section, I draw on Mercer's argument that "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent, and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty" (1990:43). The situation described above was just one example of how Roma experience processes that challenge and/or complicate their identity processes because of multiple uncertainties. This corresponds with Hall's conceptualization that identity processes challenge any previous fixed or stable understandings of race and ethnic boundaries (1990; 2006). Together—and in conjunction with the discussions on ethnicity, community, and governance concepts—we can better understand how and why elements of contestation, negotiation, challenge, and varied enactments (all based on the specific contexts of individuals and collectives) inform people's makings and unmaking of identity. As the next section intends to demonstrate, this is particularly relevant for discussions on Romani identities. Roma have been negotiating and adapting group boundaries and definitions for centuries because of both real and perceived crises. If "social identities are not an essence but a positioning

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<sup>36</sup> For example, some RCC members were frustrated by the disbelief of other community members and the tendency of some in spreading erroneous rumours, while other members felt they could not fully trust the RCC if they were not providing perceived adequate advice.

constructed through systems of reproduction (including memory, myth, news, and science) all of which are implicated in networks of power” (Pascale 2013: xiv), then the complicated histories and realities of Roma exemplify this process of identity constructions within changing realities and structures of power.

## 2.2 Romani identities

Although her specific work examined Palestinian refugee memories and experiences of exile<sup>37</sup>, Farah’s doctoral work similarly questioned how individual and collective identities were made and expressed, asking “How and when do identities overlap and diverge? What do the representations of life experiences tell us of the notions of ‘us’ and the ‘others’, who is included or excluded?” (1999:7). Throughout Section 2.1, these questions among others focused on three key concepts: ethnicity, community, and governance and how they are significant foci reshaping Romani identities in Canada. This section focuses on Romani perspectives and shows how intertwined the aforementioned concepts are when experienced and negotiated in the real world.

### 2.2.1 Authenticity, “wooden Roma”, and claiming ownership

I first heard the term “wooden Roma” when Milosh used it as slang for a kind of “inauthentic Roma”, during a conversation with some Romani community members who were expressing frustration by those who actively utilize Romani ethnic labels only to benefit/profit from such a label. These two meanings are not the same, but they both centre on the oft-controversial core of who is considered “authentically” Romani. I asked Milosh for more elaboration on this term:

It is a Rromanes concept, a translation of *Rrom Kashtalo* or *Rromni Kashtali*. It means a Romani person, often a spokesperson for Roma, who doesn’t speak Rromanes—sort of like a cigar store “wooden Indian”...it can also refer to an assimilated Romani person who has lived a middle-class existence but doesn’t speak Romani or know anything about life in the ghettos or settlements...A non-Romani person who puts on a false

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<sup>37</sup> I found it interesting to note the frequency with which Romani community members spontaneously raised Palestinians and their experiences in conversations, drawing many different kinds of connections between the two communities.

image of being Romani like [redacted], who is referred to as a *Gazho kai kerel-pe Rrom*... These are people who take on the [Romani] identity for financial reasons and play up the stereotypes, usually in the arts or by an author, etc., who has a “Gypsy great-grandmother”. On the other hand, there are lost Roma, babies who were adopted by non-Roma but their physical appearance is often enough for them to be recognized as Roma, like [redacted]. (Correspondence 2013)

Such a term and explanation dovetails with anthropological understandings of boundaries as constantly shifting depending on the actor, perspective, and context. Can someone be Romani if they were/were not assimilated, if they do/do not speak the language, etc.? Who is considered to be truly Romani depends largely on the actor doing the deciding, as well as on the presumptions regarding another’s intentions (something not easily proven, as related in the previous section). At RCC meetings, these tensions would sometimes arise in the form of accusations of specific Romani individuals profiting from the general Romani community without adequately giving back. These discussions caused tension among some members that thus further influenced individual and collective perceptions of identities. For example, Rachael, another Canadian-Romani community member stated:

Rachael: You know it’s funny—what my identity is for me, what it means to be Roma, is probably more neutral in the time that I’ve been involved in the RCC. Like, I identify as *less* Roma now after a year on the board as I did when I joined, for sure.

Julianna: Why?

Rachael: Um, because I have more in common with my 30-something white anarchist academic-y friends than I do with the guys on the board, in terms of the world that I want, that I live in, and the culture that I belong to. When I’m trying to explain it to you—it’s like being on a board with your grandfather, except my grandfather would never yell or scream at each other. It’s like that—it’s like being on a board with my grandfather... a bunch of [boisterous] grandfathers together trying to get them to make decisions, and so [laughs] (Interview 2012, emphasis based on tone)

Rachael’s main point—that involvement with the community has actually decreased her sense of being Romani—is related to Milosh’s point above, whereby a persistent awareness in the Romani community exists of others who may profit from specific Romani/Gypsy labels. This tension can actually be beneficial to the community, despite

occasionally hostile debates: for example, even if you dislike and disagree with a fellow Romani Board Member who is accusing you of only taking from the community, it is reinforced to you that this community is inherently dynamic, often vulnerable, and everyone is constantly reacting to everyone else. It can be considered both a positive and negative reaffirmation to be reminded by a member of your own community that you will be held accountable, should you try to profit or use your community in ways that others feel are undesirable or inappropriate.

Rachael, contrasting the manner in which she participated at meetings with others, found herself to be “less Roma” than when she began working with the community. This is particularly interesting, as one may expect identification with a group to be reinforced by increased activity and participation within the group. However, I do not see this as surprising or contradictory. Catalysts and/or negotiation processes that alter one’s perceived group identity occur more frequently with more exposure to the respective group. Therefore there are more opportunities to reinforce an identity when it is in part based on community participation (as I argue for the Romani-Canadian context), as well for a group identity to be challenged by those with differing beliefs, priorities, and definitions. Rachael related further:

It’s funny. I’ve gone home after RCC meetings and been like, “I’ve never felt this Canadian as I have in my whole life”. When I’m like, “everyone stop yelling at each other”. I’m like, “Oh my god, I’m being such a Canadian, I’m offended that everyone is using a yelling voice”. You know [*laughs*] so I’ve gone home, and joked, “I’ve never felt so Canadian in my life than when I go to these meetings, and everyone’s just yelling at each other, and no one can stay on the agenda”, it’s making me crazy.  
(Interview 2012)

In the above quote, Rachael is consciously engaging with and negotiating how and where she belongs on various levels of identity, indicative of the processual nature of identity-making (while also maintaining a sense of humour about it). Although Rachael is not regarded as a “wooden Roma”, being openly inquisitive about her identity invokes others to reflect upon who is included, excluded, or “less Roma”.

Community reactions to Romani members’ own experiences and identities similarly vary based on contexts. In one conversation, May, a Romani performer, initially raised the

issue of asserting her Romani identity in a perceived larger Canadian society, but soon also related how non-Roma and Roma perceive Romani identities, as well:

Julianna: You're saying you "came out to people," and I can't help but see the parallel in sexual identities or—is it similar? I'm just wondering why you chose that phrase ["come out"], what does that mean to you?

May: Oh dear, I don't know. I can't figure out why I chose that phrase, but that's the easiest thing that came to mind. I think I said that because I'm comfortable with it now—people can do what they want with it. I didn't make a point of calling up all my friends, and saying "Guess what, I'm coming out as Romani" and "Don't say Gypsy". The common thing was, they would say, "the Roma Community Center, what's that?" "Oh, well, it's blah blah blah". Commonly though, people I don't know would say, "How did you get involved in the Roma Community Center?" And I would say, "well, my father was Romani"—"Ooooh". And then I would get various comments by Roma people, saying "Really? That's cool", or, "Good", or, "I don't believe you", or whatever they want to say. From non-Roma, I get, "You don't look it", or, "You don't act it".

How others see or identify us informs the way we view ourselves. May, having to repeatedly justify herself to Roma and non-Roma alike has changed her perspective on what her Romani identity means in practice.

Physical appearances, certainly, cannot be used to define or bind a group, especially Roma. For example, a painting of a group of Romani people (in many shades, with many diverging physical characteristics) was shared online with community members and soon critiqued by some frustrated at its use of stereotypical Gypsy appearances. However, other members defended it: "It does a great job at reflecting the diversity in our community...it speaks to some [of our] shared cultural elements and our diverse geographic regions". Rather than an antagonistic encounter, however, members simply discussed their internal diversity and pointed out how they would like to see it portrayed and reproduced in other contexts. Individuals similarly have different purposes and motivations in choosing what physical or other characteristics they desire to emphasize, remember, define, or display (in or around themselves), which serves to communicate to

others who they are or how they wish to be perceived. While chatting with Jen<sup>38</sup> about various RCC projects, we had the exchange below; it is included here for two reasons. First, she describes the significance of physical attributes in relation to Romani identity as a positive community marker, i.e., someone who “looks” Romani and can thus for example make a stronger impact on Romani youth who see someone who “looks like them” succeeding and being a role model. Second, she relates the importance of “being accountable” to one’s group by, in her case, creating a physical marker on her body that would not let her forget her “white privilege”.

Jen: When you think about why Gina [the RCC Director] is such an awesome role model, it’s largely because how she is, and how she speaks, and the risks that she takes, but it’s also because young Roma women can see themselves in her. They see her be powerful and take on major challenges—that’s not a role that I would be able to play, because I don’t [trails off]

Julianna: [*incredulous*] Strong, female role model?

Jen: Well, strong, but one that also looks and presents as a Roma role model.

Julianna: You don’t think you present as one?

Jen: [*Pause*] Yes and no. Yes and no. I think what I’m trying to do is not be too caught up in trying to, though. [*Laughs*] Like, I’m not gonna stop dying my hair blonde<sup>39</sup>, or, trying to authenticate myself.

Julianna: The whole idea of authenticity, do you think about it much?

Jen: Yeah, for sure. And I think it’s so prevalent, and the discourse is so out there, that it’s hard not to. I think a part of me got this tattoo because I wanted to not ever be able to pass as non-Roma, or, it was a way of trying to be conscious of that privilege.

Julianna: What tattoo?

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<sup>38</sup> A Canadian-Romani community member who has allowed her real name to be used here.

<sup>39</sup> When I contacted Jen later to confirm if she would be ok with me including this excerpt in this work, one of her comments was: “I think it’s also hilarious that I explicitly said I wasn’t going to stop dying my hair blond, and then I promptly did! (Also hilarious that I’m talking about hair dye at all...) But I assure you it isn’t because of a change in my political perspectives re: authenticity—rather, I just started worrying more about putting chemicals on my head.” I found this just one further example regarding how seemingly minor physical appearance choices can be complicated and thoughtful relationships with identity processes.

Jen: It's the wheel<sup>40</sup>. Just to have something, so that if I ever wanted slip by as a white girl and not actually be doing any work to support the community, that I would have this thing that actually would be—to try and keep me accountable to that history...[I got this tattoo] to mark an accomplishment, and the wheel because it comes from the perspective that lets in the positive things, and keeps the negative things out. I think of it as protective.

Julianna: Was this your first major tattoo, was it a big decision?

Jen: Yeah, it was a major one because I put it in a place where you can see it, which I maybe one day will regret [*laughs*] but it's there now. So far, I really like it, so, and my cousin did it, which was cool—

Julianna: Oh, he actually did it? Is he also Romani?

Jen: Yup. And I have that within my family too, cause...my aunt is way darker than my mom, and her kids are way darker, so they—most people think they are Native...I find it so common that lighter-shade people from families are more likely to get involved in activism because of the privileges that have been afforded to them by their shade. But then have all of this weird identity and white guilt around that lighter-shade privilege [*trails off*] (Interview 2012)

Thus we can understand the significance of physical markers as communicating particular messages about identity. In Jen's examples, such physicality can be a boon for a leader being a role model, as well as an active choice, such as meaningful symbols (the Romani flag/wheel) displayed through body art (tattoos). These are significant because they demonstrate ways that Roma are asserting their right for physical markers of various kinds in the face of prejudice and persecution that usually is enacted precisely because of perceived physical differences (i.e., racism against Roma/Gypsies).

Another example of this kind of challenge against fixed notions of Romani physicality is the recent photo exhibition series by photographer Chad Evans Wyatt, titled *romarising*.

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<sup>40</sup> She is referring to the spoked wheel that is the prominent feature of the Romani flag, stylized from a traditional use of caravans. The spokes on the wheel have also come to represent specific cultural values, but more generally symbolizes "movement and progress", as well as its colour (red) representing Romani victims of persecution and hate.



In it, Romani individuals are illustrated in black and white portraits (usually in their everyday work or life settings). He describes the purpose and inspiration of this series:

*romarising* counters the widely-held view that “Gypsies” merely play music, wear folkloric costumes, wander the country, with little plan for the future. The work presents middle-class and professional class Roma not thought possible to exist, who lead lives rich of accomplishment, while remaining connected to their culture. Each is worthy of the admiration of all who aspire to a just and open society...The black-and-white portraits in this series reduce the psychological experience to its fundamental. An often ordinary context is intentional. This is a manner in which the Roma are seldom presented in the media. They address us with respect and dignity, we are allowed an authentic interaction. (Wyatt 2013)

Wyatt created a corresponding Canadian-specific exhibit of *romarising*, and many community members in Toronto proudly noted their inclusion in this collection of photographs; there are also plans for the pictures and biographies to become part of a hate-crime prevention booklet. As noted by Gina, the RCC Director, “hopefully, these images can help debunk, defy and deconstruct stereotypes about the Roma people, so people can see the community in a different light than as bogus refugees trying to take advantage of the system” (Keung 2013). Wyatt explained his philosophy to me that all of the continuing installations in this series retain the same means and desires: “Dreams are human. We all aspire. Some of us achieve grandly. Ethnicity isn’t relevant within that, save for that which the external imposes” (Personal correspondence 2013).

When Roma physically represent themselves in non-stereotypical ways, this often evokes omnipresent conceptualizations of authenticity. This is not new, in that people of many different groups have been at times objectified and/or subjectified and/or appropriated; this not only affects the people being targeted, but also reflects the larger and unequal power dynamics at play. For example, there may be critiques towards those who profit from a Romani label and yet who do not suffer any of the negative repercussions of actually *being* Romani (e.g., being discriminated against). Sam, a Canadian-Romani musician, expands on this process further, providing some of his thoughts upon hearing of non-Romani musicians using Gypsy stereotypes as part of their act:

The dancers look like a bunch of Valley airheads stoned on something. I can’t make out what language they are using but it’s not Rromanes. The

music—well—as a Romani folk musician, pardon me while I head for the washroom to barf. Why isn't [redacted] and his group performing there? They always pick these non-Romani imitators who piggyback on the word Gypsy for these shows. Get down there and do your worst. I wish I could go with you wearing a good pair of steel-tipped Canadian shit-kicker boots. Maybe in Europe they'll run into a gang of skinheads and learn what it's like to really be Roma in the real world. (Correspondence 2012)

The frustration or anger that is frequently felt by Romani individuals upon seeing non-Roma profit from appropriating or exploiting Romani stereotypes can be positioned in relevance to a frustration of not being able to define one's own group. Specifically, Roma remain subjectified and/or objectified, while non-Roma remain the “credible” sources for defining or speaking about Romani issues. This invokes Said's writings on Orientalism, as he describes how corporate institutions control “the Orient” by making statements about it, authorizing particular views, and describing/teaching/settling/ruling over it (1978:3). “In short, Orientalism [is] as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient...[this is] not to say that Orientalism unilaterally determines what can be said about the Orient, but that it is the whole network of interests inevitably brought to bear” (Said 1978:3).

There is understandable frustration towards those who appropriate “Gypsy” characteristics. I posit, however, that the larger root issue deals with authenticity and power dynamics in representation, i.e., who is allowed to define the group. This is what is meant by the word “ownership” in this section's title. Roma have historically had little to no control over their own definitions. This has become so ingrained that, for example, Roma often face dismissal in discussions whenever they request that Halloween costumes avoid “Gypsy” stereotypes. As described by James, a Canadian-Romani individual, this is because Roma have been relegated only as a passive subject, purposefully excluded even from the studies of their own people and ways: “The GLS [Gypsy Lore Society] studies Roma like other groups study the blue-billed kingfisher or the insects of the Amazon rain forest, and educated Roma are to them atypical and ‘assimilated’.” Continuing on this topic, I asked James to comment on a recent academic work describing Romani ethnicity, and he soon returned to the point that the GLS has long dictated the ‘proper’ definition of Romani belongings:

I suppose there is some value in what [the author] writes but most of what these GLS people produce is based on paternalistic racism. At their last annual convention this year, maverick member Dr. Thomas Acton presented a paper accusing the GLS of paternalistic racism and it was rejected. He was also voted out as secretary and replaced by Anne Sutherland, who is a loyal Party Member of the GLS and not likely to rock the boat. Such is the fate of heretics. As far as I am concerned after reading their papers, most of it is blatantly obvious, irrelevant or just so much *xerani shib* (braying of asses). I see they are still using the sacred Carthorse Y in their spelling of Romany instead of Romani which we the Roma are using. There is not one educated Romani person in the GLS. It is the equivalent of The Jewish Lore Society without one Jewish member. Romani activists are not welcome as members. (Correspondence 2013)

Being excluded from the organizations that claim ownership over Romani studies has huge consequences for who can then be considered ‘authentic’ (and reflects the unequal power structure that enables such decisions). This relates to one of the points made by Leve, examining identity in a Nepalese Buddhist context: “When people represent themselves as identity groups, they cast themselves as the owners of their identities and histories” (2011:525). Roma have been persistently denied the right to ‘own’ their own identity processes; disregarding a debate on whether identities and/or identity processes are valuable concepts (as Leve ultimately questions), it is critical to note how Roma are voicing their frustration at how representations of their identities have been largely formed without any Romani input.

In this context, some Roma emphasize particular definitions of themselves when they do achieve some control over their own terminology and issues. This explains not only the tensions that exist towards non-Roma who “pretend” to be Gypsy (whether for profit or pleasure), but also some of the tensions that are enacted towards any Roma who are perceived as profiting from other Roma in the community (and the hostile reactions to “wooden Roma”). One such polarizing example can be witnessed through the reactions of Romani community members to a Hungarian Romani politician. In a photo posted on Facebook, fellow Hungarian politicians surround the Romani politician, everyone in business suits, shaking hands, and smiling.

Does anyone from the Roma community in Hungary actually like [redacted]? How is it possible that he is the Romani representation for the

government, regardless of who is the ruling party? My understanding is that he is a puppet and ‘token Gypsy’. Is this true, or not? (Public Comment 2013)

--Yes, it is true. He is not a Roma for long time, maybe he never was. Roma in Hungary call him “betrayer of Roma”, this is all he is doing. (Public Comment 2013, in reaction to above statement)

This spineless worm can look people in the eye? (Public Comment 2013)

Damn disgusting scumbag traitor (Public Comment 2013)

At least everyone pictured is happy! I have nothing, but they can be happy... (Public Comment 2013)

[Redacted] is an Oreo cookie or Uncle Tom<sup>41</sup>. He was part of the delegation of three stooges who came here to testify that there was no persecution of Hungarian Roma for the Test Cases. This resulted in a massive drop in acceptance of Hungarian Roma refugees by the IRB. Rocco Galati<sup>42</sup> finally got this ruling in the test case to be declared illegal but by then a lot of Roma had been deported. [He] is a sellout and a puppet of the Hungarian government. (Public Comment 2013)

In circumstances such as Hungary, where Roma already face severe human rights abuse and a lack of social justice, the perception of Roma who “sell out” their own people can be understood as a severe betrayal. Although he is labeled as a Romani political representative, many in the Romani community (in Canada and worldwide) deny the validity of such an identity, and he is seen as a traitor, sellout, puppet, and/or “token Gypsy”. A Romani identity in this case is thus deeply ingrained with not only historical definitions and heritage, but with intentionality and participation in the larger Romani community.

I provided this example to underscore how the context of participation can significantly influence individual and collective notions of identity. Just as we understand how ethnicity should never be ignored and/or assumed, it is similarly just as important to

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<sup>41</sup> This refers to the title character of Stowe’s 1852 work *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Popular use of this term includes being an epithet for a person excessively subservient to authority figures and/or someone who participates in the oppression of their own group.

<sup>42</sup> A lawyer in Toronto who has represented many Romani refugee claimants and been involved in various federal court case challenges regarding Romani claims.

acknowledge the perspective of the assigner and assignee (e.g., who is considered ‘black’ in one area may not be ‘black’ in another), because it clearly matters *how* you live your life. After listening to RCC members discuss various matters over the years, I have heard that participation in the community is often an important aspect of Romani identity. For example, Roma who were described to me as simply attending events “just for the goodies” (like the Christmas party, which often had presents for any Romani family with children), or who never volunteered any time or energy (yet demanded programs) are disparaged in general conversations and in official meetings discussing future plans. In this way, although such a person may speak Romani/Romanes, ‘look’ Romani, and adhere to many traditional cultural attributes, if they are not actively involved in the community, then their ethnic identity—though still Romani—is altered. On the flip side, those who are heavily involved in the community, whether through official capacity such as in a Romani-run organization, or through intrapersonal means such as informally looking out for the community (e.g., helping people find jobs, giving advice), can be seen as accepted and reaffirmed as Romani, no matter their linguistic abilities, physical appearances, etc. As recalled in my MA research, I was once described as “more Roma” than an informant herself, by sheer virtue of my historical knowledge, interest in the community, and willingness to participate/volunteer. Many Roma would not agree with that sentiment, but it is echoed in various ways when discussions occur regarding who can be considered Roma, who are allies and advocates, and what roles they should play (for example, a percentage of the RCC Board must be Romani).

### 2.2.2 Stereotypes: “Two sides of the coin”

As will be demonstrated throughout this work, there are many stereotypes of Roma in Canada, but perhaps the most persistent are those of “Gypsies” and as (bogus) refugees. However, reactions to, and the consequences of stereotypes are felt and understood differently by the agents involved and the context of the situation. For example, Robert, a Romani performer, noted he does not mind the term Gypsy at all, or even most of the stereotypes that come along with it. Indeed, as long as he is not being negatively targeted, he encourages people to call him Gypsy. In contrast, May, a Romani artist, rejects the term Gypsy for herself with disgust. On one occasion, as we discussed stereotypes of

Gypsy costumes, she described how her partner's sister turned to her partner—not May—and asked “Why doesn't [May] dress like that?”. Her partner replied, “Why would she?”, before laughing loudly. Following this story, May explained what it means for her to be Romani in this context, and how she sees labels for herself and others:

A friend said to me—in the same conversation, after I [mentioned being] involved in the Roma Community Center—she said “What's that? Why are you involved?” “Well, my father's Romani”, and she said, “Huh?”, and I had to explain it to her—because I do sometimes have to explain, “Well, it's what you would call a Gypsy, but we don't use that word”. And she said “Oh! That is so cool, all that sex by the campfire”. And I was sitting there going, “What the fuck?” Then she said, “Oh, they're all pickpockets and thieves, aren't they?” There you go, there's the two sides of the coin right there. And so, generally speaking, now, if I happen to say [the word Gypsy], I just say it, I drop it, and people can do they want with it. But I generally don't make a point of it, unless there is some particular urgent reason for me to say it. (Interview 2012)

Her friend's reaction succinctly summed up two main Gypsy stereotypes, the “two sides of the coin”. On the one hand, it is “sex by the campfire” and romanticizations of nomadic lifestyles. On the other, “they're all thieves and pickpockets”, illustrating the demonization and exaggeration of criminal lifestyles. Despite May's assertion that people can “do what they want with it” as a term, I find she is quite vocal in insisting that politicians, performers, and any others using the term Gypsy in lazy or derogatory ways are made aware of the baggage of the term.

It is not unusual for Roma, who, in their attempts to gain their voice and speak out against such stereotypes, to find themselves openly rebutted or dismissed by people who insist the term is theirs to use as they wish. This includes the makers and wearers of Gypsy Halloween costumes, but can also be seen by the many different stores and brands carrying Gypsy in their names. I am aware of dozens of examples where Roma contacted the owners of such places, only to be told that the name/label would stay the same and they did not care about what Roma had to say about it. One such example regarded the title of a fictional book, *Gypped*. The book contained no Romani characters, and Romani individuals contacted the author to explain how the term is actually an ethnic slur. The author did not see any problem keeping the title, and I also witnessed first-hand the

defensive posturing and justifications by bookstore owners who similarly saw no problem in continuing to promote this title<sup>43</sup>.

The act of stereotyping can be simply understood as ascribing certain attributes to a person or group: “This is the ‘stereotype’ game, the ‘what-goes-with-what’ game. The second *what* is the label, the assignment to a group—national, ethnic, religious, racial, social, professional or any other...through its ubiquity it contributes to one of our most intractable social problems” (Tajfel 1963:3). Tajfel notes that such labeling confers assumptions regarding the “sort of person” one may be when stereotyped in such a manner. Hilton and von Hippel explore the “how”, “when”, and “why” of such stereotyping processes by first proposing that “stereotyping emerges in various contexts to serve particular functions necessitated by those contexts” (1996:238).

Stereotyping emerges as a way of simplifying the demands on the perceiver (Bodenhausen et al 1994a,b; Macrae et al 1994c). Stereotypes make information processing easier by allowing the perceiver to rely on previously stored knowledge in place of incoming information. Stereotypes also emerge in response to environmental factors, such as different social roles (cf Eagly 1995), group conflicts (Robinson et al 1995), and differences in power (Fiske 1993). Other times stereotypes emerge as a way of justifying the status quo (Jost & Banaji 1994, Sidanius 1993), or in response to a need for social identity (Hogg & Abrams 1988). Thus, when it comes to the question of “why,” we think the answer can most often be found in the notion of context-dependent functionality. (Hilton and von Hippel 1996:238)

Much like identity processes, stereotyping processes are particularly salient in context of unequal power dynamics. Usually based on only a few ‘traits’, stereotypes are often stable through time, changing to some extent but generally solidified through their social, political, and/or economic contexts (Tajfel 1963:5). Stereotypes of particular groups also become more salient and hostile when there is conflict or social tensions, as well as

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<sup>43</sup> The bookstore owners did agree to have Romani information pamphlets/flyers available during the book signing, despite their frustration with some of the Romani advocates who negotiated with them. Similarly, the author of *Gypped* issued a statement to the effect apologizing if people were hurt, but since she asked around and found others who were unaware of the connection between “Gypsy” and “gypped”, saw no problem with the title remaining.

“learned early and used by children before the emergence of clear ideas defining the groups to which they apply” (Tajfel 1963:5). Although problematic regardless of hostility (e.g., “positive” stereotypes are still stereotypes), such stereotypes are extremely difficult to modify or otherwise challenge when tensions and conflicts are present (Tajfel 1963:5).

In her work exploring how stereotypes are used in national identity processes in Brazil, Rezende describes how “stereotypes usually come into play, both as images deployed by the foreigner to understand the local society and as representations with which locals make sense of the foreign person” (2008:103). She also argues that “more than just generalised views produced by others, stereotypes can also be used by people themselves in the process of elaborating a sense of belonging associated with national identity” (Rezende 2008:104). This has parallels in Romani perspectives and experiences as well; we must also emphasize the processes of agency and choice—even when acknowledging the parameters that constrain, limit, or otherwise influence such choices—as stereotypes themselves need not be simply negative associations. Okely, for example, created a four-type categorization of Gypsy ethnic images that depend on the type of interaction: exoticised (+), concealed (o), degraded (–), and neutralized (+ –) (1996:51–58). In summary, Gypsies (Okely’s term) often actively choose what kinds of image or identity they want to put forth, all with different pros and cons. For example, + identity interactions include things like fortune-telling, which capitalize on their exoticism on outsiders. Okely specifically notes that Gypsies frequently do not believe in fortune-telling themselves, viewing it largely as a con, despite the belief that some members may actually have powers of prediction (1996:52-53). With concealed types of identities (o), Gypsies may avoid stating outright their ‘Gypsiness’, encouraging outsiders to assume the business action (as per Okely’s example) is being conducted by official organizations. Such examples include construction estimates given on official-looking notepaper, or wearing nice suits and dresses to appear “less a Gypsy” when selling second-hand items and/or antiques. When Gypsies choose a degraded image (–) (Okely giving the examples of a beggar, pauper, fool, or scavenger), the purpose can be to demonstrate the necessity of given resources. This is often accompanied by showing they would like to “settle down” or “have a better life”, “thus reassuring the *gorgio* of the superiority of his system” (1996:56). Finally, a neutralised (+ –) situation may be one where ethnic



identity either does not matter one way or the other, usually occurring when such a relationship has existed for some time with some matter of trust between the Gypsy and *gorgio*/non-Roma. Okely gives examples of regular patrons of Gypsy businesses, such as horse-dealers, who are aware that Gypsies will inevitably try to get the better of a deal through bargaining skills and extensive knowledge of the subject, but such methods are known, and actually highly respected. Sometimes they even also benefit from such arrangements (like a mechanic who receives a percentage from referred contracts). Thus, although stereotyping is frequently a negative experience for Roma who must consider the wide range of consequences for looking or acting in any particular Gypsy way, this does not negate the possibility of having agency and choice in appropriating or challenging stereotypes to promote particular individual or collective interests.

Okely's categories are relevant for Roma in Canada as well: some Roma purposefully play up exotic images like fortune-telling as business practices (+), go about their lives without explicitly identifying their ethnicity to others (o), purposefully play up how they wish to better their lives (-), and/or engage with non-Roma as equals while simultaneously being openly/proudly Romani, such as in the creation of partnerships and advocacy networks (+ -). Although stereotypes certainly exist in Canada, Roma often find that they need not explicitly acknowledge their Romani identity to non-Roma (o and + -) in everyday life: this is in contrast to Europe, where racialized stereotypes often cannot be avoided (such as described by Elena in Section 1.2, where people "just know" she is Romani). Therefore, there is potential here to create Romani-positive interactions with others. However, Roma in Canada also must deal with another pervasive stereotype, that of the "bogus refugee".

Stereotypes surrounding refugees, and specifically their correlations with fraud and bogusness, are often framed by misinformation. "Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict real harm through the imposition of deprecating images that confine people" to simplistic or reductionist stereotypes (Masquelier 2006:741). The term refugee was defined earlier as a specific legal status; today, this term is associated with negative stereotypical images that have little to do with legal requirements. Instead, a refugee is thought of as someone who should be "grateful", part of "huddled masses", and/or "boat

people” (these perceptions are discussed in Chapter 4). While discussing stereotypes and perceptions about refugees with Mike, a journalist, I asked him about this kind of vocabulary:

I think the selection of words—you try your best to find the most neutral words. Like when I use *influx*, a more neutral—I mean it’s all relative, [but compare this to] using the word ‘*arrival*’. So yeah, I think the use of words in the media really frames things—the perception of an issue, the perspective of an issue, it’s very powerful. You wouldn’t believe how—an example is the word ‘*fugitive*’. We all know it means a bad person, a bad word, and if you neutralize it, it would be “someone wanted by police”. So there’s the spectrum, right? Even on a dichotomy... I think people just use different words to their advantage at different moments, depending on the issue... It’s the description of the refugee, more than the word itself. I think the word is somewhat neutral but I think a more appropriate word, or even the more positive word to use would be ‘*asylum seeker*’ because I think we all understand the word *asylum*: you face persecution, that’s why you need *asylum*. But usually I think people would associate the word *asylum* to political *asylum*, so political *asylum* means you’re fleeing from a dictator... We still need the stereotypes and assumptions that we have [in order] to make sense of the world, but, it’s important to always be mindful of the exceptions and look at people as individuals. (Interview 2012)

As a journalist, Mike understands the potential impact that word choice has on public perceptions, as well as affecting individual and collective identities. Masquelier similarly notes, in her work examining the victims of hurricane Katrina as “refugees”, that this word “carries a heavy semantic load” (2006:736); peoples’ accompanying discomfort at the word was a result of a projected self-image of a nation and people confronted with the discordant reality, inequalities, and despair that people faced (2006:736). These same issues are raised when discussing refugees in Canada: official leaders and/or the general public refuse to believe that “third world” conditions exist within Canadian borders (for example, Canada’s reaction to UN reports on Indigenous conditions: Blanchfield 2013; Commisso 2013; Sharp and Arup 2009; UN 2011). Similarly, official leaders and the general public refuse to believe that European countries could produce refugees (e.g., any explanation regarding the DCO list). These are both examples of how the projected self-image of a nation can be conflicted with the realities and experiences of people.

In general, the stereotype of a racialized or victimized refugee homogenizes and misleads. The concept of a refugee has morphed into such a detrimental stereotype that a former IRB Member explained:

Chris: The Board Members don't really understand. And you know, people are, to a certain extent, stuck in this stereotype of a refugee. A refugee is somebody who is being politically active with the opposition party in a totalitarian regime: the police are arresting them, and put them in jail, they are tortured, through the bribe of a relative they get released, they swim across the river, and they arrive in Canada. And then they wrote home, and their uncle sent them all the evidence from their house. That is the conception [of a refugee], I think. And when the minister talks about *bogus* refugees, that *real* refugees are from Asia and Africa—

Julianna: Well, that's been really effective, this notion of queue-jumpers. Any refugee claimant is now by their definition a queue-jumper.

Chris: Yes. And so and people don't understand this—that in a democracy, you *can* be persecuted by the state, *or*, you can be persecuted by a non-state agent and the state fails to protect you. Either one is okay. That's [been established] through the Supreme Court of Canada already, many years ago, we're finished. But he's bringing back these pre-Ward<sup>44</sup> notions of who is a refugee. You can't be a refugee, basically, if you're from a democracy; you can't be a refugee if it's not the state that's persecuting you. The same thing happened in Mexico, when women faced domestic violence and other people faced drug cartels, and those were the two main claims that we're seeing from Mexico, and it's the same issue—it's not the government. Well, the government's failing to do something... but still people have this idea that [*trails off*] I think that a lot of it is messaging from the Minister. Because it can't be based on facts—any average person turns on CNN, sees Anderson Cooper standing in his bulletproof vest on the border, [*laughs*] reporting from an underground tunnel that was just discovered, it's obvious what's going on. So it's the messaging, and of course in Mexico we're dealing with free trade issues as well... People don't understand refugee law, or Refugee 101. And I think that the media is, to an extent, at fault because the media doesn't say, "Let's think of the word bogus, what is bogus? Okay, what is a refugee,

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<sup>44</sup> An immigration case heard by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1993 determining that a "well-founded fear of persecution" includes not only persecution directly from the state but also the inability of the state to protect its citizens from persecution.

what is an immigrant? There's two different streams here, and let's just go back to basics and explain the differences". But they're not. (Interview 2012, emphasis based on tone)

Through Chris' explanation, the popular perceptions of refugees are reflections of media representations, public awareness campaigns, political agendas, and so on. The specific impacts of these processes for Roma include policies that target them based on a presumption of, and stereotyping regarding, their inherent non-refugeeness (being both Gypsies and from democratic countries). In closing, this section has intended to provide a foundation for understanding how and why the concepts and related processes of authenticity and stereotypes are important for understanding how Romani individual and collective identities emerge and transform.

## 2.3 Situating the anthropologist: personal context and methodologies

This section provides discussions on 1) my relevant and personal context 2) fieldwork methodology, and 3) anthropology as an engaged discipline (especially in context of Romani identity processes).

### 2.3.1 "A peace in walking through the world": Being non-Romani

I don't study the Roma, I study the *gadje*. (Petra Gelbart, Romani researcher, author, and advocate, being interviewed by magazine *Romano vod'i*, 2010)

Anthropologists may appear deferential to their informants, but this is merely the privilege of power inasmuch as it is optional. (Michael Herzfeld 1987:17)

Although Chapter 4 more thoroughly discusses some of the problematic aspects of identity representations, I would like to acknowledge here my own position in choosing which voices were heard and reproduced—as noted by Herzfeld in the above epigraph—as well as explore how my own identities may have influenced my perspective and this project. I am not Romani and cannot speak for Roma; I can only speak to what I know, or what I have perceived or experienced. Herzfeld describes how “fieldwork forces the anthropologist to come to immediate terms with its frail provisionality”, giving “anthropology an unusually powerful relevance for other disciplines” (1987:x). However, it need only be a weakness when we are not reflexive towards our own discipline.

Fabian critically summarizes the current necessity for anthropological self-reflection by framing anthropology as having begun its existence in a state of precarious crisis, and, having never managed to assume an existence of unquestioned routine, needs contemporary critical examination regarding our acknowledgement as agents complicit in imperialist expansion (2001:103). Okely specifically contrasts Malinowski's fieldwork and writings with her own research, highlighting the problematic template he encouraged that ended up forming the discipline's foundation (2001:6-7, 22-44). She notes, in reference to criticisms of her own work studying Gypsies in a Western region, that "anthropologists continued to seek isolates or in effect construct them. We have tended to take on trust orthodox anthropologists' claims to heroic journeys into the unknown, isolated communities up the jungle and over the mountain ranges. The monographs emphasized self-containment and differences, seemingly born of isolation" (Okely 2001:7). Sluka describes how, today, our informants and the groups we study are our critics; they "talk back" and force us to be much more aware of our research thereby enhancing its quality (2007:177). Thus, it is much harder to even *pretend* one can write in an intellectual vacuum. Scheper-Hughes notes this in her experiences reflecting on the return visit to her fieldwork site/community after publishing a controversial text about the residents there (2007:202-215) and was the focus of Brettell's editorial work entitled, *When They Read What We Write: The Politics of Ethnography* (1993). For example, this dissertation would likely have been a very different work had I not been able to relatively easily connect with the Romani community over such a long period of time, and knowing all the while that they would be reading and critiquing this eventual product. In fact, the lack of distance between us has enabled me to receive regular feedback from the community and individuals regarding their thoughts and desires as to what my project should encompass or include. I feel it important to also note here that this does not mean I was a passive researcher; rather, that my ideas are all the more strengthened for having been in constant interaction and tension with others' experiences and beliefs. Such a relationship between researcher and participants, especially among anthropologists working "at home", is rapidly becoming an accepted practice (Fennell 2006; Greenbaume 2006; Gullestad 1989; Gullestad et al. 2008; Peirano 1998), as such an arrangement

contains unique benefits (and pitfalls) when reflecting back on theories, frameworks, and concepts.

My own perspectives, conceptual frameworks, and experiences necessarily shape the insights I have learned from informants and research. I am at once and at times many different things: a female, an academic, a spouse, a daughter, an American citizen, a Canadian immigrant and resident, a friend, a volunteer, a colleague, an organizer, an instructor, a student, and more. These points are important to consider, as some of my roles have overlapped with the roles of my informants and people within the Romani community, while others have not. Even my whiteness<sup>45</sup> has, at times, been seen as overlapping with Romani ethnicity—some Romani individuals see themselves as “passing” as white, while others have at times assumed I was Romani by default of my presence and participation within the community. I raise this point to reiterate the conceptual fluidity of identity assignments, dynamics, and relationships, and how identity is constantly undergoing change from internal and external forces within multi-scalar and uneven dynamics.

For example, while talking to Rachael about what it meant to belong to a group, we had the following exchange:

Rachael: [*Laughing*] Exactly, that’s the whole point, I don’t think that there is anything that is legitimate.

Julianna: And you just referred to yourself though as partial Roma—isn’t it a holistic thing? That you are or you aren’t?

Rachael: That’s a good question...because for other people and other groups, I would probably ask the same thing, or I wouldn’t be that judgmental—you know, I have many friends who are half Indigenous on one side, and of course, it would sadden me so much if they felt like they couldn’t call themselves Indigenous. [*Pause*] But there is something around, I guess—I started to feel it more and more in the RCC because the men [*redacted*] don’t see me as Roma.

Julianna: Why not?

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<sup>45</sup> For thoughtful examinations of whiteness as a concept, see Levine-Rasky (2008; 2011); Low (2009).

Rachael: Because I'm so Canadianized, because I'm so fair, because I always speak English—I don't know, because it's a really relative thing. [*Laughs*] I guess there's a peace for me about being able to walk in the world and not be Othered. Acknowledging that privilege, I think, does limit how much I can say I represent the Roma communities. (Interview 2012)

Rachael's own self-identified characteristics place her in both Romani and Canadian contexts. For her, this means that she feels she cannot be truly representative of the Romani community since she does not experience the same kind of visible discrimination they face daily. Furthermore, she extrapolates beyond her own experiences to identify with Indigenous identity and naming issues in Canada. Yet she has contributed significantly to the Romani community and remains passionate about human rights issues for many other discriminated groups. It is precisely Rachael's lived experiences, walking a constant line between being identified as Romani and non-Romani (by both Romani and non-Romani agents), that deeply shape and influence her perspective on the world, and it would be remiss to ignore these dynamics.

There is some personal context I feel is relevant for my work. First, although I am not and have never been a refugee claimant, I have been an immigrant in different countries, including Canada. My experiences as a temporary immigrant and then as a permanent resident of Canada has reiterated the valuable lesson that one cannot truly understand immigration processes without experiencing them, similar to identity processes involving ethnicity, religion, age, gender, and more. For example, although I had read all the details and forms regarding becoming a Canadian resident prior to applying, this theoretical knowledge did not accurately prepare me for the process itself, nor warn me of its unintended consequences as I was caught up in bureaucratic mistakes and red tape. I am not stating that my experience (or anyone's experience) is the only way a process may unfold<sup>46</sup>, nor am I arguing that because you are not something, you may not have good insights into a particular phenomenon. If that were true, there would be no point in men

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<sup>46</sup> For example, it would be incorrect for me to assume all permanent resident applicants suffered the same kinds of obstacles as I experienced. It would also be incorrect for a Canadian immigrant from the 1970s, for example, to assume the same immigration process is in process today.

discussing feminist issues and ideals, in heterosexual alliances or arguments for homosexual rights, or any other kind of boundary crossings. Rather, my immigration experiences have meant that I can more thoroughly understand the wide gap between policy “on paper” and policy as enacted through practice, and thus have a better understanding of the struggles that newcomers may face, while also acknowledging such a gap exists between my lived reality and theirs.

Despite my advantages, including having a stable address and contact information, access to internet, printers, and fax machines, and my familiarity with bureaucratic terms and processes, I have at times been treated very poorly by the Canadian immigration system, including significant delays, setbacks, and more. For example, the CBSA once stopped me at the border when returning from a trip home to the United States. My status had recently changed, to that of a permanent resident, and my husband was with me, a Canadian-born citizen. After going into the CBSA building, we were yelled at, told to turn around and leave Canada, and repeatedly accused of lying by an inexplicably infuriated CBSA agent. In the end, the miscommunication that prompted this encounter ended up being due entirely to a lack of communication between the CIC and CBSA and the respective forms they have residents complete. I had in fact done nothing wrong, and eventually another agent helped prove that I had not lied, as repeatedly accused; it was rather a combination of bureaucratic mismanagement and policy ignorance by the agent herself. I am not suggesting broad CBSA or CIC incompetency based on one personal example; when I later filed an official complaint against that particular agent, I felt that my concerns were taken seriously. Similarly, on our way into the building that day, another CBSA agent had explained I should not worry, as “this kind of thing happens at least a dozen times a day” (which was meant to be personally reassuring, but underscores how terribly un-assuring the process can be); he also took care to assure me I had done nothing wrong. However, once inside, I can only imagine how much more shocking it would have been to experience that incident had I been without my relative advantages, or a non-Western immigrant or someone perceived as a “visible minority”.

Gelbart’s epigraph to this section stated she does not study Roma, rather, she studies the *gadje* (non-Roma). Although this dissertation does study Roma and Romani-specific



issues, I believe it adheres to the meaning behind Gelbart's words. She was directly opposing the long-held view (by disciplines like anthropology) that Roma are an appropriate exotic Other that can be isolated and examined as subjects or objects. Her work does examine Roma, but as a Romani individual herself, she purposefully views them as active agents within a larger world impacted by non-Romani influences, policies, and ideologies. Similarly, my examination of Romani identity through histories, media, and advocacy efforts is purposefully framed by how Roma are being influenced and are influencing non-Romani social, political, and other processes. Henry, a Romani individual who was raised in Europe, spoke with me about how the media portrays Romani-focused stories, and he likewise flipped this script back onto non-Roma. "I don't think these stories say as much about the Roma as they do about the audience. These stories, they just reflect back on the people writing and reading them." As a researcher, I can only write about what I have perceived as a non-Romani individual, with the hopes that it resonates with Roma and non-Roma alike, while acknowledging my own reflections.

### 2.3.2 Fieldwork and methodology

This project covers many different aspects of lived experiences, and thus utilizes a wide range of methods that contribute to a more holistic understanding of the research involved. As such, although the majority of my fieldwork took place in the Greater Toronto Area, I conducted participant-observation in a number of areas (such as Hamilton and downtown Toronto). I obtained my data and information from different sources as well, including media, archival documents, and statistical work. Participant-observation and interviews included time spent in people's homes, in various community centres and public spaces, in government spaces (e.g., the Immigration and Refugee Board offices, federal court rooms), and at activist meetings/events. My main goal was to hear from as many different perspectives as I could.

I appreciate Herzfeld's critique of the oxymoronic term "participant-observation": "an intervention in people's daily lives legitimized by claims of both a humanity that is shared and a sophistication that sets the observer apart" (1987:16). Anthropological theory and paradigms of the last few decades have made strides in recognizing our

particular forms of prejudice embedded within our conceptual frameworks and methodological tools. This section describes my methodology so that my discussions can be understood with as much context as possible.

Interview formats used in this project included informal, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews. Informal interviews consisted of simply “hanging out” and having conversations with participants, with notes taken during and/or afterwards (Bernard 2006:211). Unstructured interviews were times when I did not use formal survey-style questions and instead gathered data through open-ended conversations with participants on general topics or issues they felt were most pertinent. Both of these methods are useful for controlling for researcher bias, as they allow the conversation to be largely determined by the informant, although they do not eliminate bias altogether. Although I sometimes asked the same questions to different informants when conducting semi-structured interviews, my interviews overall were not intended to produce a dataset with statistically significant or consistent questions/answers. Rather, the semi-structured interviews consisted of scheduled appointments with participants who responded to a set range of issues or questions I had prepared beforehand (Bernard 2006:212), usually building on topics other informants had raised and/or context-specific issues. These kind of interviews were held with Romani participants, community workers and activists, and lawyers and other representatives for Romani clients; I only conducted unstructured and semi-structured interviews with the journalists with whom I spoke. Overall, I conducted well over a hundred interviews, not all of which were recorded; it is difficult to state a firm number as the line between conversations and interviews is blurry. I attended dozens of community events where I spoke with many different people. There was a core group of about 30 individuals with whom I repeatedly spoke, and a further periphery of about 50 individuals with whom I met with or spoke to about my research once or twice.

As I explain later in this section, I do not provide many identifying characteristics of the ‘named’ informants in this work. However, there are two interesting areas of intersectionality that I would like to briefly comment on here regarding Romani identity processes. First, gender was explained as playing a significant role in influencing people’s actions and perceptions of community (this was already raised by Jen in Section

2.2.1, discussing the importance of having “strong female role models”). There are some tensions between “traditional” and “non-traditional” persons that were most strongly witnessed with regards to gender. For example, some Romani women were frustrated by the views of some “traditional” members who believed that men were inherently better leaders. During the vast majority of my fieldwork over the past six years, a woman has been in charge of running the RCC, and women regularly constituted a significant portion of the RCC Board. I would also estimate that 50-75% of my key Romani interviews were with women. I have great respect for both the male and female Romani informants with whom I spoke who participate in their community and I do not wish to stereotype or essentialize either gender. Rather, I note this as an area that would benefit from further dedicated research. Similarly, age was another intersectional aspect that deserves further attention (and is raised as a point of interest in Section 5.1). Approximately 40% of my key informants were in their mid-20s to mid-30s, 40% were over 55 years of age, with the remaining 20% made up by people of other ages. This split between “young” and “older” was also raised frequently in the community, especially when discussing advocacy efforts. Youth and teenagers were often the targets of programming, but the majority of community-oriented work was done by persons who either had time on their hands (e.g., being retired) or who had the energy to devote to such projects. Gender and age are thus areas that could add valuable insight into future projects examining Romani identity processes in Canada.

One of the main sites where I conducted participant-observation was the Roma Community Centre (RCC), located during most of my fieldwork<sup>47</sup> in the Crossways Mall. This was the RCC’s first independent location following their association within CultureLink<sup>48</sup>. Their central location to a subway station and not far from heavily Romani-populated neighbourhoods ensured that they could cater more efficiently to Roma in the Greater Toronto Area. This site was extremely significant in a number of

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<sup>47</sup> The RCC has had a number of different locations in the past six years.

<sup>48</sup> CultureLink is a non-profit community-based organization that creates and provides programs and resources for settlement and integration of newcomers to Canada. CultureLink operates out of the same building, Crossways Mall, so it was a good location for continued partnership through occasional events.

ways. First, as a newly independent office, it was exciting to witness how RCC operations, goals, staff, and clients would respond to their new challenges and opportunities.

Second, it was an ideal location to witness the encounters and intersections of so many agents and processes, including Romani advocates, refugee policies, information sharing, identity building, community events, non-Romani partnerships, and more. In 2009, over 90% of all of the recent Romani refugee claimants applied for status in Ontario, with their majority within the Greater Toronto area<sup>49</sup>. In 2009, after examining all of Paul St. Clair's<sup>50</sup> Romani claimant files, we estimated that over 80% of all of these applicants had at one time in the refugee process been in contact with the RCC. In 2011-2012, the RCC estimated over half of the total Romani claimants in downtown Toronto had at one point been assisted or in contact with them (including through their extended networks and partnerships, such as St. Christopher House or Romero House). Thus, the RCC remained a focal point for a great number of Romani claimants and their networks.

Third, as a volunteer at the RCC, I was able to more fully participate (and not just observe) some of the day-to-day operations in a more engaged manner. For example, seemingly mundane tasks, such as helping Romani clients figure out how to receive special dietary requirements, or settlement services, or reach their social assistance worker, all quickly strained my patience as a volunteer. It is relatively easy to observe or read about how policies work on a theoretical level; it is a different experience to navigate that labyrinth step-by-step, experiencing first-hand how these policies play out in reality, with frustrating dead-ends and inconsistencies within such bureaucratic systems. Frequently, as I waited on the phone, I would end up learning much more about the Romani clients I was helping. Other RCC volunteers would translate for us, and we would chat about topics from motivations to coming to Canada, to how they perceived/enacted their Romani ethnicity, to family details and histories, and more. I was

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<sup>49</sup> Based on yearly statistics from IRB Country Reports.

<sup>50</sup> A lawyer who has worked with Romani refugee claimants since 1996, and who has also been at times the Director of the RCC.

repeatedly surprised by how open and candid the clients were; many seemed eager to share their experiences in Central and Eastern Europe and contrast them with their hopes for Canada. I got the feeling that they were often reveling in the new experience of being able to be openly Romani without fear. In these kinds of situations, being non-Romani was perhaps even a beneficial catalyst, as Roma would sometimes feel the need to “get to the bottom” of why I was there, after they had established I was not Romani. A typical follow up question was “if you’re not Roma/Gypsy, then why do you help?”, to which I would explain my role as a researcher interested in documenting their experiences. This would often prompt more detailed answers from them, as well as a renewed passion to help me “see the truth” of what was happening to them back home.

Finally, the RCC was chosen as a main site because of its multiple roles for the community facilitating things like representation, advocacy, education, events, and more. This relatively small space was used for an incredibly wide range of gatherings, events, and purposes. These included formal Board and Executive meetings, Christmas and picnic parties, the creation and expansion of new programs, and workshop/events. It was a location where journalists visited in hopes of interviewing RCC members and its Executive Director, and where drop-ins would inquire “Who are Roma anyway?” It provided space for Romani-focused materials<sup>51</sup>, as well as a place to display Romani-created artwork. As an institution created for assisting its own marginalized members, but still having to adhere to legal and other policies while simultaneously represent its base accurately, the centre also represented a unique area of interface between individuals, community, and governance at different levels.

Other sites that I conducted participant-observation at/within include any areas where Romani events took place (e.g., Toronto Public Library locations, schools, panel discussions, film screenings, parks, churches, fundraisers), within private residences (in Hamilton and Toronto), interviews areas (e.g., cafés, bars, parks), and Immigration and

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<sup>51</sup> Part of this included books, films, and a portable projector, the beginnings of a library collection. I received a grant through the RBC Student Community Service Fund at Western University and received \$750 to help initiate a library for the RCC. After working with Gina, the RCC Director, we decided on a resources list that would best benefit the community.

Refugee Board areas. It is the final site, the IRB offices, which proved most difficult. For my Master's research, I was relatively easily able to attend IRB hearings of Romani claimants as a witness: as long as the Board Member established that I was not a journalist, and that the claimant had personally invited me, I could often stay for the hearing as a witness. Although I visited IRB offices for my PhD research approximately 15-20 times, I was only able to attend two Romani hearings (both occurred in the first half of 2011). After that, any time I accompanied a Romani claimant or family to their hearing, IRB Members asked me to leave. Simply not being a journalist, and having been specifically invited by the family, was no longer enough. Some IRB Members who asked me to leave were apologetic; they told me it was out of their hands, and that without official research permission from the IRB, I was unable to stay/attend. I cannot say if this was accurate, as the rules as expressed on the IRB website and explained by lawyers and IRB representatives rather indicated that witness permission is entirely up to the Board Member's discretion (as long as the claimant has welcomed/invited the witness). Yet other Board Members were far more hostile, and insisted that it was impossible for me to stay. Early on after the first few negative turn-away experiences, I made contact with the official IRB liaison office that arranges and approves researchers as witnesses in refugee claimant hearings<sup>52</sup>. Despite repeated emails, and numerous calls and messages, I never received an answer from them. One day, after again being turned away from a hearing, I was able to personally speak with one of the liaisons: she explained that there had been a "rush" of researchers that they had had to deal with. She apologized, and promised she would sort things out for me. I emailed her twice, and never heard back. I continued to show up at the IRB offices when invited by claimants, but I emphasized to anyone who invited me that there was a good chance that I would not be allowed to stay. Although Romani claimants expressed disappointment when I was repeatedly turned away (they told me they appreciated my presence in what they felt were hostile hearings), these experiences did contribute to my research, and many times simply being in the waiting

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<sup>52</sup> Many researchers rely on this office, as they are not in direct contact with refugee claimants who could invite them personally to their hearings. Instead, a researcher contacts this IRB office, describes the kind of hearing they would like to witness, and the office helps arrange cases in which the Board Member agrees to witnesses.

room chatting with claimants and witnessing the atmosphere/moods of everyone there greatly informed my understandings of the process. It is with great interest that I am awaiting the findings by researcher Tomkinson<sup>53</sup>, with whom I have been in personal correspondence; she has been sitting in on IRB hearings for the past year in Québec as part of her doctoral research.

Beyond participant-observation and interview techniques, I included quantitative and archival research as part of my fieldwork and data collection. Kertzer and Hogan's series *New Perspectives on Anthropological and Social Demography* highlights the significant ways through which demographic research has fuelled policy debates to great consequence yet has been traditionally ignored by the anthropological discipline, which has failed to fully incorporate demographic tools (2002-2006). Although my research remains qualitatively-focused, I agree with Kertzer and Arel's perspective: censuses and other bureaucratic counting processes are far more than mere reflections of social reality and actually play key roles in constructing and influencing that reality (2002:2). To this end, I have continued collecting and analyzing data from the IRB. Demographic and statistical data are normally reported by the government and media as stand-alone, self-evident numbers. One of my aims in Chapter 5 is to contextualize the quantitative analyses within my qualitative findings and larger political and theoretical frameworks in order to critique how statistical reproductions influence particular kinds of policies. This is particularly relevant because Roma are often misrepresented in surveys, censuses, media articles, and government reports; my findings suggest that IRB statistics are not only used in different ways than how Roma experience the IRB process (Butler 2009), but also suggest that such measures like the DCO lists (which rely on quantitative formulas), actually create new and problematic realities. Discussions including both quantitative and qualitative data can demonstrate the connected and convoluted relationships between statistics and people's lived experiences as members of a marginalized group.

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<sup>53</sup> PhD Candidate at the Université de Montréal; work unpublished/in progress.

As part of understanding the quantitative data involved in the refugee determination system process, I have paid special attention to Canadian policies and laws, so as to understand the language and framework of the legal system that creates this data. There have been dramatic changes to the IRB system, most recent of which has been Bill C-31, which took effect December 15, 2012. Other changes and policies are also examined, as they occurred in recent years and continue to dramatically affect Romani individuals and refugee claimants. I situated these policies within larger Canadian and international contexts following the kind of work as done by Chimni (1998), Knowles (2007), Kymlicka (1995), and Simmons (2010).

Part of my fieldwork also included archival and public discourse analyses. I spent approximately one week at the Archives of Ontario (York) looking into past references to Roma in historical Ontario/Canadian documents and photographs. I spent approximately two weeks at the Weldon Archives at Western University researching Gypsy stereotypes in popular culture for a side project that nonetheless ended up providing me with a deeper understanding of Gypsy representations. I also kept abreast of media reports, news articles, and documentaries on Canadian refugee and immigration systems and Romani topics in order to look at public attitudes and representations of refugees and ethnic stereotypes. Nordberg (2004) demonstrates how studying such public-scapes are an excellent means to analyze public attitudes, especially with regard to Romani issues. In accordance with Western University's Ethics Board approval, all data, notes, audio-recordings, and transcriptions were gathered by myself and have been stored in a secure manner. The only other person with access to my data has been my supervisor and principle investigator, Dr. Randa Farah. Furthermore, in adherence to Ethics Board protocols, consent was obtained from all participants before any interviews took place, as well as regarding whether audio recording was permitted. As expected, there were cases when an informant agreed to an interview but did not allow audio recordings. In lieu of signing physical consent forms, I gained consent verbally from my participants. Roma are justifiably reluctant to sign forms, as they have often experienced negative consequences when identifying themselves to any formal kind of organization or representative (see Hancock 2005; Koulis 2005; Ladányi and Szeléyi 2006). Newcomer Roma, especially those from extremely hostile home regions, often regard formal interviews and signatures



as institutional tricks (McGarry 2009; Sigona 2005) or other methods intended to target and negatively affect them and/or their refugee claims<sup>54</sup>. Furthermore, receiving written consent is further complicated when considering any differences or ability in language comprehension (especially when dealing with Ethics Board jargon). Such tactics have even been used in the past decade as a means to have Romani women in Eastern European countries sign papers they do not fully understand which are actually sterilization papers (Zampas and Lamačková 2011). Newcomers were not the only ones with concerns regarding signatures: many Canadian-born Roma expressed wariness (or reluctance towards any relationship with authorities and institutions, explored further in Chapter 5). If I had insisted on obtaining physical signatures, I doubt they would have been as open as they were when discussing their perspectives and thoughts. It is understood that gaining permission from informed participants in general can present difficulties and obstacles for many anthropologists and researchers who work with marginalized groups and individuals; I believe many of these concerns were largely assuaged by my long-term involvement with the Romani community and Roma Community Centre.

Romani communities are often generally closed towards outsiders so that many researchers have difficulties convincing Roma to participate (Hancock 2005; Ladányi and Szelényi 2006), and, as mentioned earlier, Roma have long been the targets of long-term persecution and discrimination and are thus justifiably wary of institutionally affiliated researchers. There additionally exists a reluctance to self-identify as Roma to non-Romani individuals (Koulis 2005; Lee 2008, 2009; Petrova 2003; Sway 1988:6; Walsh and Krieg 2007:170; cf. De Genova 2002 for non-Romani examples).

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<sup>54</sup> I learned this about the Canadian context when conducting my MA research (Butler 2009), when Romani informants expressed their concern that I was “working for the government” or that any information they told me would be reported. During my PhD fieldwork time, there was also an incident regarding a (non-Romani) refugee claimant whose personal details (including her asylum and criminal records) were purposefully released by Minister Kenney into mainstream media reports (Keung 2012). Roma were aware of this, and subsequently worried that their personal details may also become public knowledge—further increasing their risk of targeted persecution by anti-Roma and neo-Nazi groups in Canada, in Hungary, and other regions of Central and Eastern Europe.

Being a long-standing researcher and supporter of the RCC and Roma rights in general has also enabled me to attend special events. For example, I was one of the few non-Romani individuals invited to the meeting held on October 30, 2011 between the RCC and the CIC (which included the surprise attendance by Jason Kenney). Additionally, I am an invited/approved member of Romani listservs and Facebook groups, which are a valuable source of information, as members from all over the world engage in discussions with each other on topical issues related to Romani rights and injustices. Even though my position as researcher has been clear, I sought permission before reproducing specific information.

There were some challenges that I encountered during my fieldwork. Interviewing urban newcomer and immigrant groups presents researchers with some logistical issues: for example, there may be challenges in accessing informants, especially in the context of conducting urban ethnography, as explored by Low (1997; 1996). Such issues are frequently compounded by linguistic obstacles. As I do not speak Romani/Romanes, Czech, Slovakian, or Hungarian, four of the main languages of newcomer Roma in Toronto, my options were limited to English-speaking participants and the availability (and ability) of interpreters. The majority of my interviews and time spent talking with people was conducted in English; some people spoke English as a native language, while others had gained fluency after residing for years in Canada. Some conversations and interviews were conducted with the help of volunteer translators: RCC staff and volunteers frequently assisted, while sometimes I arranged translation help beforehand for a scheduled interview. There were also some times when an informant who was being interviewed would act as the interpreter for other Romani individuals around us; for example, Elena acted as interpreter for her own parents, and then again for the Roma around us at an IRB scheduling conference. As such persons were not trained translators and were frequently still learning English, the excerpts from their interviews and conversations that I use in this dissertation are usually edited for grammatical clarity (though I always keep it as close to the original meaning as possible). I do recognize the limitations of interviews that relied upon translators (Borchgrevink 2003). For example, there may have been some reluctance to share personal details with yet another person. To help mitigate this effect, all of the translators and interpreters that helped me were

either Romani themselves or worked closely with the RCC. Simply hiring an outside Czech or Hungarian translator would not have been as effective because of the negative and historical relationships that often exist between Roma and their neighbours. This has been previously identified as a major obstacle in performing precise translations during IRB hearings (Butler 2009; Rousseau et al. 2002), but has also recently been reiterated by the independent findings from the Canadian Council of Refugees (2012), who produced a report detailing the experience of refugee claimants as they navigated the Canadian system<sup>55</sup>.

In this dissertation, I have used stories and excerpts from interviews. Briggs proposes that narratives “produce subjects, texts, knowledge, and authority”, especially in relation to how informants’ stories are communicated and circulated through varying settings, functions, and consequences (2007:552). One of Gubriem and Holstein’s contributions to narrative analysis is their emphasis that “the contexts in which stories are told are as much a part of their reality as the texts themselves” (2009:2); in an extended framework which includes refugee life stories (e.g., Ghorashi 2007), it was necessary to locate the interpreting and analyzing of narrative data. This is echoed by Eastmond, who argues that narratives should be valued for their creation of a dynamic view of the subject because they provide opportunities or entry points into grasping the complex interplays between self and society that create “a meaningful and coherent order, imposing on reality a unity which it does not inherently possess”(2007:250). Narratives should not be seen as simply reflecting life as lived, but instead “as creative constructions or interpretations of the past, generated in specific contexts of the present” (Eastmond 2007:250). My research depended on gaining deep understandings of lived experiences and perceptions of being Romani in Canada and/or as an asylum-seeker in the immigration system of Canada. As informants and contacts played an active role in the direction of my research questions, I tailored my conceptual focus to correspond and engage with ethnic identity and representation processes, as these emerged as significant for Romani informants.

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<sup>55</sup> For full disclosure, I volunteered on this project and contributed the Romani interviews that were included. However, many other informants in the study also brought up similar translator issues as a specific concern.

Although the Romani community in the GTA is extensive and varied, the core community that makes up the RCC and other education/advocacy projects is considerably smaller. Being as this is also a formative time for awareness of Romani issues in Canada, the Romani individuals who are actively known in the media are also relatively limited in number, though growing. I am also limited in elaborating on the background of people with whom I have worked closely, as my position within the RCC was well known and I have associated closely with some specific individuals. For example, if I described a Romani author who helped found the RCC, Roma as well as non-Roma would likely have no problem identifying this man as Ronald Lee, much less if I provided further details about his age, citizenship, family ancestry, languages, etc. Likewise, if I described at all the Executive Director of the RCC, or any of the numerous programs she has spear-headed, anyone could look her up (if they were not already familiar with her) and discover her name is Gina Csanyi-Robah. These two examples are relatively well-known Roma in the Canadian context<sup>56</sup> and their identities are generally public knowledge. However, it is most likely impossible to provide anonymity to *anyone* who is a general active member in the RCC and still provide meaningful and detailed background to their person/individual context. Even stating someone as an RCC Board Member can be too detailed, despite the relevance this experience has on their perspectives; the Board typically has 10-14 members, a minority of which can be non-Romani. Further divided by gender (if identified as such in my narrative excerpts), the potential individuals may be narrowed to only two or three people in a given time period.

However, as one of the main goals of this project has been to situate the lack of Romani representation and knowledge of the challenges they experience in Canada, I believe it is imperative to include Romani voices and narratives as often as possible. I have therefore taken a three-pronged approach in my methodology towards making sure I could include as much of their thoughts as possible without inadvertently identifying informants. First, any quotes or excerpts from identifiable people (like Ron and Gina) are presented with

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<sup>56</sup> They are both such significant actors in the Canadian milieu that Levine-Rasky's upcoming book *Writing the Roma* devotes a chapter to each of them.

their explicit permission<sup>57</sup>. This only happens when I have decided that their identity (as a writer, leader, etc.) is necessary so that the reader can contextualize the full meaning of their words/sentiments, if they requested non-anonymity, or if their statements are a matter of public record. Second, I have given pseudonyms<sup>58</sup> to informants. However, I have sometimes altered characteristics (such as gender or age) when introducing them in text, when such details are not critical to the narrative or specific topic at hand. When in any doubt, I have left out any definitively identifying characteristics and/or altered their excerpt to remove such details. In this way, I can still provide the reader with some specifics (to show the sheer range of characteristics of interviewees). Third, I have omitted names/pseudonyms altogether in cases where I have felt the quotes or ideas can stand on their own. Such examples are usually from informants, who—should someone compile all of their quotes—would be able to figure out their identity. In rare cases, unattributed quotes are from individuals who I did not personally interview (such as public comments left on online newspaper articles or other online arenas).

In addition to refugee claimants, I interviewed Canadian-born Roma, long-term Romani residents of Canada, accepted refugees, non-Romani journalists and advocates, lawyers, various settlement-services affiliated persons, and former IRB Members. My informants have diverse backgrounds and show how difficult it is to generalize Roma (e.g., “Roma are x, y, z”, or “This one particular reaction represents how all Roma or people working with Roma feel about x, y, z policy”). Indeed, many people bridge such definitions and complicate any bounded notions of identity and experiences. Therefore my point is that a purposefully wide and diverse range of informants reflects better the complicated and messy realities Roma (and their communities) face when engaging with multiple agents

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<sup>57</sup> For example, this section was sent to Ron and Gina for their approval. I also confirmed approval by the speaker in every case when a real name is used, even when the quotes or information is part of the public domain.

<sup>58</sup> The names chosen do not follow any pattern or consistency—they might be Anglicized versions of Eastern European names, or from that person’s similar linguistic/ethnic group name, a name that I thought fitting, and/or a name preferred by the informant themselves. Some informants’ original names were based on their Romani or European ancestry, others were not: there was no clear divide and thus I did not see it relevant to restrict pseudonyms similarly. In fact, the many popular/common Romani and European names are purposefully not often given as pseudonyms because many community members shared those names and I do not want any confusion or speculation about their identities.

(e.g., public, state, groups), as well as underscores the significance of shared experiences or perspectives when they occur across such varied backgrounds.

### 2.3.3 Anthropological engagements

“Anthropologists cannot escape physically, ethically, and emotionally the suffering or the brutality of their research subjects and the historical epoch in which they live.”  
(Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006:xii)

For me, conducting fieldwork with a marginalized and persecuted group without also advocating for their better treatment when presented with the opportunity would have been unethical. However, the premise of “applied” or “advocacy” anthropology has long been contentious. For example, Paine’s response (1990) to an unfavourable review of his edited book (1985) on advocacy and anthropology in turn sparked a string of responses from other various researchers hotly debating the topic. Hastrup and Elsass, though remarking that advocacy does call into question the very nature of anthropological representation, nonetheless stated that anthropological advocacy is ambiguous at best, and questioned whether such a thing can truly exist, describing it as “contradictory” and “incompatible” (1990). They in turn were responded to by Gray, who posited their positioning was binary and arbitrary, and instead emphasized how the very existence of anthropology has socio-political ramifications (regardless of whether one believes their work to be applied or advocacy related) while demanding acknowledgement of our own inherent non-neutral liminalities as researchers (1990:387). Singer concurred, going so far as to demonstrate on a continuum how all anthropology exists *as* advocacy, noting scholarship overall as also being “inescapably political” (1990:549). Hastrup and Elsass replied in turn with further points to consider regarding issues of representation, stating that “anthropological discourse is always hierarchically related to its subject matter” and that “in order to speak *about* something, one must frame it in language of a different order” (1990:389, emphasis in original). Ultimately, they argue this as a logical obstacle, in that people can only oscillate between positions, not speak from both positions at the same time (Gray et al. 1990:389).

Although I agree with some of Hastrup and Elsass’ points regarding the imperative to constantly question representation processes, especially when one has taken on a role of

academic advocate or activist, I especially do not find their final point—that one cannot speak from both positions at the same time—to be necessarily true. As with identities, I take the position that there are dynamic multiplicities at work, and though we can single certain aspects out at different times, we should not ignore their concurrent contexts, nor can we enforce any kind of fixed boundaries between them. However, I am also of the opinion that the idea of a divide between “pure” anthropology and “applied” anthropology (deconstructed in relation to education by González (2010)) is also a false dichotomy. It is thus difficult for me to see how one could conduct anthropological research with Roma and not become similarly immersed in the applications of such work.

Debates and disagreements regarding the role of ethical anthropology politics and advocacy are not new. For example, Boas condemned anthropologists during WWI who spied for the US government and Malinowski warned against anthropologists being spies or agent provocateurs (Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006:3). Today the conversation continues, as anthropologists make individual decisions regarding how they feel regarding the “professional obligation of researchers to contribute their expertise to public policy debates” (Sanford and Angel-Ajani 2006:3, quoting an excerpt from the 1971 AAA Code of Ethics). These discussions raise some of the complicated issues that are similarly present in identity processes, which is not surprising, considering every anthropologist or researcher in their respective field must learn what that identity means and how they define it in their own contexts. In my own work, I have faced questions such as: to what extent should I become involved? Where and when do I draw my own ethical or moral lines<sup>59</sup>? When is silence and/or speaking up a breach of trust? What is my responsibility and/or obligation as a researcher, ally, advocate, friend?

It is interesting to note that an etymological or semantic discussion regarding “advocacy” brings us back to the term “vocation”, suggesting the calling of advocates as one of

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<sup>59</sup> As noted, I have of course conducted all of my research according to the Western Research Ethics Board. However, such a bureaucratic system for determining one’s own ethics is not possible, especially considering the fact that such processes are inadequate in almost every sense for preparing anthropologists for fieldwork considerations or ethical dilemmas. In fact, I believe it has the potential to do harm, as inexperienced researchers may believe since they are adhering to the ethics as defined, then they are adequately protecting their informants.

occupation (Proschan 2004:267). More broadly, advocates are those who “defend or speak for” others (Proschan 2004:267). This has been pointed out as problematic, with good cause, by anthropologists concerned with our Othering tradition by simplistically representing the people we study. This reflexivity is useful, especially in offering insight towards understanding the (re)productions of inequalities in global landscapes, within national boundaries, across perceived cultural groups, and between individuals. In their introduction to their book on being an “engaged observer” and the interrelationship between anthropology, advocacy, and activism, Sanford and Angel-Ajani state: “By informing fieldwork with critical theory, anthropologists can make the connections between macro forces and intimate social relations, emotions, and dispositions so that individuals are no longer misrecognized as having to be worthy victims or blameful agents” (2006:xi).

This informs my own perspective, and I believe there are innumerable ways that anthropology has relevance as an applied discipline and as home to advocates. Lende does an admirable and compelling job in summarizing the role of public anthropology and our discipline overall using the recent tragedy of the Newtown massacre as a case study, while demanding “both action and resolution” (2013:498). González writes on the anthropological perspective as applied to education engagements, and uses as an example the phrase “anthropolitical linguistics” to emphasize the “complex connections between language, political economy, and social identities” (2010:S256). Haines examines the intersections of migration, policy, and anthropology, but he also calls on us to pay attention to how anthropology should *purposefully* be working to bring migrant voices to policy tables and scholarship: such voices “are the ones who will know best if policies work” (2013:86). Outside of socio-cultural work, an example includes how anthropology and/or archaeology is entangled with land claims (Clemmer 2004; Rigsby 1995). This highly political debate is further complicated when research is used in ways unpredicted by the authors themselves as they find themselves immersed within histories, colonial processes, identity negotiations, politics, and more. Kirsch, introducing a collection of articles based on the topic of engaged anthropology, sums the seeming contradiction in attitudes towards such practices: anthropology encourages critical thought of its students



to “read against the archival grain” and denaturalize conventional political terms and more (2010:71).

Yet, historically, the anthropological discipline is not comfortable when its own ethnography is conceived, enacted, or integrated within political engagements (Kirch 2010:71). Kirch’s questions, regarding what new modes of ethnography (when conceptualized as a mode of political engagement) might look like or reshape the field of anthropology, remain largely unanswered. There are anthropologists directly engaging with these questions and concerns. For example, Resnick reflects on fieldwork with Roma in Bulgaria by offering her opinion on the relationships and pressures that advocacy-focused anthropologists often face: “The engaged anthropologist cannot control the consequences of actions any more than anyone else can, but engaged anthropology might do well to question more explicitly the relationship of communication to its (intended and unintended) consequences” (2010:107). This ultimately leads us back to discussions involving governance and intentionality, a necessary reminder that we cannot fully control what happens in our own lives, nor are we able to control for all the possibilities when immersed in fieldwork. Reminiscent of the “Buddhist paradox,”<sup>60</sup> Leve describes, Roma face a global “identity machine” that encourages particular/specific processes of self-definition, usually ones without Romani participation. As the next chapter demonstrates, this is based on (and circularly and/or retroactively justified by) historical accounts of Romani experiences that do not include Romani presence or perspectives.

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<sup>60</sup> Wherein Buddhists in Nepal are often caught between their religious worldview, in which there is no ‘self’ and thus no individual identity, while simultaneously struggling to raise awareness and recognition of their groups (which requires defining their group and selves) (Leve 2011). Leve had attempted to “collect a ‘life history’ from someone who conceptualized life as nothing more than an impermanent succession of mental and physical events” (2011:516), while also noting that this same informant was deeply involved as a community member striving for self-recognition from the government and in other political arenas. Buddhists thus face a complex situation when attempting to utilize the same channels and “classificatory practices of the Nepal state” that many minority ethnic groups had previously navigated and used to assert a common identity (Leve 2011:517).

## Chapter 3 – Histories, and historical Romani identities in Canada

### 3 Introduction

Just as the opening example in Chapter 1 regarding Hungarian refugee claimants challenged assumptions and helped illuminate some of our preconceived notions about Roma in Canada, discussions on histories (understood as reconstructions of the past) can be similarly understood as areas that defy expectations, reinforce prejudices or believed truths, and/or expose presumptions. However, such conceptualizations of history require the acknowledgement that it is not a fact, a given, or an immutable truth. Rather, people write history “in the present for particular purposes, and the selection and interpretation of ‘sources’ are always arbitrary” (Olick and Robbins 1998:110). History is also a kind of social memory, “a convenient piece of shorthand which sums up the rather complex process of selection and interpretation” (Burke 1989, cited by Olick and Robbins 1998:110). Therefore history—or, plural histories, since there is not only a single account of the past—lets us examine not only historical perspectives, but also the intersections of power, agency, and representation as conceptual forces and processes. What people know about Roma and Romani histories (and thus affecting identity processes) is deeply complicated by social, political, and cultural contexts. This chapter seeks to challenge pre-conceived understandings of history by emphasizing Roma in Canada and shedding light on some of their experiences. Through discussions on their historical presence in Canada, some of the most relevant historical circumstances relating to Romani immigration to Canada, and Romani perspectives on their history, I intend to demonstrate how Roma have been essentialized in historical accounts and why their inclusion is valuable outside of Romani-specific studies.

I found the following correspondence during my research, which reflects some of the historical biases towards Roma in Canada. Dated in 1914, these letters are between

varying government official in Ontario seeking justification to rid the province of “gypsies”<sup>61</sup>:

Dear Sir; -- This County is infested by two bands of foreign Gypsies who are making a general nuisance of themselves and causing a good many complaints to be made. If we arrest them and send them all to Gaol we would not have room for them although from actions, fortune telling, begging & c., they are I fancy, Vagrants, in any event, they should if possible be deported. Can you suggest any way out of the difficulty for me?

—Crown Attorney of Chatham

I shall be glad if you will advise me if your Department will take steps at once to rid the country of these people. I understand you have been trying to locate them, and trust you may now be able to send them out of this country.

—Deputy Attorney General of Toronto

Referring to your letter, concerning two bands of gypsies, I beg to inform you that a band of gypsies was located at Glencoe on the 25<sup>th</sup> instant and another band at Sandwich West on the 26<sup>th</sup> instant. Our investigation, however, shows that the members of these nomadic tribes are not subject to deportation. The heads of the families were in possession of certificates of naturalization in Canada and quite a large number of these people seem to have been born in this country. It will, therefore not be possible for the Department to do anything in these particular cases.

—Superintendent of Immigration

This correspondence clearly establishes that Roma were living in Canada in the early 1900s, suggesting even earlier dates of residence (as it is noted that some had been born in Canada). This already complicates popular understandings of Canadian history, as it demonstrates that Roma have lived in Canada for over 100 years. Such history contradicts mainstream stereotyping that all Roma in Canada are newcomer, bogus refugee claimants hoping to manipulate or abuse the Canadian immigration system, and certainly challenges the idea that Canada should not accept *any* Roma who wish to migrate (cf. news analyses in Chapter 4).

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<sup>61</sup> Archives of Ontario: File RG 4-32, No.906, “With reference to deportation of foreign gypsies in the County of Kent”, H.D. Smith (1914)

Moreover, these letters expose the anti-Roma/Gypsy racism, stereotypes, and discrimination present over 100 years ago, as we see still today in Canadian politics, policies, and attitudes. The officials in question assumed that such “gypsies” must, by their nature, be “foreign”; stereotypical understandings of “gypsies” meant that Roma were automatically perceived as undesirable or unworthy immigrants. Such anti-Roma sentiments can be considered one of most persistent forms of racism against an ethnic minority through time and are reproduced in numerous and varied ways (described as such and termed “Romaphobia” by Ljubic et al. 2012). Taken into consideration with the fact that similar attitudes have existed towards other migrant and/or minority groups, these historical accounts challenge the idea that Canada is, and always has been, a multicultural and tolerant country.

Finally, the discourse, expectations, and tone present in the above exchange allow us to critically view the related parallels within contemporary Canadian immigration and refugee determination processes. Immigration processes today are borne from historical foundations; the sovereign rules and laws that exist today need to be understood in their context as gained through protracted struggles by First Nations, immigrants, and groups like women and workers. The accusations and contemporary justifications that thus appeal to the idea that Romani refugee claimants are bogus align Roma with violating these laws. However, this historical correspondence serves as a reminder of how marginalized ethnic and/or minority groups are defined and labeled by ruling elites seeking to classify who belong—and who is excluded from the Canadian nation-state—as well as reinforce a kind of national identity envisioned by those with power. Drawing upon scholars working within anthropologies of policy and power (Bourdieu 1977; Cruikshank 1999; De Certeau 1984; Okongwu and Mencher 2000; Rose and Miller 1992; Gupta and Sharma 2006; Shore et al. 2011; Shore and Wright 1997), this chapter demonstrates some of the ways in which Romani perspectives and experiences of history/histories are necessary for understanding Romani identity processes. In turn, this chapter provides a foundation for understanding representation processes that Chapters 4 and 5 examine through media and advocacy, respectively.

### 3.1 Historical Romani origins

This section provides the reader with a brief discussion on the overall historical origins of Roma. This background is useful for later discussions on belonging, identity, history, and memory, all of which contribute to the understandings of contemporary Romani people in Canada and their relationships with each other and non-Roma. This is particularly relevant considering how “minorities of all kinds can and do voice their cultural claims, not on the basis of explicit theories of culture but in the name of historical authenticity. They enter the debate not as academics—or not only as academics—but as situated individuals with rights to historicity” (Trouillot 2003:10). Trouillot states that such self-representation causes tension when examined by academics (who are caught “off guard” when people present personalized histories) and that we need to reformulate our theoretical approaches to reconcile the “radical authenticity of the first person” accounts with “conservative canonical truths” (2003:10).

Interestingly, a recent mainstream news cycle regarding the historical origins of Roma in December 2012 perfectly encapsulates these tensions and relationships; new genetic research has sparked public interest in Romani origins (Nelson 2012; Giles Tremlett 2012; Varma 2012). Newly publicized research unequivocally stated that Roma were from northwest India, in a single group movement based on exact parental population groups, circa 500CE (Rai et al. 2012). Related news articles and research spurred debate not only among non-Roma, ranging from disbelief to intrigue, but also among Roma, who discussed among themselves which aspects they agreed with and/or which aspects they felt were not accurate. Incidents like this provide an excellent opportunity to understand more comprehensively the kinds of identity processes that are bound up or tangled within public commentary regarding one’s supposed history<sup>62</sup>.

The fact of India (not Egypt) as their originating territory has been long known. In the 1700s, linguistic analyses began positing Indian origin hypotheses (at least, as a

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<sup>62</sup> For example, the circumstances described in Footnote 20 regarding the “fair”, blue-eyed, blond children taken from their Romani families in Ireland and Greece. DNA testing was used in both cases, determining Romani ancestry, although the Greek incident involved Bulgarian Romani parentage.

‘legitimate’ discussion—one can assume prior to academic evidence/interest, Roma who asserted Indian ancestry would likely have not been believed). By the early 2000s, genetic research had confirmed Indian origins (Gresham et al. 2001; Hunter et al. 2002; Ioviță and Schurr 2004; Kalaydjieva et al. 2001; Morar et al. 2004; Perić et al. 2005). I explored this topic in more detail in my MA Thesis (Butler 2009). Further genetic research conducted in the past ten years has expounded on this topic in various ways, all reaffirming Indian origins (e.g., Gabriková et al. 2012; Gusmão et al. 2008; Kalaydjieva et al. 2005; Nagy et al. 2007; Pamjav et al. 2011; Salihović et al. 2011). As summarized by Bakker in a comprehensive report of genetic research on Romani origins, “the results of linguistic and genetic research appear to be compatible: genetic research proves an Indian origin, subsequent splits and the founding of groupings by limited number of ancestors and often limited mixture with outsiders” (2012:91). Although some questions surrounding Romani origins (such as exactly when they left, from what region(s), exact routes, size of the population, the cause(s) of migration, etc.) are still debated, it does at least provide a clear-cut and “unambiguous proof of Indian ancestry” (Bakker 2012:105). Despite such evidence, such claims remain controversial:

The genetic studies surveyed here have basically confirmed what linguists and anthropologists already had found out: the Indian origin of the Roms (Gresham et al. 2001: 1328 mention the “strong evidence of Asian origins”), their migration route to Europe (to a limited extent), their dispersion into groups after their arrival in Europe, and a history of endogamy within extended clans. This provides rather devastating evidence against the claims of historians Leo Lucassen (1996) and Wim Willems (1997) and social anthropologist Judith Okely (1983) that the Roms are Europeans and emerged through social stigmatization (Bakker 2012:106).

This research—and its reactions—demonstrates that particular kinds of evidence are perceived as more valuable or reliable than others, as well as demonstrates some of the consequences of our own cognitive biases, such as selective perceptions leading to erroneous extrapolations. Genetic evidence is generally perceived as holding a more scientific value than the theories of linguists and anthropologists; this is despite the sophistication required of grammatical and other analyses, much less the insights that

could be gained from so-called speculative lines of evidence can bring, such as from oral narratives.

We are also living in a time where genetic testing is complicating histories and perceptions of self and nation. Reardon and Tallbear's discussion of public engagement between genetics/DNA and indigenous histories is an excellent example for understanding how genetics can be viewed not as absolute truth, but rather as another form of storytelling practice (2012). "We want to call attention to emerging research in which scientists are rethinking their research questions such that they reflect not only a 'European' view of historical events (including genomic events) and values about which knowledge is important to produce but also which address a broader array of stand-points, thus resulting in a broader array of 'truths'" (Reardon and Tallbear 2012: S244). Although they make sure to note that such research constitutes only a different line of evidence, and not one inherently superior to other forms, it is fairly common for people to believe genetics (and 'science' in general) more readily than other forms of information. Tallbear (2013) explores some of these trends by critically examining the social and political consequences of genetics research when linked to "racial science" paradigms. As such, it is thus common through these genetics research projects today that people will more readily acknowledge Indian origins for Roma.

However, it is important to point out that there remain people who refuse to acknowledge this ancestry at all. One of the most prevalent arguments for this way of thinking relies on the belief that Roma are simply a "criminal culture" and actively pretend to be an ethnicity (usually framed as taking advantage of social assistance programs). This builds on long-standing stereotypes and ideologies passed down generations by people who refuse to acknowledge Roma as an ethnic group and who will thus ignore any evidence to the contrary. It is also worth questioning *why* it is easier for people to accept genetic research over linguistic or oral research. This point is directly connected to histories and our framework of time/events: whose words are believed more readily than others, and what forms of history or knowledge productions are considered superior to others?

Returning specifically to Romani histories, it is also very illuminating to discuss the reactions to the theories of one of the most well-known Romani historians and linguists, Ian Hancock. Even among those who have acknowledged that Roma do in fact have Indian origins, there are many who continue to refute his well-founded theories on *why* Roma left India. In summary<sup>63</sup>, Hancock has posited that “proto-Roma” were composed of different groups of people from northwest India (with their own dialects, etc.) who came together after being captured as prisoners-of-war<sup>64</sup> by the Ghaznavids (2006). Following the Ghaznavid defeat at the hands of the Seljuq Turks in 1038CE, the “proto-Roma” community began to develop their own language and culture (Hancock 2005:8-13). Romani then “crystallized into an ethnic mother tongue under the influence of Byzantine Greek” (Hancock 2006:16), and dates the earliest account of Romani presence at the gateway to the Balkans in the late 1200s (Hancock 2005:15), leading the way to Romani migration into mainland Europe in the 1300s. One of Hancock’s students (Vijay John) is currently researching some oral legends in India that seem to lend support to his theory (Pillai 2013). Hancock details his previous work, including how he has significantly revised his theory since he first began researching this topic, in one of the selections in his collected works (2010). His reflections demonstrate his willingness to adjust theories and interpretations according to the available facts, all the while contextualizing various facets of his theories. This theory is contrary to those who posit that Roma were *always* itinerant and/or outcasts, certainly not ever high-caste warriors of any kind (for example, as put forth by Fonseca (1995) or Moreau (1995)). Hancock’s theories have been received with outright hostility in some cases, which he believes is in part because of his position as Romani and scholar. For example, he has countered

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<sup>63</sup> This summary does not do justice to the analysis put forth by Hancock and his peers, including Kenneth Lee, Ronald Lee, and Adrian Marsh, and if the reader is interested in understanding historical Romani theories, I would strongly recommend the following selections: Hancock (2010: 54-94); Hancock (2005); and Hancock (2006).

<sup>64</sup> Prisoners would have included soldiers, but in fact, the majority would have been comprised of entire communities, as was the practice at the time. Thus, women and children would have also been part of the captured camps. Hancock emphasized to me in personal correspondence that “the ‘high caste’ component of the migration, however, would have been very small, in my opinion—only the top rank of the military force which otherwise consisted of a greater number of lower-caste recruits. The fighting force itself was outnumbered by the service providers (camp followers) that accompanied them - the most important group since they were female as well as male”. (Hancock 2005; Correspondence 2013)



criticism against him that he has “neither linguistic nor historical evidence to support” his theory by similarly questioning critics’ own lack of evidence to support their accounts (Hancock 2010:55). When I asked Hancock to elaborate on this tendency, he said:

This is nothing new...But to understand *why* non-specialist commentators should feel the need to deride anything positive about Roma you have to look at history. The popular image of the romantic or the excitingly sinister ‘gypsy’ is very, very deeply embedded in the popular perception, and has provided fodder for literally tens of thousands of novels, movies, songs, and continues to do so despite the mass of accurate information now easily available to those who keep it alive. And having to deconstruct this stereotype and learn new, sobering facts is not only an effort, but a disappointment. The situation of Roma today is not a happy or attractive one at all. At the end of one semester a student came up to me and said “Professor Hancock, I have learnt so much about Romani people in your class, but I have to confess that I’m disappointed.” I asked her why. She said “Because when I came in, I had a romantic and enviable image in my mind about Gypsies, and now you’ve taken that away.” (Correspondence 2013)

This serves as another example of how exclusionary and/or racist ideologies come to affect our perceptions of knowledge, history, and memory. Some people are simply unable or unwilling to reconcile their understandings of contemporary Roma (e.g., “dirty”, “criminal”) as ever being anything different. Denying difference through time not only limits scientific research but ultimately reinforces negative and stereotypical societal understandings (which can then be turned into accepted policies or ideologies).

As recent studies on Romani origins continue to attempt to answer some of the major questions regarding their exact routes, departure times, and more, their findings continue to spur debate. As noted, they may come up against historical ideologies (how the world works), or perceived information paradigms (what kind of information is valued). My main point in this brief summary of Romani Indian origins has been to emphasize how flexible historical ‘truths’ have been: Roma have been perceived as from Egypt and India, as well as belonging to no ethnicity (and originating land) at all. Research conducted exploring the specifics of their history can similarly be besieged by those with vested interests in a particular theory. All of these processes influence and are influenced by how people remember and perceive their own identities, relating to how certain forms of

information are prioritized. Thus, what we might see initially as disjunctures and contradictions can actually be understood as concurrent and multiple aspects of identity, all contributing valuable insights into things such as who belongs within national or ethnic identities, or who is excluded from such definitions—and how that can change over time and context.

### 3.1.1 European Romani histories

This section is a brief summary of Romani history after their departure from India so that the reader can better contextualize the processes of exclusion, marginalization, and other discriminatory systems that Roma have faced since then in Europe and beyond. These processes continue to play a significant role in identity processes today, and it is also important to review this because such experiences are frequently not included in traditional history lessons. Indeed, as Chapter 5 relates, the lack of knowledge—even among Roma themselves of their own history—is the focus of many advocacy programs intended to educate children, their families, and the general public on their history.

Most accounts, regardless of whether they concur on exact departure dates from India, agree that Roma were definitely present in Europe by the late 1300s in the easternmost regions and by the 1500s for the northern- and westernmost regions (Crowe 2003:82). It is impossible to generalize a single Romani European experience or history, because they split up as they moved across the continent, many settling, others moving on voluntarily and/or involuntarily. As they lived in different areas, they adapted to local dialects and cultures in varying degrees. Thus, many different regional clans or groups of Roma exist, all with specific dialects and traditions and who have encountered and engaged with heterogeneous European regional groups over time, resulting in further diversification.

However, there are shared experiences that most European Roma have faced at one time or another: discrimination, exclusion, and persecution. Although expressions of these actions differ in their individual contexts, Roma have been especially targeted throughout Europe, usually due to xenophobic attitudes towards perceived outsiders. Petrova describes the complex and exceptional results that centuries of discrimination, exclusion, marginalization, and persecution have had on Roma (2003). Despite these horrendous

experiences, “Gypsy groups have preserved strong elements of a common ethnocultural self-consciousness, which serves as one of the bases for the continuing construction of the Romani identity” (Petrova 2003:112). She notes that factors such as their late arrival to the European continent (populated by already settled communities), their notable difference from other societies and cultures of the time, and even their social and political structural weaknesses have worked together to preserve a sense of belonging and identity (Petrova 2003:112-113). “Attitudes and practices that reproduce the pariah status of the Gypsies are deeply entrenched anti-Gypsism and the systematic abuse of their human rights in the last few centuries, including widespread persecution and racial discrimination. These same factors can be described as the root causes of both anti-Gypsism and the survival of the Roma as one single—but not...internally homogeneous—cultural identity” (Petrova 2003:113). Since these experiences have so deeply affected Romani identity processes, we need to acknowledge these histories.

Roma have experienced numerous injustices throughout their history, including enslavement, forced sterilization, expulsions, special “hunts” and permissions to kill on sight, legalized rape and murders, segregated communities and schools, property theft, linguistic restrictions, forced adoptions, and outright genocide. “Leave or be hounded to death. This became the choice constantly forced upon Gypsies in most of Europe” (Kenrick and Puxon 2009:6). Kemény covers some of this history in his piece situating Hungarian history for Roma, noting that “persecution of Roma evidently began very early on”, with issues ordering anti-Roma laws as early as 1497 in Germany and other regions (Kemény 2005:3). Fraser points out how edicts in 1497-1500 singled out Roma as accused of espionage (1995:86), Kenrick and Puxon describe branding for females and children in Germany (1973:42–45), Trubeta provides some background on treatment of Roma in the Balkans leading up to WWII (2003), while Hancock (1987), Crowe (2007) and others contribute overall to these histories. From these sources and more, the following is a small sample of some of the laws and policies through time that have targeted Roma; I chose these specifically to show the breadth of geographical region and type of punishments faced for existing as Roma in Europe (see Silverman, Arbel, and Beaudoin (2012) for specific sources):

1417: Germany's first known anti-Roma law comes into effect. Forty eight more laws come into force over the next three centuries.

1471: Swiss law banishes Roma from the country.

1500s: England brands and enslaves Roma. Spain and Portugal enslave and sell Romani people. Roma are expelled from Norway and Denmark.

1510: Switzerland orders the death penalty for any Roma within their region. Other European countries forbid the entry of Roma into their lands.

1612: France evicts all Roma out of France by way of court order.

1665: The "wholesale deportation" of Roma and "poor people" from England to Jamaica and Barbados is recorded.

1700s: Austria forbid Roma to marry and orders Romani children into forced adoption/orphanages.

1710-1721: Hungary outlaws Roma, and they become targets of "Gypsy hunts". Romani language and nomadic lifestyle are soon also outlawed and forbidden.

1800s: Roma are expelled from Belgium and Denmark. Swabian (German) government organizes a conference on "Gypsy scum" (*Das Zigeunergeschmeiss*), where the military is empowered to keep Roma from settling.

1855-1864: Romania frees all Roma from their enslavement - slavery existed in Romania since the 13-14<sup>th</sup> centuries.

1900s: Germany, Slovakia, Switzerland, Norway enact special laws denying the rights of Roma to live in the country, impose laws detaining Roma in work camps; subject Roma women to forced sterilization; and order ethnic cleansing measures leading to WWII.

1939-1945: Roma were ethnically targeted along with the Jews in the Holocaust.

The Holocaust, referred to in Romani as *Porrajmos*<sup>65</sup>, was therefore built on fairly well established precedents that had targeted Roma for extermination and exclusion for centuries. "Since at least the middle of the eighteenth century, one can follow the tracks of anti-Gypsyism from the Enlightenment to the Nazi genocide: the Enlightenment's wish to 'improve' Gypsies was always aimed at causing the Gypsies to disappear" (Heuss 2000:54). As Heuss critically notes, simply justifying Roma as incidental targets of the

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<sup>65</sup> Meaning "the devouring" or destruction, a testament to the extreme effect of WWII on the Romani population. Spelling varies. For its origin story, see Hancock (2007:54).

Holocaust because of racism is circular reasoning (2000:53), and thus, that “the atrocities should be seen as more than the outcome of specific local resentments. They were, however inconsistent, an early form of modern state action, taken by duly constituted authority, within its officials’ sphere of jurisdiction. That is, the atrocities were presented by those committing them as ‘due process’ not personal malice” (2000:55). Considering this historical context, we can understand the Holocaust as an act, extreme as it was, based on centuries of similar policies and backed by seeming inevitability—whether because of racist attitudes or because of the familiarity with which officials had previously enacted such laws.

The effect of the Holocaust on Romani peoples was severe and devastating. As researched by Hancock, a statement from 1950 noted that 85% of Germany’s Roma had been put into concentration camps and no more than 12% survived (2010:227), meaning that “well over half of the Gypsies living in Germany perished during the Nazi period” (Kenrick and Puxon 2009:42). The percentages and “success” of these genocidal programs varied from region to region and from country to country (Crowe 2007:xxi). For example, in Crețan and Turncock’s summary of Romani victims in Romania alone, they cover how “there is uncertainty over precise figures since the total number of deportees fluctuates between 25,000 (Crowe 1991:70) and 90,000 (Fraser 1994:268) while Ringold et al. (2003:90) claim a total of 36,000 Roma deaths in Romania during the war” (2008:282). Similar fluctuations exist for the overall figures, although Hancock details multiple accounts that estimate the total deaths as numbering up to 1.5 million (2005:48). Thus, it is relevant to note that Kenrick and Puxon pointedly state that firm numbers do not include or “represent the full measure of the suffering” of that time (2009:153), as internments, experiments, physical and mental breakdowns, community devastation, and more all contribute to the horrors of this time despite not being including in a death toll.

After WWII, while trying to recover from their significant losses, many Roma in Eastern Europe were about to experience a socio-economic-political rollercoaster. In his case study of Communist Roma policy in Hungary 1945-89, Stewart notes that “Gypsies did not fit easily into Stalin’s rather mechanist model of what constituted a nation and posed

a continuous challenge to Communist theorizing”, thus creating a need for “explicitly assimilationist Gypsy policy” (2001:71). This did not occur solely in Hungary, and Guy notes how “during the Communist period the overall structure of the economies of the CEE [Central Eastern European] countries shifted decisively in a way that benefited Roma by opening to them new opportunities that had never existed before” (2001:9). Many accounts of this period relate the intended and unintended consequences of Communist policies on Roma. For example, “Communist party officials saw this segregation as counter to their goals ‘to make every effort to change the life of the Gypsies for the better, and to weld them into the political and social and economic life” (Gatenio Gabel 2009:67). However, Stewart points to this as an erroneous argument, likening these understandings to those that believe because Roma have suffered worse conditions since 1989, they were “better off” before (2001:86-87).

Indeed, crucial aspects of official policy towards Gypsies have left a damaging legacy of forty years of mismanagement. To give a few examples: the term of reference within which ‘the Hungarian questions’ (how can one construct a democratic, relatively stable state within the borders maintained as ‘the Hungarian nation-state’) came to be constructed (amongst other things) a ‘Gypsy question’ (it had once been a ‘Jewish question’); the creation of phantasmagorical ‘socialist’ jobs for Gypsies which disappeared as soon as consumers had any choice over what they purchased; the creation of what were referred to locally as new urban ghettos under the title of ‘ending Gypsy residential isolation’ while in reality destroying one of the few parts of their lives over which Gypsies has some control...I could go on. (Stewart 2001:86-87)

Thus, following the collapse of Communism, many Roma were left in even worse conditions, having been denied the ability to practice traditional livelihoods or lifestyles (in favour of state-dictated ones), and yet still facing discriminatory attitudes by the majority population (HRW 1994; 1996). “These virulent sentiments exploded as the communist regimes of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union collapsed between 1989 and 1991. Gypsies were now viewed as the symbol of all gone awry in the new democracies” (Crowe 2007:xxi).

Borne from a long history of persecution, Roma in Europe continue to face terrible conditions, targeted persecution and discrimination, and a general lack of state protection. Zampas and Lamačková detail how “state-supported eugenics policies led to tens of

thousands of women being coercively sterilized from the 1930s to the 1970s” (2011:164). They also note how, in certain countries (including the Czech Republic and Slovakia), “the recent practice of forced and coerced sterilization of Roma women was rooted in now-defunct policies of the communist era” (2011:164). These countries have not provided adequate redress or acknowledgment of such human rights violations that have indeed continued following the fall of Communism (Zampas and Lamačková 2011:164). Clifford similarly reported that “sterilizations may still be taking place” in the Czech Republic (2009), and a recent Slovak court case similarly ruled in favour of “a Roma woman who complained that she was sterilized without her informed consent” (Peroni and Timmer 2011; see OSF 2011 for further reports). Segregated education for children also remains the norm in many places, despite numerous reports by organizations like the UN (2011; 2010) and Amnesty International (2010). Though such reports have done an admirable job in bringing injustices to light, they note that even court rulings have not stopped this behavior: “Despite repeated international and national criticism, thousands of Romani children continue to be segregated in separate classes and special schools across Slovakia. In 2010, the Slovak government acknowledged this problem and committed to ending it. It has not done so. The reality is, it is barely even trying” (AI 2013:2). Employment/housing discrimination and exclusions are also in place for many, who are forced to live in designated areas (often ghettos or barbed-wire enclosed spaces) and/or turned away from jobs because of their ethnicity. France made many headlines creating and enforcing such Roma-specific “ghettos” and expulsions (Hinnant 2012; Nacu 2012). It is estimated that 90% of Roma in Europe live in households under national poverty lines by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 2011).

Compared to non-Roma citizens, Roma are more likely to live in poverty, have a higher risk of unemployment, stay in school for fewer years, live without access to drinking water, sanitation and electricity, and live in substandard, overcrowded homes (UNDP 2011). Roma are also more likely to suffer from chronic illness and have less access to health services (UNDP 2011). Roma are estimated by the World Bank to be ten times poorer than the majority population, while “a recent survey showed that nearly 80% of Roma in Bulgaria and Romania were living on less than \$4 a day” (Wolfensohn and Soros 2013). This abject poverty affects average life expectancy rates, with Roma

estimated as living 10 to 15 years less than others, often living in run-down areas avoided or isolated by non-Roma (Wolfensohn and Soros 2013). Prejudice runs deep, and “there are cases where employment adverts say ‘Gypsies need not apply’. In others, hospitals have turned away Roma, refusing to treat them” (Wolfensohn and Soros 2013). Blitz accounts blatant police and other state-sanctioned abuse against Roma in Slovakia (2011:1760–1762). We can understand such actions as some of the cumulative effects of prejudice through the centuries, situated within a larger understanding of the socio-economic politics involved. “By comparing formal provisions and laws aimed at protecting human rights and comparing them against operational practices, one may arrive at a deeper understanding of political change. The concept of ‘qualitative democracy’ is introduced here to inform our understanding of democratic consolidation which is examined in rights-enforcing sectors, for example in the court system and police” (Blitz 2011:1764). Blitz takes Slovenia and Slovakia especially to task, demonstrating how their “degree of complicity and complacency” towards known human rights and racist abuse by the justice sector (including courts, authorities, and law enforcement bodies) is simply staggering for democratic countries of their size (2011:1764).

Having now a basis for how Roma have experienced centuries of life and discrimination in Europe, we can see the bridge between past and present injustices. As related earlier, histories and memories of experiences form integral aspects of identity processes. These exclusions, as Petrova noted (2003), have actually created a foundation for shared Romani identities. Therefore, the next section raises important questions and issues relating to Romani identity processes, specifically in regards to ‘belonging’ in the face of exclusionary governance processes.

### 3.1.2 “You carry your history with you”: Remembering exclusion in Europe (and history)

Often when discussing their identities and future plans, Roma would bring up their histories, situating their migration and/or memories in terms of exclusion. I found this repeated in their current perceptions and experiences, especially when reflecting on the significant effects of how aspects of their histories and cultural ways have been silenced.



Below, Lily interpreted how her own family's past from England intertwines with her worldview, senses of belonging, and connections to other Roma and groups:

There was a massive drive to assimilate them, and in England, that was not the case. English Roma were actually able to—[*interruption*] Anyway, the English Roma kept themselves very apart from the rest of society. And, really, when you have no land, and you have no territory, you carry your culture—you carry your territory with you. And you carry your land with you, [quoting fellow community member] “Romanestan is where my two feet stand”. And, I’m digressing here, but I’m really against the idea of land, because who is going to be displaced? 750,000 Palestinians were displaced in order to create Israel... Who are we going to ethnically cleanse to find our piece of land? And it’s unfortunate, because I’m very pro-Palestinian, and I know a lot of Roma are not, because there is this great shared history with Jews from the Second World War. But a growing number of Jewish Holocaust survivors are appalled at Israel, at what Israel is doing. (Interview 2012)

In only a few minutes of reflection, Lily raised not only her personal history as Romani, but connected it to a fellow Romani community member’s idea of “carrying your territory with you”. She then further contrasted this with her own beliefs regarding the “idea of land” and what it represents, connecting that further to perceived parallel injustices against Palestinians, which then raises contentious issues of allies and identifying with Jewish groups. As she reinforces, the important points here are territory and identity, and how territory need not be the anchor for identity; rather, history and community serve as such an anchor. “Nations—social constructions and imagined communities—are not static entities but rather imbued with fluidities and change” (Dembinska 2010:317). Dembinska further explores how the binding aspects of nationalistic and land-based belongings and pride are myths that serve to account for and determine borders of ‘us vs. them’, as well as motivate collection actions or justify collective claims (2010:317). Similarly, many European Roma may feel seemingly contradictory senses of belonging to Europe, having lived there for centuries while also feeling excluded from their larger societies: yet neither of these feelings necessitates a causal relationship with land. Indeed, nomadic lifestyles are frequently presented as a freedom from needing materiality, conveniently ignoring the context in which they have

perhaps risen (Roma were/are often forced to incorporate nomadic ways as they were not allowed any claims to land or territories).

Lily's above quote was an example of a specific recollection of her ancestors' history, interwoven with learned historical knowledge, and deeply connected to her contemporary identity and opinions. The next two quotes are from Elena, who describes what it was like to actually make the decision to move to Canada from Europe. She refers to more specific and recent events, but also draws on historical memories and patterns as she shares how it affects her everyday life and identities (as a daughter, victim, target, etc.).

On one hand, it was a very difficult decision to come here because my parents don't speak English, just me. So it was very difficult. On the other hand, it was like having something very heavy and you cannot breathe. Because here, we know we are safe, you know? The biggest reason why we came here was because of attacks. Because my parents, they were attacked many times. And the last attack was on me. I was attacked on April 2009, so we left everything there. That's why we came here, because that was the last thing. I'm an only child and I have [a medical condition], I was very sick, I was in hospital. For my parents, I'm everything, and if they imagine they could lose me? So, it was not such a hard decision for them, why they came here.

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". And when they attacked me, they said the same thing. They said, "This one was just a warning". And they said, "if we see you again, or your family, you will not be allowed to leave"... [After the last attack] I quit school, I was just home, I was in my room, I didn't want to eat, I was so depressed. I didn't want to go out, I just wanted to stay close to the house. After we came to Canada, I slowly started to get better...You know, it's horrible. People know what's happening with Gypsies, but they do nothing. Like, we have the television from our country, we have Internet, and we watch the local news. The mayor is wanting to kick them out, they want to kick the Gypsy people out of the city. So what's going to happen? Again, the same as the Second World War? (Interview 2011)

The above account is heart-wrenching; not only because of how her family have suffered emotionally and physically, but also because we can see how entangled this pain has become with her family history and outlook on the future. History impacts her narrative in different ways, perhaps most obviously through the reference to another Holocaust (i.e., her worries that the “same as the Second World War” is happening) but also when she describes herself as “everything” to her parents. Children are viewed as the future, the very reason to live. “Without them, what is the point?” I heard this same refrain in various ways from numerous people. Families are willing to give up their known regions and histories for the opportunity to have their children grow up safely. This is not restricted to Roma of course; immigrants all face similar choices of ‘home’ versus ‘new place’; Clark-Kazak (2013) has specifically noted this blurred boundary with reference to between “voluntary” and “forced” migration. Although the choice to migrate involves agency, but we must also acknowledge the parameters in which choices are available. It becomes for some, a choice between “live here and probably die” or “leave the familiar for the new” (as described by informants).

Various state-enacted laws have meant that many Roma stopped performing certain cultural or ethnic identifying practices. For example, for a long time, it was illegal to speak Romani/Romanes in Hungary; today, the lack of this skill deeply affects Romani perceptions and performances of belonging and identity and remains a negative and public marker of Romani ethnicity for Romani/Romanes speakers to non-Roma. Thus, not only did Hungarian Roma lose their language, but those who retained it or have a desire to re-learn it may be reluctant for fear of persecution. This process is not exclusive to Hungary, and helps us understand why many Roma are themselves often unaware of their own origins: they are often persecuted for speaking their language, not to mention passing down or practicing cultural knowledge, histories, and traditions. Multiple newcomer Romani informants explained to me an ability to “hide” their Romani accent when on the phone with potential employers. Others, like Clara (a newcomer Romani refugee claimant), related how their Holocaust-surviving grandparents refused to teach their children how to speak Romanes (or were reluctant to admit Romani affiliation at all), for fear of persecution.

As Clara discussed her family's inability to speak Romani/Romanes, she explained how the Holocaust changed this aspect of Romani traditions and identity. In Clara's case, her grandmother was a Holocaust survivor. The Holocaust, as such a cataclysmic event, unsurprisingly often figures prominently into identity processes (e.g., Johnson and Rittner 1996; Stein 1984); the salient point here is its multiple and contradictory effects on Romani identity, especially regarding how collective memory operates. The Holocaust is often purposefully used as a commemoration that helps create or reinforce community identity by drawing attention to Romani persecution (something that has not traditionally received widespread recognition by non-Roma), and while this can be a positive process in identity making, it is necessarily a complicated one. This genocidal act not only decimated the Romani population in Europe in a vicious and brutal way, leading to lost generations (and thus contributing to long-term detrimental consequences such as loss of cultural knowledge), but it also affected subsequent identity performances. The refusal by Clara's grandmother to speak Romani aloud with her children stemmed from her fear that they would "stand out even more". Thus, speaking Romani/Romanes—usually a positive and identity-reinforcing characteristic for Roma—was eschewed in favour of increased survival hopes. Her granddaughter now laments the loss of their language, but similarly and cognitively understands her grandmother's decision. The Holocaust in this case is both a site of commemoration and/or catalyst that reinforces certain aspects of community identity (especially based on collective memories), as well as a continued critical marker of loss for other aspects of Romani identity (like language, but extending to other traditions as well) that continue to influence individual memories and identities.

The next example describes some of the further effects of obstacles imposed on Roma, including the alterations of public and general perceptions and how governments co-opt educated Romani representatives:

And even in [Europe], I remember, what's happening with the Gypsies and the Roma people—when the government sees somebody who is very intelligent and educated, right away, they take him and they hire him into the party. And they tell him from that moment, you will have a nice life, a better life than other Roma, but you keep your mouth closed. Because you work for me, I will give you the money, and you will dance the way I want you to dance. And in this way, they destroy the Roma race. Because the

guy cannot say anything for the Roma people. He's a representative of the Roma, but he really serves the party. (Interview with Henry, 2012)

Henry, a Romani individual who was born and raised in Europe, poses the above situation as a memory, "remembering" how this has already happened to Roma before, again recalling fears that "another Second World War" is on the horizon. I would like to emphasize that his account should not be dismissed as paranoid or considered overly cynical; he backed up these allegations with many examples, some of which I already knew or had heard of. When governments or other agents prevent people from being able to represent fully their realities or needs, this has implications for their collective identity processes as well as their ability to access equal rights. Henry explains how some Roma find themselves caught up within political maneuverings whereby they end up accepting these kinds of deals to ensure safety for their own immediate family. Henry's point, however, is that the safety of one's family also depends on the group's survival, which is undermined through such figurehead representatives. Roma who are selected for such representation are given limited means for actually advocating on behalf of their community. The same people who get to decide who represents Roma are often the same who have traditionally written history. Thus, we can see how some aspects of history or certain narratives receive representation based on power dynamics. This cycle continues in various ways. For example, Lily describes her family's history (which included Communist family members under surveillance by Canadian authorities in the 1950s) and why her family had not been concerned about speaking out politically:

[There were] no relatives back in England that were quite close enough who would've been even found out, because in those days there wasn't the same access to information. For example, here, now, people are terrified of what could happen to their relatives. (Interview 2012)

Lily is echoing Henry's ultimate point that fear often ends up determining who can say what. If your family would be in danger if you spoke out, you will remain silent and/or "dance the way" you are told to dance. Such silences are cumulative, in that the *status quo* is a hard thing to challenge; this has a huge effect on the history we read and write (as well as our interpretations of it). This is also the newfound attention to the purposeful inclusion of sub-altern voices in academic research as part of correcting histories.

## 3.2 Romani histories in Canada

Despite the existence of long-standing immigration policies based on racist ideologies and attitudes in the past, in general, day-to-day life in Canada has been a welcome change for many Roma when they arrive. As Elena notes below, she was not even aware it was possible for Roma to live and not be constantly harassed, demonstrating how ingrained prejudices become the norm:

We came here to Canada, we were so happy. We are free. We don't have to be scared of everything—like, we were shocked. We were shocked because we didn't know existence like this. We went to the store, No-frills, and you know when you don't know a place [and look confused]? The [store workers] saw us, and they said “Hi, how can I help you?” And we were shocked. For us, that wasn't normal. We were shocked and so surprised that they wanted to help us. It was totally different. (Interview 2011)

Compared to current conditions in Europe, it is no surprise that many Roma are eager to live in Canada. Yet there remain anti-Gypsy sentiments in Canada that have major consequences for identity expressions and lived experiences. In order to understand Romani identities in the Canadian context, and how or why they have been positioned as threats to Canada, we must first examine Romani history in a Canadian context. For this section, I draw upon archival work, other researchers' findings and historical analyses, and informants' narratives on their own migrations and historical perspectives to examine certain watershed periods in Romani histories in Canada to challenge the assumption that Roma do not belong in Canada.

It is valuable to first question why we know so little about Romani history in Canada. Roma in general did not keep written records of their travels and relied almost exclusively on oral traditions (Crowe 2007; Čvorović 2008; Dobrevá 2009:17; Fraser 1995; Hancock 1987, 2005). Thus, European/regional enforcements of linguistic restrictions and/or penalties for practicing Romani traditions often meant a loss of language, as well as historical knowledge. This was exacerbated by further exclusionary policies, which created lost or “stolen generations” (this pattern is explored in general by Declé 2000; Fejo-King 2011; Garkawe 1997; Popic 2008) of children either through forced sterilizations and adoptions, or outright genocidal killings of Roma.

Additionally, it is a well-known adage that history is written by the victors; as Roma have long been considered sub-human and marginalized in Europe (e.g., Goldston 2002), we can clearly see they were never the “victors”. Thus, many accounts of their origin, routes, culture, and language have come exclusively from non-Roma (which in part accounts for so many misleading theories and the continued resistance to believing their Indian origins). When acknowledged at all, what has been documented about the Roma is often “written in ignorance, prejudice and incomprehension” (Fraser 1995:10). As Ioviță and Schurr have noted, this tendency to disregard Roma in historical frameworks (as noted by many other authors like Acton and Mundy 1997; Crowe 2007; Hancock 1987, 2005) has undoubtedly culminated in research biases across disciplines and is only very recently beginning to come under closer critique (267:2004).

Another explanation for our lack of knowledge of Romani history involves the probable reluctance of Roma to self-identify as such to outsiders<sup>66</sup>. Consistently persecuted and targeted for violence based on real and/or perceived differences, many Roma have strived to draw no attention to themselves by outsiders in order to survive (see for example (Ahmed, Feliciano, and Emigh 2007; Butler 2004; Gatenio Gabel 2009:66; Ringold, Orenstein, and Wilkens 2005). This connects to Lily’s earlier description of how people remain silent, and thus do not insert themselves into the public consciousness, out of fear. Compounding this has been the tendency to stereotype Roma with “Gypsy” characteristics. In an example that perfectly encapsulates this historical tendency, Brown describes a Romani family who were first denied entry to North America in the early 1900s at a port due to their poor clothing and demeanor; yet when they showed the immigration official their wealth (in the form of money, items, and jewelry), they were promptly turned away because they were assumed to be conniving Gypsy thieves (1924:23–24).

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<sup>66</sup> For example, see Sutherland, Sway, and Orta’s titles, respectively, *The Hidden Americans* (1975), *Familiar Strangers* (1988), and *The Invisible EU-Roma* (2010): all emphasize this tendency to remain out of the historical spotlight.

This kind of double-edged sword or standard holds true for contemporary immigration policies as well. For example, as related to me by numerous lawyers, if a Romani refugee claimant comes too well prepared with documentation, it can be viewed as suspicious. Yet, if they arrive with no documentation or proof of persecution because they were in a hurry to flee their home, they cannot hope to fulfill IRB protocols/standards for demonstrating lack of state protection. An alternative example could be how Romani refugee claimants (who usually base their asylum claims on experiences of ethnic persecution) struggle to prove to the IRB their credibility and ethnicity. They have usually spent a vast majority of their lives attempting to hide or downplay this aspect of themselves (at least, to outsiders) and are suddenly required to provide evidence for how they perform their ethnic identities<sup>67</sup>. This dynamic clearly supports the overarching themes of this dissertation. Roma wrestle with their own varying self-conceptualizations of identity, which are in turn based on their historical contexts and lived experiences. They then further engage with other members of their community (all of whom have their own perceptions and identities) and with people outside their community (again, with their identities, but also compounded by further notions of who Roma are or what being Romani supposedly entails).

These patterns have continued, meaning there are not many records of Roma in Canada. What most Canadians know about Roma come only from contemporary (media-mediated) discussions on the relatively recent “waves” of refugees from Central and Eastern Europe as refugee claimants. There may also be some awareness within specific groups (such as ethnic communities or academic researchers) of Romani migration to Canada during the 1956 Hungarian refugee exodus and of post-World War II movements of people fleeing persecution. These are indeed critical moments for understanding aspects of Romani history in Canada, but we need to start even earlier to understand the beginnings for how Roma continue to feel the effects of Canadian belongings and

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<sup>67</sup> Very frequently, Roma in Europe need do nothing to inspire hate crimes against them for their ethnicity: many informants related stories where people only look at them and “know” they are Romani. Roma who are openly Romani in Europe (such as being involved in community action or as a representative) do face more targeted crimes than those who do not, but remaining silent does not by any means protect Roma in daily life.



exclusions through history. This section provides an overview of the kinds of work that explores or deals with Romani histories in Canada, beginning with the 1800s and earlier, and culminating with some information on contemporary refugee migrations. Thus, we can ultimately begin to question why the history of Roma in Canada is a contentious issue and how it affects identity processes and representations of the past.

In order to understand why this situation is so complex (and problematic), we can examine in general Canadian issues of identification as present in official categories: the category “visible minority” intrinsically distinguishes and reifies white as the *de facto* default people for Canada (Bannerji 2007; Hutcheon 2007). As such, non-visible or white Canadians are often proud of their ancestry and make special efforts to demonstrate these aspects of their identity; this is certainly not to say only white Canadians are proud of their heritage, nor is white a homogenous category. However, what is considered “visible” and/or “white” changes through time and context, and thus complicates historical knowledge and identity processes. In the Canadian census, which is “a defining moment in the relations between government and people” (Sager 2001:6), the category “Canadian/Canadien” did not even exist until 1986 (Boyd 1999:1). Prior to this, “during the first half of the twentieth century, census questions emphasized racial origins” (Boyd 1999:1), and it is widely noted that census patterns are instrumental in assisting understandings and deconstructions of ethnic ancestry and identity in Canadian society (see Jedwab 2003; Sarkar 2003). As the majority/ruling group, white ancestry is privileged, and it is often the norm to identify which “kind” of white you are—Irish, Scottish, British/English, German, etc. It is also common that non-white Canadians face daily questions regarding their origins: “but where are you *from*?” (Barabin 2009; Miedema and Tastsoglou 2000; and Bayoumi 2010 explores this discussion in a US context), which is founded on the presumption that you can only be *from* Canada if you are of white settler stock (simultaneously ignoring First Nations peoples). This is directly entangled within the white settler myth of Canada, demonstrating a further lack of awareness of Canadian history and adhering rather to popular national discourse and mythology (Dua 2007; Preston 2013; Regan 2010). If one assumes a white foundation, it can thus be difficult to understand how Roma have existed for so long under Canadians’ radar; this may be in part also an assumption that everyone (like them) should proudly

display or otherwise perform their ethnicity or ancestral origins. Reinforced by a conceptualization that non-white immigrants belong only to specific immigration movements, there may be confusion for Canadians who do not recall any historical knowledge about Roma.

Contrary to popular belief, Roma have indeed been a part of historical Canada, predating its status as an independent state and even prior to its formation as a federal dominion in 1867. Yet there is not much available that regards this aspect of history<sup>68</sup>. Looking at some relatively contemporary works that explore Roma in Canada and North America, one can find Sutherland (1975), Okely (1983), Gropper (1975), Lee (2009[1984]), Sway (1988), and Smith (1998). In 1975, Sutherland's anthropological book *Gypsies: Hidden Americans* focused on the academically underdeveloped and recognized Roma in North America. Gropper's work on *Gypsies in the City* (1975) was insightful for the time, but ultimately depicted Roma in a sometimes unsavoury ways and tended towards generalizations. Lee's work is the only auto-biographical work that focuses on Canadian Roma and emphasizes the struggle for many Roma in the 1960s for positive recognition by the Canadian state and international institutions (2009 [1984]). Sway's work is invaluable, and rare, as she critiques the scholarly urge to generalize or predict the future and instead focuses on ethnographic detail and larger socio-political processes (1988). Smith's work (1998) focuses on historical small agricultural farm towns in Ontario, but includes a chapter on Gypsies entitled, *Were There Ever Such People?*, going on to answer this question with a resounding "yes", through historical photos and ethno-historical records of Roma in the 1800s and early 1900s. Perhaps because of its intention to reproduce faithfully people's beliefs and thoughts towards Roma of the time, Smith ends up using stereotypical and negative vocabulary and examples to describe these

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<sup>68</sup> "In the past, long before the Internet", Ronald Lee described collecting oral histories and old newspaper articles on this topic but has not yet published an account of this work (Correspondence 2013).

Roma, including for example being “slick horse traders”, being “cunning” in “wheeling and dealing”, and sometimes stealing or tricking people into unsavoury buys<sup>69</sup>.

Today, the academic work available on Canadian Roma comes from a handful of authors, including Kernerman (2008), Lefebvre (2003), Lee<sup>70</sup> (1997), Levine-Rasky, Beaudoin, and St. Clair (2013), Tóth (2010), Walsh and Krieg (2007), Walsh, Este, and Krieg (2008), and Walsh et al. (2011). Outside of Lee’s 2009[1984]’s work, these pieces are primarily oriented along social work and/or refugee policy foci and not dealing specifically or critically with historical accounts or discriminatory cycles. There is an increase in researchers beginning to publish or research Romani issues in Canada, which is a welcome change from the previous silence, but they do not entirely fill the void. We need many more voices, especially from Romani authors themselves. Therefore, before examining what new research and works can cover, the following is a summary regarding some of the known history of Roma in Canada.

### 3.2.1 1800s and earlier

When giving public lectures, I find many Canadians are surprised to learn that Roma live in significant numbers in Canada. My audiences are even further surprised by the fact that Roma have been living in the Ontario region for at least a century and possibly earlier. In the 1970s, Sway noted a similar surprise for most Californians, who were shocked to realize that “Gypsies lived in the United States, let alone Los Angeles” (1988:3). In fact, Roma may have been living in Canada as far back as the 1500-1700s. According to Brown, who recounts Romani history in the United States and Canada, there have been Roma inhabiting North America since “Colonial days” (1924:16).

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<sup>69</sup> There are also some positive examples, but the overall tone is that of exoticization and romanticization. Again, this is probably because it is intended to simply present or record past beliefs. However, seeing as it is presented as a historical work/report, the tone and lack of context for these beliefs unfortunately hampers its informative background. Tellingly, it also recounts how such negative stereotypes are cemented in popular belief. For example, she describes the story of how, after a child went missing from an Ontario village following a Gypsy camp visit, the townspeople blamed Gypsies for stealing children. Even after the father found his child’s remains in the pig pen, he did not tell his wife, encouraging her to believe the girl was alive with the Gypsies (Smith 1998:112-113).

<sup>70</sup> Additionally, an unpublished work in progress: “The Gypsy Invasion: Romani Refugees in Canada 1997-2006”.

Although this notion was gleaned from second-hand sources, Brown provides his own first-hand ethnographic research on Roma history, detailing one of his informants' birth year as 1857—and since that particular *Romanichel* was born in North America, we can assume his parents had been living there at least a few years prior (1924:16).

Sway thoroughly researched the possibility of Roma who may have arrived on the first boats settling North America (1998). She discovered archival records in 1695 of a possible Romani woman, as well as evidence for early colonialists' antipathy of their "Gypsy problem" (Sway 1988:7-8, 37-39). Brown posits below the "obvious" reasons for which Roma would migrate to North America as soon as they could:

There are countries where a larger percentage of the population is gypsy...but none contains as many varied types of true Romanies as America. The reason for this is obvious. The United States, having attracted immigrants from more different lands than any other country, it would have been strange if it had not also attracted the least settled element in those countries—the gypsies. Naturally, it appealed to the most nomadic of them...The New World is the land of the restless, the paradise of those who refuse to stay put. Nowhere do gypsies thrive as here. (1924:15-16)

Although Brown couches this reasoning in romanticized and stereotypical Gypsy characteristics (such as their supposedly inherent nomadic tendencies), his point that North America attracted all sorts of immigrants is ultimately correct. As a destination popularly understood during the 1600s-1800s as the place to come, make your fortune, and/or lead a new life, North America no doubt appealed to Roma as well, having faced long-term European persecution and anti-Roma laws. Compounded by other causes such as emigration push factors like unemployment and impoverishment (Smith 1998:1), as well as problems like overpopulation in various regions (Knowles 2007:50), we should not exclude the possibility that the same pressures also encouraged historical Roma emigration.

In fact, while discussing Romani history with Ethan, a refugee lawyer, he recounted the following story detailing his impromptu research on Romani residents in Canada in the late 1800s for one of his cases:

Ethan: Did you know that the Roma in Saskatchewan were the horse trainers for the RCMP?

Julianna: I did not know that!

Ethan: They were also the trainers for the Royal family in England. The Roma connection to this country goes back to the 1800s, but back then they were integrated, you see, it wasn't on the Canadian radar, this racism against the Roma back then, so—

Julianna: Where did you find out the history with Saskatchewan?

Ethan: It was just part of our reading. I had some clients from [outside Canada] who were here to see a dying relative, and one of these clients had a minor criminal offense. He was US-born, and he had a minor criminal offense, and so they were trying to kick him out, and he said, "I just want to stay here until my cousin dies". His cousin was also third-generation Canadian, as far as he knew, or fourth? This man was in his 60s, third-generation brings them back to the late 1800s, and so I said, "well, how did you end up there, and them here?" And he explained to me that the entire family, the whole clan of Roma, including his great-grandmother and great grandfather, were training horses for the RCMP and for the Royal family. As it turned out, he was a Canadian citizen by law—at the time he was born in [a US state], you still acquired citizenship through your parents, so they couldn't keep him out, he was a citizen. I had to do my research, in terms of the law...I had to prove that his grandfather was in Canada at the time physically. So through the Ottawa archives I found his grandfather, or his great-grandfather, I can't remember, I think it was his grandfather, at the age of 35, in 1905 visiting [a city in Ontario], visiting relatives, and he got hit by streetcar while crossing the street...In the statement of claim [for our lawsuit], it set out his birth date, and where and what he did. (Interview 2012)

This account demonstrated legally that Roma were indeed in Canada in the 1800s (and their occupations as horse-trainers). However, it is also interesting to note that not only was the Canadian government forced to allow Ethan's client to visit his dying cousin, but he ended up being a Canadian citizen (i.e., they could not deport him). This contemporary example parallels the earlier 1914 correspondence that began this chapter: Roma were presumed 'inappropriate' or 'undesirable', yet their historical experiences in Canada meant they had legal rights to stay. A similar reluctance by Canadian officials towards granting Roma any kind of Canadian status can be witnessed today as they attempt to

prevent Roma from accessing the Canadian refugee system through outright interdiction techniques (e.g., visas) or “passive pre-emptive interdiction” methods (explored by Kernerman (2008) specifically regarding Romani refugees).

Ethan also noted that Roma were often “integrated”, or at the very least, not specified as Romani. A lack of records explicitly detailing immigrants as Romani may be easily explained by the Romani practice of not voluntarily telling non-Roma of their heritage. Thus, many remain “invisible” on immigration registries (see next section). As Ronald Lee explained to me: “There must be something about this in the archives but as usual, Roma will probably [only] be listed as nationals of the country of origin” (Correspondence 2013). Therefore, the notion that Roma may have been some of the earliest settlers of North America should not be dismissed. If Roma were indeed some of Canada’s earliest immigrants, their current juxtaposition by the government as ‘undesirable’ migrants is flawed (especially considering the valuable role Roma played in Saskatchewan assisting the government as Ethan recounted).

### 3.2.2 Early 1900s

Understanding that Roma lived in Canada in the 1800s and possibly before, what do we know of the Roma who lived in and migrated to Canada in the 1900s? When examining the Ontario archives, I came across a photograph dated from 1926, showing “Gypsy girls on the way to a spring near their camp”. This picture and others, as well as more information on Roma in Ontario, can be found through Heritage Toronto (Wencer 2011). I also found this picture reproduced in Smith’s work, along with several others dated between 1909-1926<sup>71</sup>. These pictures and articles, along with Smith’s reports from Ontario residents in the early 1900s, demonstrate that Roma were not an unusual sight in the region. Many families had personal stories and memories of interacting with Romani camps traveling through town, which serves again as one of the main issues in recounting

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<sup>71</sup> Their captions include: “Marle, a young gypsy woman camped along the roadside in 1909”, “A gypsy camp scene in October 1918”, “A gypsy camp near Peterborough, Ontario in 1909. Being continuously on the move, the gypsy groups appeared sporadically in many parts of Ontario”, and “Rosie, a fourteen-year-old gypsy bride at a camp near Peterborough, Ontario in 1909” (Smith 1998: 110-116).

this historical knowledge. Smith remains one of the only works dealing with this history, yet her information comes exclusively from non-Roma: there are no Romani sources or quotes in the relevant chapter. Another perspective regarding this same Romani community comes from Joellen Brydon, an artist who collaborated with Keith Walden (Trent University professor of history) and Ronald Lee (Canadian-Romani author) to create a series of paintings called “Lost Histories: The Gypsies of 1909” which detailed the Romani events and people that were described in the news coverage of their time (2006). Through her work, Brydon specifically sought to re-visit “forgotten” historical narratives (2006:9).

When talking with informants, re-learned and/or “forgotten” family histories were also a frequent topic. Lily describes her father’s migration experience from England to Canada:

Lily: My dad was *Romanichal*, he came at the turn-of-the-century, 1907... Lancashire, they traveled there, they did the whole traveling thing, they were entertainers. But when he came here... He came, as a lot of Roma do, under the guise of his national passport: he was English, he came as an Englishman... speaking with an English accent. So that automatically conferred upon him a certain status. And he also did a really bad thing—he assimilated, so I grew up assimilated.

Julianna: He purposefully assimilated?

Lily: He purposefully assimilated, yes... There was still some family back in England, and they stopped traveling around the beginning of World War II, so they became sedentary. Which is kind of—you don’t do that, if you’re English Romany, that’s my understanding. So I’ve been totally assimilated. I have been kind of like without an individual context. (Interview 2012)

Lily notes this as being without context—this history is clearly an important influence on identity processes for her. Roma who made themselves known as Gypsies (again, as witnessed by Smith’s Ontario locals) are the only Roma such locals ever encountered, not realizing that many Roma immigrated and lived in this time but without publically asserting their Romani identity or making it visible (such as Lily’s father, who purposefully assimilated and eschewed his Romani identification). The early 1900s were a time of rapidly changing social categories and identities, and when additionally

factoring in Romani reluctances towards self-identification to outsiders, researching their historical events becomes even harder.

Brown postulated that the majority of Roma in 1924 were “recent arrivals”, estimating the overall Romani population in North America as 50,000 Romani “nomads” in the U.S. and Canada, with a further 50,000 more of other “varieties” (1924:20). In more detail, he drew on witnessed examples of Roma communities, such as the 300 family-strong neighborhood in Chicago, “some two hundred Hungarian gypsies [who] have purchased a solid block in a Pennsylvania city, where they have lived for years”, and the 1,000 Romani individuals who gathered for a wedding in San Francisco (Brown 1924:17-18). “Roving bands of nomads, commonly called Gypsies” were such an issue in areas of the United States, that states like New Jersey enacted statutes circa 1918, making horse-drawn carts and other practices illegal (McQuiston 1998). Interestingly, Brown’s accounts include frequent mentions of travel within and between Canadian borders, specifically mentioning Montreal, Hamilton, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and Saskatoon (1924); thus, despite a lack of records dealing specifically with Canadian Roma, works dealing more generally with Roma in the United States may offer some relevant information for the Canadian context.

### 3.2.3 Hungarian refugees in 1956

Hungary today has been in Canadian immigration news as one of the main “sending” countries for Romani refugees. However, significant Romani immigration from Hungary began earlier. Frequently cited in Canadian history as a watershed for immigration and refugee politics and policies in general (Keyserlingk 1993), the 1956 movement of Hungarian refugees was a critical time for many Canadian-Romani families’ histories. This event in 1956 occurred in the aftermath of WWII politics and during Cold War strategies and concerns. It also happened before Canada had any kind of institutionalized refugee system. This was therefore the first time Canada accepted any large numbers of refugees and immigrants from a Communist country. It also set the stage for how Canada was perceived as a humanitarian and welcoming country, as Canada ended up paying for much of the transportation and resettlement of refugees (McCarthy 1993; Pickersgill 1993). The first group arrived in November 1956, but more continued for the following



ten months. “By the end of 1957, more than 37,000 Hungarians had been accepted into Canada” (Bangarth 2014:3).

Summarizing some of the various motivations and consequences of this governmental decision and the people involved, Reilly notes, on its 55<sup>th</sup> anniversary, that “although this was in many respects a new approach by the Canadian government, it still reflected Canada’s traditional approach towards immigration, which was to serve the needs of the Canadian economy. The Hungarian refugees were mostly young and well-educated; they were quick to adapt and contributed to Canada’s booming economy” (Reilly 2011). This less-than-altruistic analysis of the Canadian government’s actions is supported by many others writing on the same topic, citing Cold War motivations and economic needs (as well as acceptance of Hungary as a suitably white or desirable sending region).

Additionally, Thompson and Bangarth conducted an analysis of this time demonstrating the significance of the roles played by churches and voluntary organizations, as they not only pressured the government for more humane policies (and thus influencing the formation of future refugee policies), but were also key players in settling and providing services for the Hungarian refugees (2008). Bangarth also specifically highlights the significant role that various volunteer agencies and organizations played in facilitating the reception of the Hungarian refugees as well as in larger immigration and intergovernmental affairs (2010:12). In the end, many of the organizations remain involved in settlement processes but now play “the role of opponent rather than of partner” to the federal government (Bangarth 2014:25). These complicated understandings of the motivations and consequences of this historical refugee movement helps us see the beginnings of Canada’s refugee system today.

According to 2001 census data, there are over 315,000 Canadians with Hungarian ancestry, with the 2006 census numbering over 73,000 people having learned Hungarian as their first language. There are substantial and active Hungarian communities in Ontario and Toronto. This generally strong presence of Hungarian identity is demonstrated by a prevalence of churches, Hungarian language newspapers, and other areas, like online forums. Keep in mind, however, that Roma were among the Hungarians who escaped in 1956, although their stories are less well known. Most of the anniversary

events or reflection pieces that celebrate this historical moment do not mention or include Roma (e.g., Dreisziger 1982; Gyáni 2006; Hidas 1998; Keyserlingk 1993). There were in fact many Roma who arrived to Canada as part of this movement “as political refugees along with non-Romani Hungarians fleeing the Russian invasion of Hungary”,<sup>72</sup> (see also Saunders 2010). This is less surprising when understood that approximately 2% of the Hungarian population had fled Hungary by 1958 (Thompson and Bangarth 2008:311). Livia describes what she knows of her grandfather’s experience as part of this event:

The only part of the story that I know is that I have this dresser that was given to my grandfather when he arrived in Canada because he was in a program through the Hungarian church that would put up children. Like, refugees who were alone—they would provide a single bed and dresser. (Interview 2012)

As with Romani immigrants from other places, the lack of explicit knowledge or inclusion of Roma during this moment in time can be partly explained through their motivations to remain ethnically un-identified to outsiders for continued fear of discrimination<sup>73</sup>.

However, this can also be understood in part through the desire of Hungarian-Canadians to claim or situate this historical event solely as part of their identities. Roma were escaping a Communist region, fleeing an immediately dangerous situation, as “Soviet forces clashed with protestors, killing roughly 20,000 and imprisoning many more” (Bangarth 2014:3). Rather, Hungary was also a place where Roma had been singled out and had racialized laws enacted against them for centuries. Ethnic Hungarians may refuse to acknowledge any wrongdoing or racist attitudes on their part in both the past and the present and frequently retain a strong animosity towards Roma<sup>74</sup>. Beth, who is Canadian,

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<sup>72</sup> Ronald Lee, unpublished work in progress: “The Gypsy Invasion: Romani Refugees in Canada 1997-2006”

<sup>73</sup> In a similar pattern, the reception of Hungarians in general during the 1950s in Canada included suspicion and hostility towards displaced persons (“DP”s).

<sup>74</sup> I witnessed some examples of this animosity when volunteering at the RCC. For example, in 2012, a topical article in the Canadian-Hungarian newspaper dismissed all Roma as criminals who give Hungary a bad name. There were angry phone calls made in the Hungarian language to RCC members and volunteers, disparaging the work they did, and I also witnessed some publicly rude audience members who self-described as belonging to the Hungarian community at various public Roma education panels. I heard

relates how such attitudes translated into a negative sense of self-worth for her as Romani, since her father was Hungarian who frequently expressed negative views towards Roma:

My father's Hungarian, and my mother's Hungarian-Roma, both came over in 1956...So I already had this huge tremendous sense of shame...Of course, it was that Roma were "Oh, dirty, filthy, you should see how they live, oh, and they don't want to work, they're lazy and they're garbage people, and they just live off the system"...It didn't help that my mother and her family were all on welfare, you know, single parents with huge amounts of kids [*laughs*] so. My father, even though he was a complete lowlife [*referring to his arrests and crimes discussed earlier*], for some reason, he thought he was definitely higher up the status ladder than Roma in my family. (Interview 2012)

Beth gives here an example of typical Hungarian attitudes towards Roma—even a criminal Hungarian is “higher” than a Romani individual, but more specifically, Beth also demonstrates how this historic influx remains a strong influence for contemporary attitudes (and identity processes) regarding Roma. It took Beth a long time of self-searching to reconcile her Romani identity after hearing such strong anti-Roma sentiments from her father's side of the family. The 1956 movement is the heritage for many Canadian-born Roma today in Canada, many of whom are now second- and third-generation Canadians and active participants and organizers of the RCC and other groups. The lack of inclusion in such a major event in Canadian history supports my premise of the continued and longstanding marginalization of Roma. Therefore it is important to include this context when understanding the reception of newer Hungarian (and other Eastern European) refugees in Canada.

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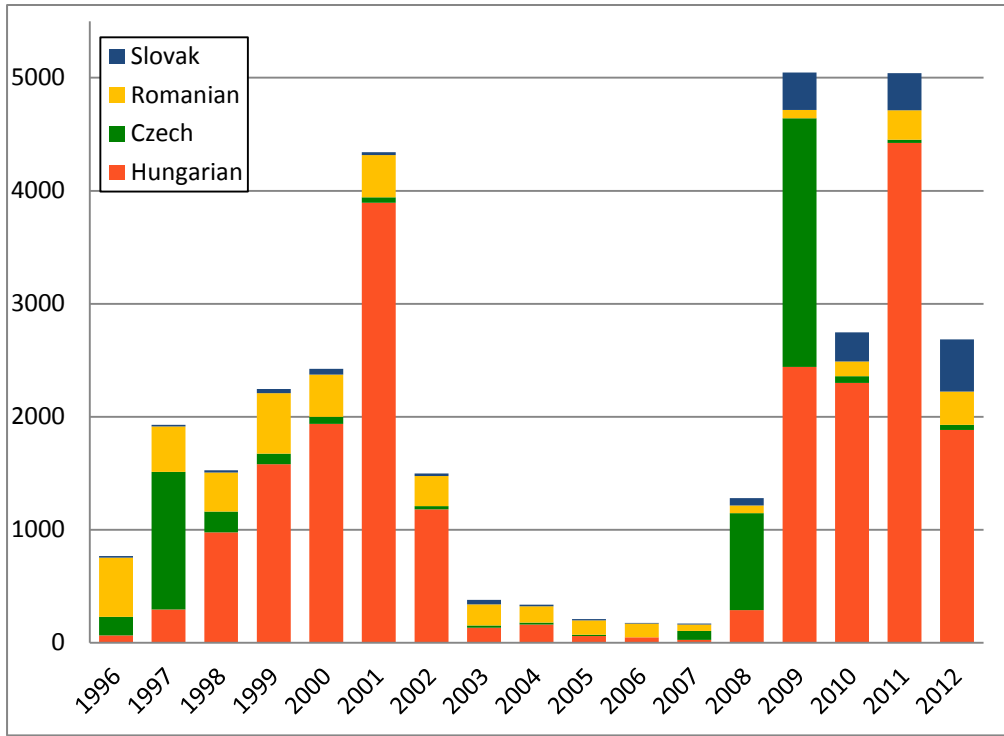
second-hand accounts of a Hungarian church turning away Romani individuals, and participating in negative discourse against Roma in Toronto. I am not stating that all Hungarians feel this way—indeed, some were exceptional and dedicated volunteers and advocates—rather, that it was fairly common for Roma to feel, in their words, “hated” by many Hungarian-Canadians.

### 3.2.4 1990s-2013

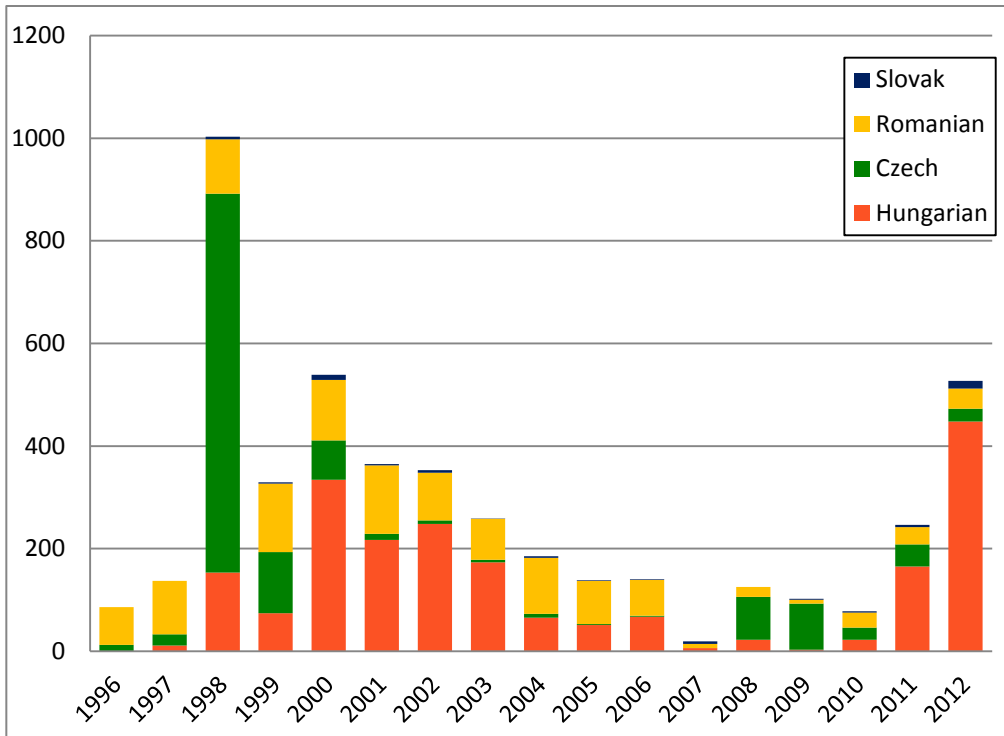
In 1996, large numbers of Czech Romani refugees began to apply for refugee status in Canada, soon followed in the late 1990s and early 2000s by Hungarian Romani refugee claimants (Kernerman 2008; Tóth 2010). Although Canada does not release the ethnic background of its refugee claimants, only their nationality, it is estimated that Roma made the vast majority of these claims by these two countries from 1996-2008. These approximations are based on the previously summarized academic and professional work examining Romani refugees in Canada (see Footnote 2), and my own personal fieldwork interviewing refugee lawyers and service providers. Further evidence supporting the assumption that the vast majority of these claimants were Romani comes from the actions of the government of Canada. There were focused and concerted efforts to specifically limit and deter Roma from applying for refugee status: for example, visa restrictions, and the \$13,000 billboard campaign “to dissuade would-be Roma asylum-seekers from coming to Canada”, which included notices in bus shelters, newspapers, and radio ads in Miskolc, a Hungarian city with many Romani inhabitants (Poynter 2013).

Although I specifically discuss Czech and Hungarian refugee claimants, I would like to emphasize that these are not the only two ‘source’ countries for Romani claimants; rather, they have been two of the most significant sending countries (both in terms of total numbers as well as regarding governmental reactions). Outside of these two groups, there are also Roma in Canada from Kosovo and Serbia, Great Britain, and many other European Union member states, such as Romania and Slovakia. However, because the majority of newcomers I have spoken with were from Hungary and the Czech Republic, and they remain statistically significant in comparison, they are the focus in this section. The figures included here are so that one can visually contextualize the number of Romani refugee claimants in Canada at a glance. These numbers will be again relevant in Chapter 5 when the discussion regarding acceptance and success rates relates back to overall total claim numbers.

Figure 1 shows the top four Romani claim sending-regions (Hungary, Czech, Romania, Slovakia). These numbers represent the number of individuals who came to Canada and applied for status as a refugee; the actual number of Roma who were granted refugee



**Figure 1 - Total National Referred Claims**



**Figure 2 - Total National Accepted Claims**

status and allowed to stay in Canada is much lower, shown in Figure 2. The referred numbers show how many people have been utilizing the refugee system, while the accepted numbers are those who now have status and can stay permanently in Canada. However, simply examining numbers does not tell us the full story of what is happening within the refugee system. Numbers and statistics are also incredibly susceptible to manipulation, and thus I caution against drawing general or concrete interpretations from them on their own. For example, the drop in refugee claim referrals from 2003-2007 illustrated in Figure 1 was not because Roma suddenly did not want to come or were somehow facing less dangerous or threatening environments; rather, this dip is easily explained through Canadian policy restrictions and visa limitations that were imposed specifically to deter and prevent further Romani refugee claims (see Kernerman 2008; Levine-Rasky, Beaudoin, and St. Clair 2014). These numbers are dealt with in more detail in Chapter 5, as relevant to understanding how numbers and statistics are utilized by various agents for varying motivations.

The Canadian refugee determination system has undergone many significant changes within the times plotted on the following graphs (briefly outlined in Section 2.1.2.1). These changes have influenced the experiences of Roma who have come to Canada at various times. For example, in an interview with Brenda (a Hungarian-Romani refugee who arrived in 1997), she noted a difference between older Romani refugee claimants and more recent refugee claimants: “I found the process easy. Everyone who came, got it. I only know the Hungarian side, but since then [referring to 2004-2008] there is 150% drop in getting in, getting your papers accepted.” This section is not a comprehensive summary of the obstacles that Roma have faced/continue to face in Canada, but rather just an introduction to some such challenges upon arrival to Canada.

As an example of the kind of experience that Roma have faced as refugee claimants, I summarize here Elena’s story and background<sup>75</sup>. Her story is especially significant because it encapsulates many of the difficulties that many Romani claimants face when

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<sup>75</sup> As she had no contact whatsoever with the RCC, even with the details as provided here, her anonymity remains protected.

navigating the refugee determination system. Although minor details may vary, it is an experience that many Roma, especially refugee claimants, may find relatable. I first met Elena in the spring/summer of 2011, after I was invited to her cousin's refugee hearing. Although I was not allowed to stay and witness that hearing, I remained in contact with her relatives. After traveling to Hamilton to meet with her relatives, I was introduced to Elena and interviewed her and her parents in their home. Elena was approximately 20 years old; her parents were in their late 40s. They all came to Canada from the Czech Republic and began their refugee claim in 2009, following a particularly bad attack on Elena by neo-Nazis. She noted that her parents had been targeted most of their lives, but this had been the final straw that compelled them to flee and seek refuge in Canada (they could not stomach the reality of their daughter fearing for her life). Some of their extended family had already come to Canada, which also influenced their decision. Elena spoke English fairly well, and she was eager to continue learning. Over the past two years since arriving to Canada, Elena had essentially become her parents' translator, as they could only speak a few words in English<sup>76</sup>.

However, the refugee process was especially frustrating for Elena as she was nearing completion of her education, because she would not be able to continue without a finalization of status. All three had health problems: her mother has diabetes and was later diagnosed with cancer in 2012; her father had some health problems including depression; and Elena herself had a condition that required important medication. Despite the heavy burden of her parents' needs, their combined refugee claim delays, witnessing her extended family receive rejections from the IRB, and her own health issues, I was struck by Elena's positive attitude and willingness and ambition to succeed. She described optimistically her hopes of settling in Canada and creating a business helping newcomers, and she was eager to continue her education. She proudly showed off letters of recommendation written by her teachers, praising her abilities and attitude. Good

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<sup>76</sup> Also termed "language brokering" by the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The practice of children often taking up the role of interpreter for their parents is well documented in many immigration/migration circumstances. See McKeary and Newbold (2010:531) for an example dealing with some of the consequences of this practice.

letters and other documents notwithstanding, Elena and her family had an extremely hard time with their refugee claim process. I met them in downtown Toronto at the IRB office on three separate occasions (between October 2011 – July 2012): none of these dates culminated in an actual hearing. Once, their Board Member/hearing room was double-booked. Another time, the Board Member called in sick. Another time, they were part of a scheduling conference to determine a hearing date. Before all of this, they had attended an IRB hearing that was ultimately erased from the record because of negligent counsel/other factors. Following the times I was able to be with them at the IRB, they attended a hearing that went over the allotted time and were given another date to complete it. However, Elena told me that one week before that date, they received a letter explaining that everything had been cancelled and they would be seeing a new Board Member. Then, Elena and her family had to postpone their December 2012 hearing because of her mother's chemotherapy treatments. The last time I heard from Elena (in early January 2013), they were supposed to have a hearing within the next month. I have not heard from her since, and I believe it is very probable that their claim was rejected and they have been deported. Elena's story shares much in common with Romani and non-Romani refugee claimants alike, including the long waiting period before a hearing, their fears of violence back home, and struggles navigating the refugee and settlement processes in Canada.

### 3.3 “Keeping their memories alive”: Recollections of Romani history

As already noted, historical processes are interpretive and contentious. Power structures factor heavily into which aspects of histories are remembered, forgotten, emphasized, ignored, and/or re-written. With its multifaceted and often contradictory nature, history is a formative and foundational aspect of identity. This section provides some Romani contemplations of on identity processes, including how they see themselves as fitting into Canada (historically and in the present), while also emphasizing a range of perspectives. Some of the questions raised in this section include: how do Roma in Canada view or remember their histories? Does this affect their feelings of belonging here? What kinds of disjunctures and connections are witnessed and experienced? What can we learn from



these perspectives? It should be clear by the end of the chapter that, although issues do not act in isolation from one another, there is much that can be learned about contemporary circumstances and identities by taking the time to consider history and historical memories.

As an example of historical recollections informing contemporary identity making processes in the present, Hancock described a particular memory of dealing with Canadian immigration officials in the 1960s, which has influenced his current perspective. Hancock had already lived in Canada, his parents were currently living in Canada, and yet he was refused permission to re-join his family.

I went, first of all, to Cook's Travel Agency in Chiswick High Road, and was told that since I was not going simply for a short holiday I'd have to get permission from the Canadian immigration office if I wanted to return to live and work. I didn't think this would be a problem, since I'd already emigrated to Canada, and had gone to school there, and my parents and brother were permanently resident there. But instead of my application being routinely processed, I received a letter instead asking me to come for an interview at the Canadian High Commission in Trafalgar Square. I was shown into a small office, like the kind of booth at the unemployment exchange, where a man I remember as being somewhat cocky, and who was smirking, sat behind a desk... There were a number of documents in front of him, and I could read my name on the top one, upside down. He told me right away that my application to return had been denied. When I pointed out that I had already gone to live in Canada seven years earlier as an emigrant, I was told that I'd been away too long, and that I would have to re-apply to emigrate. When I said okay, let me do that, he then said that any application made by me would be rejected. I was beginning to feel uneasy, and demanded to know why.

"We don't feel you'd make a good Canadian," was his reply; "the fact that you didn't stay in Canada the first time is an indication of that. You don't seem to be a very stable person." I argued again that my parents lived there, and that I'd worked and gone to school there, that we'd already emigrated. It was then that I saw the word "Gypsy" in one of the boxes on the page; how they knew I don't know, but I realized right at that moment what was acting against me. I stood up

quickly and snatched the paper from his desk, and waved it in his face, and said “it’s this, isn’t it; it’s the Gypsy thing!” but he continued to smirk, neither confirming nor denying it, and asked me if I wanted a second opinion. I was very upset, shaking by this time, and told him there was no point, because I knew I’d be told the same thing again. I hardly remember leaving Canada House, or getting back to Chiswick, I was so upset; I wrote to my father to tell him about this incredible and repressive situation, and also to the Canadian consul...

I did get back to Nanaimo, eventually, in late Spring, 1964. I learned later that when we emigrated the first time, we had been processed with “special” papers submitted by my father, which concealed certain facts about the family. This subsequently became known to the immigration department, although ironically our Romani ethnicity had not been a factor the first time. That information had gone into our file, but my parents and brother Stevo had become Canadian citizens in the meantime, and were now beyond the bureaucracy’s reach. (Correspondence 2013; See Appendix A for the full letter.)

Hancock’s experience provides yet a further example of how Canadian immigration policies have historically attempted to limit Romani migration. I make this point to emphasize how such policies are not restricted to present interdictions; we can see a clear—albeit rarely acknowledged—pattern of exclusion towards Roma (based on Gypsy stereotypes). An apparent lack of transparency is also demonstrated as Hancock recounted how he attempted to contact officials for information regarding this incident:

I wrote once again to Canada House demanding an explanation and a justification for their decision in 1963, also asking for a specific statement regarding the current immigration policy regarding Gypsies. The reply, dated June 15th, 1993, informed me that “...unfortunately we do not keep immigration records dating back thirty years...any documentation relating to your application for immigration to Canada in the early 1960’s would have been destroyed many years ago. As you require information on Canada’s current immigration policy regarding the numbers of Romani asylum seekers from Eastern Europe (not what I’d actually asked), I would suggest you contact our headquarters in Ottawa.” (Correspondence

2013; see Appendix A for the full letter)

Purposeful exclusionary targeting of Roma through immigration policy, as well as obfuscation of such policies, was often cited by informants as a consequence of the colonial policies that founded Canada. It is important therefore to acknowledge on-going colonialism practices in Canada (Crosby and Monaghan 2012; Preston 2013); today, it means more than the mere physical expansion and exploitation of (European) colonies or settlers. Razack explores the impacts of Canadian colonial power structures in many of her works; for example, her argument that the death of Frank Paul, an Aboriginal man in police custody, bears the imprint of ongoing colonialism, manifested in various ways throughout the subsequent inquiry (2012). Additionally, Razack's larger arguments concern the colonial foundation behind contemporary gendered education and racialized justice (1999; 2005). Darnell similarly describes Canada in terms of its "entrenched settler colonialism" mentality when exploring the ways First Nations political leaders have attempted to "redress the balance of power" (2012:35).

No one has yet explored in detail the specific ways that Roma have experienced and/or continue to feel the effects of colonialism in Canada. There is a case of centuries of such treatment in Europe, combined with new experiences in Canada, all of which works in varying ways to impact their identity processes (whether ethnic, personal, national, and others).

Did I ever get pissed off when—who was it, it was some heritage Minister—started planting Canadian flags on people's lawns and distributing them a few years back. Well, fuck that. The media will do it, and of course, all this hype about the Queen, yet people are living in misery. People are dying of hunger, they have no jobs, their children are dropping out of school. And here we have the Queen. And I watched part of it, like 10 minutes of it, and I was completely baffled. That's how you get people away from the real issues at hand: you just throw cultural nationalism at them, and they go "Ohhh, I'm Canadian, ohhh I love the Queen, ohhh, Kate and Will". (Interview with Lily, 2012)

Although Lily is venting frustration about the superficialities of nationalism in the above excerpt, it deeply informs her sense of belonging to Canada. In the next part of the conversation, she specifically uses the term "colonial settler state" and draws parallels

between Canada and Israel, both of which she views as imposing unacceptable levels of force and violence.

Lily: I have never felt Canadian. I have never—I grew up never feeling that I was ever part of any community.

Julianna: What does it mean to be Canadian?

Lily: Being Canadian? I don't know. Because I don't feel it. The closest I can get to it is my love of the landscape, and that's about it. There is nothing else that I can really wrap myself around...It's like Israel—Canada is a colonial settler state, where indigenous people were displaced and were murdered and were confined into prisonlike circumstances, it destroyed their culture, was designed to dehumanize, and so now we live on their land. We're just like Israel. (Interview 2012)

It is striking how Lily so clearly articulates why she cannot answer what it means to be Canadian. She cannot, and does not, because she does not feel it herself; she is conscious of the difference between theoretically knowing something—she obviously does have an idea about what it generally means to others regarding being Canadian—and the significance of taking on an aspect of an identity or belonging you disagree with.

Not only Romani informants expressed the idea that Canada remains a colonialist entity; for example, the excerpt below is from a similarly incensed lawyer who struggles with Canadian ideas of belonging. The term “colonial” appeared in several interviews with many different backgrounds. Whether they had engaged with Canadian institutions and identities as newcomers, as natural-born citizens, as performers or artists, as lawyers, as community organizers, as parents, or in many other roles, people found Canada a complicated construct, one that should not be taken for granted as a label, regardless of governmental status or birth rights.

We're simply not integrated. This is a colony. This is a colony. This is a white colony...As far as Canadian society is concerned—it's bullshit. It's just racism—institutionalized racism and apartheid...And I'm not a communist or a Marxist, but Vladimir Lenin said, “you know you live in a police state when the police make more than the teachers” [*referring to an earlier anecdote about police officers' starting salaries*]. All right? So how are judges appointed? A corrupt system. It's all their white friends again. So the corruption here is institutional. Jobs and positions aren't given based on merit, but on political affiliation, it's corrupt...I'm not a

pessimist—I'm an optimist with too much fucking experience. (Interview with Ethan, 2012)

When people discussed their ideas within a framework of colonialism, they often included references to assimilation and categories as well. As already noted, many Roma who have come to Canada have probably already actively or passively practiced or experienced assimilation or categorical exclusions. Some Roma perhaps chose voluntary assimilation options to ease their transition. While distinct from voluntary choices, these decisions are still connected to the larger power structures, circumstances, and categories that led to these choices. Ethan went on to explain what such a choice actually entails: “it takes erasing your identity, that’s what it takes. Because there’s a difference between assimilation and erasing your identity...I suppose you could say you integrate without being misperceived as part of the mainstream”. Although referring specifically to his own situation, Ethan also related it back to his Romani clients, noting how they are perceived as foreigners and while also having a known risk of losing their identity. Seemingly contradictory, I found this kind of reflection repeated by many Roma when describing their experiences in Canada, and the choices they feel they have for themselves and their families.

For example, Rachael describes below how, later on in life, she came to realize her Romani heritage. Her family had conflated national identity (Hungarian) with ethnic identity (Romani), and simultaneously overlooked other identities (such as Transylvanian). Rachael includes all of these identities as she described what it means to not stand out or seem too different:

I actually grew up seeing myself as Hungarian, because my dad is in my life, but my parents aren't together. I grew up with just my mom. And my mom's family very much identifies as Hungarian. They speak Hungarian, we eat Hungarian food, we go to the Hungarian Presbyterian Church. So, they always used to refer to the “old country”, and it was probably in my early 20s before I learned that the “old country” is Transylvania and Romania, and not actually Hungary! [*Laughs*] Because they just don't talk about that! My mom's mom is from Transylvania, and my mom's dad is from Northern Hungary, yeah. My mom's dad was Roma...[Learning about all this has] been really piecemeal because my grandfather did not talk that openly about his Roma ancestry, particularly in front of my

grandmother. So he kind of talked in front of us grandkids, like in the backyard after he'd had some drinks. It was kind of during the time he was 'passing' [*pretending to be white*]. Like, all of us kids talking, and then just finally asking our parents about it...I was 21 [when I found out about my Roma history and] I didn't really know what that meant. Like, my grandfather never used the word Roma, but he talked about the Gypsy way of doing things, that this was "Gypsy bread", and so on. (Interview 2012)

How we remember our family histories, and how we continue to shape our identities are all part of how categories are defined and reinforced. Whether regarding ourselves, or the people around us, such categories are often imposed from above; categories are not ever a "given" or natural concepts, they are definitions in constant flux (see Flynn 2011; Polzer 2008; Silverstein 2005). Identities and our memories change as we reflect on the consequences of the different categories. For example, being born in Canada is not necessarily sufficient for an automatic conferral of belonging and/or identity. This was described earlier in relation to Canada's "visible minority" label, but also works systematically through bureaucratic or legal processes. Here, James describes some of the bureaucratic obstacles that contributed early on to his feelings of being excluded from a sense of belonging to Canada:

I had to *become* a citizen because although I was born here, because of the way the laws were—I was born in a tent [and with no official documents]...The only thing I have is a [later] christening certificate from Ontario, not Québec. Now if it had been from Québec, I could've gotten a passport with it, but because it was Ontario...you cannot take Ontario christening certificate and get a passport, but you can take in an Ontario christening certificate and get a citizenship card. With a citizenship card, you can get a passport, does that make any sense?...They just want to make you go through more pain, more steps. (Interview 2011, emphasis based on tone)

James is far from the only Canadian frustrated by the seeming lack of efficiency or rationality of Canadian immigration policies, but it is worth relating here because it demonstrates one of many forms of difference-enforcing practices enacted by governing agents. Drakakis-Smith examines precisely this tendency in one of her works examining Roma in Great Britain (2007). She details how "such policies are often based on a knowledge archive from which definitions are derived which may or not be accurate. Implemented policies can lead to a set of coping strategies which can make, shape and

separate the GypsyTraveller habitus from the mainstream” (Drakakis Smith 2007:463). Historical and present British governmental policies have been aimed at curtailing mobility of Roma in those regions, and “when interpreted and translated into local policy and practice, exacerbated the problem whereby some families are excluded from employment, education, health and social welfare” (Drakakis-Smith 2007:463).

An active practice of exclusion or targeting of Roma in governmental policies connects back to some of the exclusionary practices and discourse witnessed towards Roma in Canada, such as in this chapter’s introductory example, as well as the narrative provided by Hancock. According to Henry, these kinds of exclusionary policies, both in the past and present, ultimately revolve around state motivations.

Because all countries, they’re only interested about their own interests. What that means is: the rich people, they have a caste system. We have to know who will be the worker, who will be the business people, who are the leaders of this thing. And what’s happening is, is that if somebody is coming to the country—a new group of people—we know where they belong. We know what we need them to do in order to make the country more successful or not. And for this reason, we make decisions—we need them, or we don’t need them—and it makes it harder to get in, to let them come in. I remember the Second World War, the Rockefeller family, he was pushing the American government, well, not pushing, but he told them to close the borders because the poor Jewish were coming, and we don’t want the flood. Only the rich Jews can come, being selective. Yeah, and I think it’s the same thing today in Canada. (Interview 2012)

Continuing in this direction discussing governmental motivations within immigration policies, Ethan similarly reflected on how Canada can seemingly justify its restrictive actions towards Roma in the face of well-documented ethnic persecution:

Ethan: I think it’s disingenuous and dishonest. Practically, it’s simple: it’s tribalism. These are our white cousins in Europe, who are persecuting the Roma, so that’s why.

Julianna: So you’re saying then it’s kind of a reflection on Canadian society?

Ethan: It’s not only a reflection, it’s a ditto of Canadian society. The Canadian government engages in Holocaust denial when they—Just think of the intellectual schizophrenia that goes on.

Julianna: [*chuckling*] That phrase, ‘intellectual schizophrenia’.

Ethan: Well, once a week, the *National Post* says these Roma claimants are bogus. Two weeks later, they’re alarmed at the rise of anti-Semitic and neo-Nazi groups targeting the Jews and the Roma in Europe. But which one is it?...It’s not only that. Prime Minister Harper, as was pointed out in an article...it’s all fine and dandy to commemorate the Holocaust Memorial, as it should be, yet his Immigration Minister is calling the very victims of the Holocaust—the Roma, who were not included in the commemoration—as bogus and queue jumpers, when there’s rising neo-Nazi-ism in Europe. And if European Jews were being persecuted to the extent the Roma are today, I think we would have a different reaction. [The Roma] are just a forgotten people. Nobody cares for them, nobody. (Interview 2012)

Continuing further, Ethan ended up comparing Canada with the United States, in trying to make his point regarding how ingrained Canada’s particular form of racism can be and thus why Roma continue to face so many legal and other obstacles.

In America, look, there’s a historical pathology of slavery and racism. I can say this: in America, individuals are more rabidly racist. However, in America, the institutions are not. Canada is the exact opposite. People tend to be on a personal level much nicer: they’re nice. It’s the institutions that are apartheid; we have apartheid institutions in Canada, I’m not exaggerating. The institutions here are racist, and so when the institutions are racist, then everything flows from that. In America, nobody thinks of Robert DeNiro, Frank Sinatra, Al Pacino as Italians. They’re American, because American society has allowed that slice of American society to enter the mainstream. If you look, for instance, in the last hundred years in film and music, which are both very powerful cultural conduits, who has dominated film and music in America in the last hundred years? The Jews, the Italians, and the blacks. There’s no question. So, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there are the Jewish Americans, the Italian Americans, and the African Americans—although Americans don’t really speak in those terms. We hyphenate in Canada...but as a race, but not as a cultural designation, not as a nationality. A sub-nationality of American. In Canada, when they say Italian-Canadian, Afro-Canadian, Chinese-Canadian, what they mean is: you’re a second-class Canadian. They’re not referring to your race; they’re referring to your status as a citizen. (Interview 2012)

Ethan is voicing these concerns from the perspective of one who has grappled with the innermost workings of the immigration and refugee system and its related institutions for



decades. He emphasizes how complicated institutionalized governance is concerning historical trends and their continued relevance for categorical definitions. The connections Ethan makes also demonstrate the significance for purposefully drawing connections across borders and groups, explored further in the next section.

### 3.3.1 Recalling violence and making historical parallels

I think that when you have people—like in a family where children are treated horrendously, beaten, sexually abused, emotionally abused, or just treated like they're not even there—what you will have is that, if the children are not able for one reason or another to address this, [for them to be able] to go and face the past and deal with it and move on, they are going to perpetrate the same kind of treatment to their children. And I think the same things happened as a whole, with whole ethnic groups, or religious groups. Look at what the English did to the Scots and Irish; the Scots come over here as the administrators of the English Empire, they were the ones who were directly involved in the residential schools, the police system, and everything—cause they never dealt with the genocide that was dealt against them by the British. That is what happens to people. Look at all the post-colonial African countries where a leader—his own family, or his own political-economic-territorial group—was destroyed through colonization. Look what they're doing now, all the incredible massacres and whatnot. (Interview with May 2012)

When Roma discussed historical memories and experiences, they would frequently make parallels to other marginalized or disadvantaged groups who also experienced violence. Therefore this section provides some Romani perspectives on self and collective identities when violence was raised during interviews and in conversations. Canada remains reluctant to recognize its violent and colonial treatment of its First Nations peoples, and many European nations similarly refuse to acknowledge violence against Roma. Thus, when Roma remember—and speak up about—their experiences and perspectives on violence, this is an important act in of itself.

Violence can take many forms, including those stemming from past colonial eras. It also always encompasses “both an instrumental and an expressive function” (Hastrup 2003:312), which serve to obliterate senses of collectivity or community. “The individual in terror is just that: an individual in terror; alone, on the edge of speech” (Hastrup

2003:312). Learning how to speak out against violence is thus never easy. The legacy of colonial violence remains a significant factor for some, as explored in the above excerpt from May. She specifically talked about the effects on children and generational cycles, connecting this pattern with larger political institutions and methods. She also sums up the importance of being able to identify the terrible acts done against someone, but also being able to recognize their impacts and consciously deal with them/ work through them. Without that acknowledgement, she explains how she understands how/why victims go on to be perpetrators themselves (see for reference, Mamdani 2001). Canadian Roma engage with their own experiences of this, as well as those of their Romani community members transitionally: “Both violence and suffering are more than social facts in that they are also global plights to which the international community must respond” (Hastrup 2003:310). Thus, recollections and reflections on violence are deeply connected to May’s understandings of family, ethnic identities, European and other histories, and more. Romani lives, experiences, and identities are impacted by violence in many ways, with varying parallels to their experiences in the past as well as to other marginalized groups.

Frequently, Roma compared the current rise in Hungary’s Jobbik party to Hitler’s rise in popularity, both of which capitalized on scapegoating techniques blaming supposedly “lower” classes of people for the general woes of the nation. Alanna describes below her frustration when Canadians do not understand how prevalent the neo-Nazi movement is in Hungary today.

Julianna: Is Hungary a safe country?

Alanna: You know what? I lived there until I was 48 years old. It was a not-so-good time then too, but right now, in the past two to three years, it’s terrible, it’s terrible. The Nazis—all around the world, they are known as such. How can [Canadians] think that over there it’s not dangerous? That Roma are protected, that they’re safe—who? Because the Nazi group, Jobbik, they have a uniform, just like in Hitler times—they use exactly the uniform that they had in the Hitler times—and then the people say [Roma are safe]? The Roma, they are living in their own area. The Roma children cannot go very well outside, into school or anywhere else, because they fear. And their parents too, they know they want to kill you. And all over the world, they know this. They know this! And they

[Jobbik] are in the Parliament. Come on, they are second place in Parliament, can you believe it? The Nazis. (Interview 2011)

Alanna is frustrated not only that the Jobbik exist, but also towards the seemingly selective memory the rest of the world seems to have in acknowledging the dangers of such a group. Hastrup (2003) explores how this kind of violence intertwines with the lack of ability for victims to have a public voice and speak up against injustices. “For an individual to be able to speak, to narrate or to bear witness demands that the speaker is recognized and recognizable as part of the social. The objectified victim of violence is denied access to such a position” (Hastrup 2003:313). Alanna seeks at least mere acknowledgement by others that this violence is happening to her community, if not even the ability for Roma to speak up on their own.

The Jobbik party has made it clear they would like to “swat out” or exterminate “Gypsies” altogether<sup>77</sup>. Yet Canada does not acknowledge this as sufficiently dangerous circumstances that justify Romani seeking asylum and protection from another state. Decisions rendered denying Roma refugee status here often cite their ability to move to different regions, cities, or even other European nations. Thus, the accounts and narratives of the persistent violence and terror that Roma describe are not given much credibility. For example, Elena explains why she and her family came to Canada from the Czech Republic:

It’s very difficult to explain to those people asking me to explain, “why didn’t you just change cities?” We did change to the big city, we lived in [redacted]; then we lived in another city. Afterwards we tried a smaller city, where we stayed for a while. We have family [over there still]...and when we spoke with them by Skype, we asked them how things were, and they say, “don’t come back. Don’t come back please, it’s much worse. If I had a chance to leave the country, I would get out right away...Don’t come back.” So, it’s more depressing, and it’s also more difficult, because we’ve been here for two years. You tried a new life, you feel like a human being, and then there’s the feeling that you might go back. There is no way...we don’t have a home there anymore. And we are sure if we go back, there’s a chance we could be killed at anytime. You see, [my

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<sup>77</sup> Searching YouTube will produce their official videos encouraging these actions.

mother] doesn't know what we are talking about, and she just said "tell her, here in Canada, we found out about this real life." It was a big surprise and a big shock when we came in 2009. Starting at the airport, when people didn't move away from us—they didn't go "oh yuck". [We're now] just normal people. It's a totally different life. (Interview 2011)

I repeatedly heard similar sentiments while volunteering at the RCC. From many of the Romani clients that came through the centre's doors, I heard accounts of attacks, no state protection, education segregation, and more, across wide regions and in different cities. For example, the excerpt below is just one of many similar conversations with Romani clients who hoped the RCC could help them with their claims:

Client/Translator: The police, and the doctors—there is nobody that would help. In August 2000, they attacked her husband. He went back to the doctors, and was attacked by the skinheads.

Julianna: Attacked again?

Client/Translator: Yes.

Julianna: And the police?

Client/Translator: Doesn't matter. Yes, they did a call to the police. The police asked her, "do you know who the attacker is?"

Julianna: And no reports were written?

Client/Translator: Nothing.

Julianna: Would you say that it's gotten better or worse over the last five years in Hungary?

Client/Translator: Yes, worse. [*Now crying*] It's a very hard story, you know? (Interview 2012)

I found it common that, when talking with others at the RCC about their stories, the volunteers and others would chime in and start recalling their own histories, circumstances, thoughts, or experiences they had forgotten to tell me about before. In other words, these incidents are unfortunately so common for many Roma that it takes a specific word or moment for them to even remember to remark on them. For example, Istvan (my Hungarian-Romani interpreter at the time) interrupted a conversation with a client whom I was helping fill out an application:

Istvan: My little sister was playing in the playground, and two kids said to her, “Gypsy go home. This place is not your place. Where’s your parents place?” She’s seven years old.

Julianna: When did this happen?

Istvan: Three weeks ago. My wife’s sister’s came in, said this has happened, I didn’t know what had happened, and they told me that children had told her seven-year-old little girl, a Gypsy, “go home”. And for three weeks, this little girl has been crying, you know, she doesn’t go to the school, or any place. (2012)

Istvan was actually recounting an incident that took place in Canada. This incident had more impact on him here, as it was more unexpected. Although Istvan was ambitious and expressed to me how he was keen to find a sense of belonging to Canada, this incident gave him pause as he reflected on what it will mean to continue to live in Canada as Romani.

Returning to European incidents, Elena’s reflection in the excerpt below regards the final incident that caused her family to sell everything and try to come to Canada. She described how a group of neo-Nazis attacked her one evening:

When I was attacked, they attacked me in the bus station. They punched me, they kicked me, and after, the men—I remember—they said, “I would like to rape you, but because you are Gypsy, you are dirty, and I don’t want to touch you, so I’m gonna do different things”. So, they did pee on me, everywhere. [*Pause*] It was a horrible feeling. (Interview 2011)

While Elena understandably was still processing many intense emotions as a result of the fairly regular violence that was threatened and perpetrated towards her and her family, I found it difficult to hear how such acts have come to be viewed as normal. For example, during an interview with Diana, another Czech Romani refugee (who had already received status and was fairly settled in Canada by the time I interviewed her), told me, “My dad was murdered because of his race...It’s ok, I got used to it”. She was nonchalant, and it was clear that she would talk about it to me if I wished, but she had decided long ago that she would not dwell on it anymore than she had to. Diana had been a child when it had happened, and humans develop survival techniques to cope with violence. The fact that this happens does not detract from the underlying point, however:

this extreme violence occurs daily, and as such, affects Romani expressions of identity at the individual, family, and collective levels.

Ethan correspondingly describes his own take on how the severity of how violence impacts larger identity and community processes, particularly when inflicted on children:

Gandhi said the worst form of violence that you can inflict on any person, is to inflict poverty on a child. And it's true. This is what they're doing; they are committing the worst type of violence on [Romani] children by truncating their development. That's striking to me, because when you do that, you know you're gonna decimate a race, the race has no chance...It's a crime against humanity. When you do that to the children, at that high level, you are committing, in essence, developmental genocide because the entire community, the entire race doesn't have a chance. If you do it to two or three generations of children, well, where is the community? Where are they? (Interview 2012)

Understanding their children as targets of violence and exclusionary policies, this is perhaps the reason I often witnessed Romani families purposefully discussing violent incidents in detail in front of and with their children. For example, during one summer picnic, otherwise a time of fun games, balloons, and good food, the conversation turned to upcoming occasions and specifically, an upcoming remembrance event for Romani victims of the Holocaust. Rather than discuss things ambiguously, the parents and community members took specific time to describe how Roma were burned in the ovens and tortured for being Romani, purposefully directing much of the discussion to the children gathered around the tables. Not only have these violent acts become integrated into everyday life and identity processes that the children must learn, the adults were teaching them why it is important to remember. Emphasizing awareness of these issues serves to hopefully prevent future violence and suffering (“never again”) by retaining historical knowledge and acknowledgement. This kind of dialogue has been explored in relation to Jewish collective memories regarding the Holocaust: “It is argued that the function of Jewish historical memory and commemoration of the Holocaust is to preserve the sense of imminent (not merely past) danger and to instill the conviction that the Holocaust is as much a reality now as it was then” (Stein 1984:5). Remembering ‘wrongs’ thus enables survival and the “paradox of persistence through (not despite) persecution” (Stein 1984:5).

This has also been explored in relation to Romani collective memories regarding the Holocaust (Kapralski 1997; Kenrick and Puxon 2009; Stewart 2004; Thorne 2011), a relationship fraught with politics. There has not yet been any examination focusing on Roma in Canada who are in the process of re-learning their histories (which subsequently affects their identities and experiences). Informants making connections and referring to neo-Nazi movements today voice their concerns as a contextual precursor to the widespread and large-scale persecution against Roma before and during the Holocaust. Henry describes the relationship between having a Romani identity with understanding Romani pasts:

The problem is how the Gypsies are right now—the Roma—we are a reflection of our own action and historical perspective. Because what we did over there [in Europe], it reflects on us today [in Canada]. It is action and reaction. It means that people who had a hard time surviving, who had a hard time being part of society—I think this is part of the reason we had a kind of caste system for 400 or 500 years. The Pope in 1500 made a law that Gypsies cannot stop in a village. If they stopped, they could be killed without any purpose, without any court or cause. Just kill them. So, this is why they had to always move. I feel that’s why—talking with Roma kids and Roma people—what they are doing is a reflection of their own history and historical perspective, like the Indians. (Interview 2012)

Roma frequently drew connections to First Nations and Native American experiences as they described their experiences in and perceptions of Canada. I learned that this was not only because Roma witnessed similar stereotyping processes in North America (“Indian” and “Gypsy” characters/representations share much in common), but also because Roma felt a similar reflection between colonial experiences and consequences.

I was going down the street and I saw this Indian guy, he was poor, he was destroyed, and my thought was “this is the cause of something”. I saw that it was because of the government, because of their tricks... What I’m saying with this, is that when I saw the Indian guy there, and he’s almost dead, when I see the ambulance, the police—I don’t blame them. I blame the government. I blame this historical thing what happened, because he’s a result of that thing. And I think for me, when you go to a company where they create something, you check out the product. The product is always a result of their consciousness, what they do. If we see the product is good, that means all the leadership is doing the right thing. But if the product is defective, that means the leadership is in trouble. And this is

why now, today, I'm saying the Canadian government is excusing itself from the Indians. They said, "we have to give them hundreds of millions of dollars now because we admit what we did". But the problem is that they still do the same thing with other people, [*laughs*] you know what I mean? And I think this is—well, it's a lie, it's a lie. (Interview 2012)

Henry clearly points out that Canada, if considered a company, is producing a product with many flaws; their treatment of First Nations is only one of these indicators that something is not quite right on a foundational level in Canada. This underscores the importance of the next section for examining things in their historical context.

### 3.3.2 Remembering and being Romani in Canada

Julianna: What are your thoughts on Romani ethnicity?

Livia: I guess I kind of see it almost as much culturally as I do as through ethnicity or ancestry. Just, the customs, and the stories that I grew up with, or the history in the family that I feel like I love and look like, and that I have the same mannerisms. Or that it's more in the tradition and keeping their memory alive through loving those practices. For me, that is the most important piece. And that it is also very political, trying keep pieces of histories and ethnicities of people that we're not proud of normally, that they tried to hide, or tried to put down, as part of selected things to try and hold onto and reclaim them and find a connection to them, whatever that is. And you know, [I've]...been involved in activism, human rights work, anti-racist organizations, so it makes sense particularly, as in the last few years of what's been happening in Hungary, that I would get engaged in that, given that that's where my family identifies from. And not just the involvement in Palestinian solidarity, like First Nations activism—I would have a connection to the racism happening in my country of origin...I guess that the way that we lived, what our holidays looked like, what we eat, how we celebrate, or you know, those kinds of things...But I think I'm still trying to figure out what it is to be Roma, or what that meant. I think it was a conversation with my mom, my aunts, my grandma, my other cousins, all was part of me just trying to learn some history of what has been happening then in [Central and Eastern Europe] at that time. And also reading, and then I went to some talks that Ronald Lee gave. I think I heard him speak once at the Native community center. Yeah, and then I began reading about the European Roma Rights Center. (Interview 2012)



The seemingly simple question of asking someone to explain what makes them Romani resulted in the above, decidedly complex, statement. Livia switched her verb tenses back and forth, her memories and contemporary attitudes blending together. She covered topics from ancestral customs, ethnic backgrounds, past traditions maintained in the present, oral stories and histories, political engagements, human rights activism, and more. She emphasizes that she keeps these collective memories alive through loving the past, even as she recognizes such actions as extremely political. Much as collective memories can be essentially understood as agreed-upon history, and therefore imagined in the same sense of Anderson's imagined communities, all identities—including ethnicities—can be understood as imagined, with all the enacting, negotiating, contesting, and re-defining that comes along with it. Ethnicity, connected as it is to the concept of race—with its own inherent genetic/physical walls of its own (e.g., an essentializing and conservative approach that perhaps considers intelligence, strength, personality characteristics, etc.)—is an imagined collective identity whose walls are ambiguous and depend entirely on the person(s) involved.

As there is no quintessential “Canadian” identity or a quintessential “Romani” identity, this section intends to reflect the different ways that Roma use history when framing their identities as Romani in a Canadian context. For example, the following excerpts refer to varying beliefs regarding Romani identity overall as a construct, with regard to language, meanings imbued in historical transmissions through generations, and responses to/challenges of historical Gypsy stereotypes.

When talking with Ronald Lee (an expert on Romani/Romanes and the first Canadian author of an English/Romani dictionary) about different Romani identities and histories, he explained the impacts that language and power have on reinforcing identities and retaining histories:

Ronald: For some reason, the Vlax<sup>78</sup> retained it [their language] even though they were in the camps. The Vlax seem to see it as an identity marker. So it doesn't matter where they are, they'll speak it. I'm getting

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<sup>78</sup> Vlax is a dialect of the Romani/Romanes language spoken mainly in southeastern Europe.

emails from Latin America and all over the place, and it looks like they are the most numerous—the fact that they intermarry in different countries, [with] the only language in common as Romanes. But look at the advantage: they come here from Europe speaking Romanes. They've got Roma throughout the Americas that speak their language. Otherwise, they speak only Czech, or what other options?

Julianna: What about those [at the RCC] who can speak it and those who cannot?

Ronald: Like I said, I'm in the middle, because it's usually the educated Roma who don't speak it, and the traditional Roma who do speak it. I happen to be educated, but I also speak it. So is Hancock... Well you take a guy like [redacted], who is not all that well educated, and when he came here, he could hardly speak Romanes. And now he can, fluently, because he's working every day with Roma who do speak it. The Romanian Roma, the Hungarians, only the 30% who are Vlax... The ones who remained in Slovakia usually speak Romanes, but in the Czech Republic, they've mostly lost it or are losing it. Some of them do speak it fluently. But they don't use it at home. But I have seen them, their musicians on the stage singing Romanes. But that's kind of like Scot-Canadians who've learned some songs in Gaelic—they don't actually speak it. (Interview 2012)

Despite differences and varying linguistic abilities, Lee affirms the roles that language can play in influencing Romani identities for Roma in Canada. Distinctions through language are another way of connecting Romani identity in Canadian and historical contexts. The sense that Romani/Romanes is a strong ethnic identity marker is felt by many Roma, whether they are speakers of it or not. Many who cannot speak it lament this loss and praise those who commit to teaching it to younger generations (from many different nationalities and groups) in this new environment. This requires thinking about language beyond an immediate means of communication, but also as a deep connection to their past and histories.

People also likened Romani histories and identities to being a puzzle, such as in the quote below by Lily. Much like Rachael's description of herself as "less Roma" than other community members, Lily believed other community members do frequently not see her as fully Romani. She based this feeling on her physical appearance and cultural attributes,

but more significantly, because she lacks living relatives, who represent a more solid link between history and identity.

I generally am not accepted by Roma as Romani. For one thing, I don't look it. For another thing, I don't have any cultural attributes that they're familiar with. But the main thing is, I have no living—my father's not alive, my brother's not alive, I have no living people. So yeah, I think you find this with any cultural group, you know. I went to Scotland I remember, because I'm part Scottish, thinking, "I'm going home", and people looked at me like a stranger. And I realized that, you know, unless you are enmeshed in that culture, you're braided into it somehow—you're not really of that culture. And so, you pick and choose. Or you might say, like I say, "Well, the pieces of the puzzle have fallen into place for me, I understand now, I see the big picture about my own family and that is where my identity is". (Interview with Lily, 2012)

Lily describes belonging as being enmeshed or braided into a culture, with the most significant factor being family history. In other words, only through knowledge of her own history did she see the "big picture" of her identity (as well as its disjunctures with others' perceptions of her). Similarly, Beth, another Canadian-born Romani individual, described how she came to understand her family history as an integral part of her identity:

I thought about starting a Roma group, I knew there had to be other educated people out there, I knew I'm gonna try and make a new identity for myself...But as soon as I started doing research on it, and when I found [a Romani organization], I really felt like I had found gold...I guess it took me that long to really realize that I needed to start writing "Gypsy" into the search line of the Internet and see what comes up, to see and to start educating myself more about my background, you know? So that was it. It was always the same thing, always around North American people: everybody always thought it was so cool, that like you could be Gypsy, you know, and that it was real. And there's only stereotypes—the questions like, "Does your family have a caravan at home? Do you have a crystal ball? Can you read cards?" (Interview 2012)

Beth has since then focused on finding out more about her Romani history, both overall and of her own family. When I was in her house, there was a large and old poster of a Gypsy band; after I asked about it, she explained:

I made a poster from a record company, a record cover from our family. It's from Poly—see the corner, Polydor records? This was my only connection our family had to any kind of past. [Redacted]'s band, at the bottom, so this is our only connection to the past. This one broken up record that we have [*laughs*]. (Interview 2012)

This poster represents to her the entirety of her Romani family history in Canada, and she spent a great deal of care and energy into restoring and reproducing the poster. It was one of the first times she described feeling proud of her family's ethnicity and culture, having previously felt singled out and ashamed as a child.

Historical experiences and recollections greatly influence identity processes. Earlier sections of this chapter described some examples of anti-Gypsy policies in Europe, and it is worth examining some further historical context that Roma in North America experienced to provide perspective for the historical patterns that Roma describe as affecting their identities today. The following excerpt is from an article discussing anti-Gypsy laws in New Jersey (on the books from 1918-1998).

A long history of persecution caused many of the Gypsies to seek a new life in the United States...World War I marked the end of the first migration of the Gypsy people from Europe to America. "It coincided with a period in which xenophobia was common through the nation, a hostility to strangers that took the form of employment discrimination and attacks on the use of teaching languages other than English"...Mrs. Cruz-Perez said the fact that the law was still on the books was brought to her attention by members of a Jewish community group in her Assembly district. She said support to repeal the measure came quickly from the American Jewish Congress as well as other Jewish and Roman Catholic groups. "Surprisingly, I have not heard from any Gypsies, not even a letter from someone who remembered their grandmother or grandfather talking about the old law," Mrs. Cruz-Perez said. "Perhaps that old discrimination causes them to continue to deny their heritage". (McQuiston 1998)

Henry echoes this kind of rationalization regarding why Roma may not have been vocal against these laws. He believes that historical discrimination heavily influences how Roma currently perceive themselves (both individually and as a collective ethnicity). As a passionate philosopher, Henry frequently turned our conversations into history lessons.

These lessons often included directions for how he believes the Romani community should understand their histories.

Roma have to understand that they have to take care about themselves. This time is over, that they take money from anybody [else]: they have to take care about themselves. Because what's happening is, you remember, if you have animals, if you take out the animal from the wild, and you start to feed them, like a lion or something, after, you cannot put him back in the wild, because he's used to the food. He's destroyed. You need at least one year just to show him how to find the food himself again. And this is what's happening to the Gypsies. Gypsies, they don't know how to survive anymore in society because...they're used to this lifestyle. As it's been for 500 years. They don't how to live in a society, they don't how to be a doctor, they don't know how to be a lawyer, they don't know how to open a business, they don't know anything. They're ignorant about it, because...from day-to-day, they live in survival mode...[They think] only the non-Roma can [succeed], because they have this perception of themselves too, psychologically, that they are bad people. That we *have* to survive this way, we *have* to beg for money, our children are not *supposed* to go to school, we *have* to live in dirt, and all these things, the same problems for 500 years...We are all Roma. *This* is the most important point, even if we're different. I think the basic thing is that we have to bring them back their own history. It means we have to go back to our own roots, where we came from, find back the way. And on this, you can build. (Interview 2012)

Although Henry began by discussing how immediate survival concerns for Roma teach them that they cannot succeed, he contextualized this as a historical pattern reinforced for centuries. As he stated, only time and dedication (and the space to do so) by Roma themselves can help reverse these effects. Henry believes that the truly solid way to build up positive and lasting Romani identities is to return to the roots of their history so that they can produce their own interpretations and understandings. This connects to one of Lily's quotes as well, as she shares how history can be one of the most important things for understanding and reclaiming Romani identities (as well as the frustration that can occur when accurate information is lacking):

My dad was very uncomfortable about [asking for family history]...I think it was because he had left that purposefully behind. And so, I guess when I got into my teens, I began to get quite curious but didn't know where to look or what to read. All I got was—what was that book, not by

Baudelaire, I can't remember. My other cultural reference was George Borrow, and that kind of thing, so I thought, "Oh, and my dad would not talk about it at all, because now he was a new person and he was a Canadian person", and he wouldn't discuss anything to do with—as I call it—"his past Gypsy". So there was a very clear—a wall came down. So I began to find out from other sources, like, these other culturally inappropriate sources. (Interview 2012)

Beth had similarly recalled trying to find information on the internet about Roma. This demonstrates how—despite extremely varied and diverse backgrounds and experiences—"certain shared experiences" can be found in how Roma search for historical information as a means to help ground their understandings of belonging, and ultimately, their identities.

Although historical conceptualizations are significant factors, the process of representation—in both the past and present—is another area in which Roma are asserting their own versions of histories and identities, as the following post suggests. Written by the RCC Director just before she was to appear in Ottawa to speak on behalf of Roma rights in Canada, it demonstrates an intersection of historical knowledge and media reproductions of identities:

In eleven hours from now, I will be the first Roma person in Canadian history to appear in front of the Canadian government. My testimony to the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration will be in Ottawa at 3:30pm. I think that it is safe to say we are finally making some progress. As a leader, and a representative of the Canadian Roma community, I am going to give it my absolute best to urge the Canadian government to not create a "Designated Country List", whereby citizens seeking refuge from EU countries will be given an unfair limitations when seeking safety in Canada. Secondly, I will raise awareness about the epidemic of hate crippling our communities in Europe. Third, I will encourage our government to stop Jason Kenney's campaign to slander our community by spreading anti-Gypsy racist stereotypes. I will attempt to do all of these important things in my allotted five minutes of testimony. (Online post by Gina Csanyi-Robah, RCC Director, 2 May 2012)

This occasion ties together the significance of Romani history and identity in Chapter 3 with the next chapter's focus on media representations (as well as Chapter 5's focus on

leadership and advocacy). Making history herself as the first Romani person to appear in front of the Canadian government, Gina's actions underscore the lack of knowledge and representation surrounding Roma in Canada overall. Additionally, Gina calls for more awareness of current persecution and stereotypes facing Roma. This necessitates historical information (where did these stereotypes come from? How have Roma been targeted by persecution?) but also points out the contemporary processes with which Roma must engage. How Roma remember history and have been portrayed in the past, and how they are presently represented in the media, together intertwine in Canadian policy. Roma are increasingly engaging with their own histories and identities, communities, and external agents (such as government institutions) in various ways. Important aspects of these relationships and/or tensions are witnessed in the media, which serves as the focus for the following chapter's discussions.

## Chapter 4 – Roma in the media

### 4 Introduction

Unthinking respect for authority is the greatest enemy of truth. (Albert Einstein, written in 1901 in personal correspondence, reproduced in *The Private Lives of Albert Einstein*, by Highfield and Carter, 1994:78-79)

Races are very often invented from ignorance, or for very evil purposes. (Francis Lieber, 1871, in a letter published in the *New York Evening Post*)

On 5 September 2012, Ezra Levant aired a segment on his show *The Source* (hosted by *Sun News*) titled “The Jew vs. The Gypsies”. A Canadian conservative pundit/personality previously reprimanded for offensive and obscene speech<sup>79</sup>, Levant began his show with the following:

On Friday I told you about the wave of fraudulent refugee claims made by Gypsies trying to lie their way into Canada. That’s law-breaking in itself, lying about being refugees, I mean, they’re coming from Hungary for crying out loud. A rich, generous, liberal democracy...And these are Gypsies! A culture synonymous with swindlers. The phrase gypsy and cheater have been so interchangeable, historically, that the word has entered the English language as a verb: he gyped me. Well the gypsies have gyped us. Too many have come here as false refugees. And they come here to gyp us again, to rob us blind as they have done in Europe for centuries. (see Appendix B for full transcription)

The segment was approximately nine minutes long and continued in the same vein the entire time. He repeatedly dismissed and disparaged notions of Romani identity and ethnicity, and he accused them all of theft, violence, and other criminal activities. This sparked a string of reactions that included an official Canadian Broadcast Standards Council (CBSC) complaint and hate crime investigation by Toronto Police Services initiated by the Roma Community Centre (RCC).

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<sup>79</sup> In 2010, Levant was ordered to pay \$25,000 for libel to Giacomo Vigna for “defamatory” remarks. This was far from his only past run-in with the CBSC, for example, an official complaint and a subsequent ruling against him on June 2012 by CBSC for obscene speech.



This chapter begins with this incident because it provides a recent example of media discourse that specifically frames some of the representation issues facing Roma in Canada, which in turn inform identity processes. It also highlights some of the issues regarding public assumptions of knowledge regarding refugees and identities in the media. Levant unquestioningly absorbed and reproduced the official discourse that has been put forth by government officials—summarily, accusing all Roma as “bogus” refugees and criminals—which echoes and draws upon long-standing and well-entrenched racial/cultural stereotypes against Gypsies in public discourse. Quotes and excerpts from the Levant incidence often serve as a springboard for the main sections in this chapter to reiterate these points.

This chapter specifically examines various forms of media and how they influence Romani identity processes. Messages disseminated in the media often necessitate a collective voice (such as through spokespeople or representatives) that can simultaneously essentialize *and* unite community members. However, media offers a platform for diverse voices that can both reinforce *and* challenge stereotypes as well. This chapter also initiates discussion on how language and ideas that are disseminated through mainstream Canadian media can influence (and in turn can be influenced by) Romani identities, all of which are compounded by historical stereotypes and negative and/or racist public attitudes regarding so-called “Gypsies”. Specifically, media-scapes act as an important intersection between constructions and reproductions of history/information with the advocacy efforts and the emergent ways that Roma seek to use their own voices in constructing and reproducing Romani identities.

The reception that most Roma have received in the Canadian context illuminates the growing gap between who is perceived as welcome in “multicultural” societies and who, in reality, experiences the effects of increasing anti-immigrant and/or anti-refugee sentiments (for example as explored by Aiken et al. 2009; Ana 1999; Bryan and Denov 2011; Dauvergne 2008; Figgou and Condor 2006; Hjerm 1998, 2009; Pratt and Valverde 2002). Romani perceptions of, treatment within, and interactions with Canadian media-scapes also demonstrate larger-scale political and social engagements of identity negotiations and representation processes. This is not only occurring in Canada; one

example is the *romarising* exhibit discussed in Chapter 2. Another example includes Romani activists in Macedonia who created a protest campaign (*Rromano Avazi!/Roma Voice!*), explaining the situation as:

It's the best of times and the worst of times for Roma in Macedonia today. This campaign marked my initiation into civic engagement and public life. I graduated from university four years ago, but have been unable to find a job because of my ethnicity. It's the best of times because the likes of this campaign never happened before, and I am really proud to be part of making history.

It's the worst of times because the political system continues to resist change when it comes to the Roma, institutional arrangements are beset by bad policies and personal corruption. This is the most serious danger facing democracy in Macedonia today. Despite the authorities' attempts to use fear against us, we are still determined to fight to strengthen democracy for all in our country. (Rorke 2012)

As Rorke notes in the above cited article, "it is very telling and indicative of the political climate in Macedonia that all the activists quoted wished to preserve their anonymity for fear of further recrimination" (2012). As already mentioned by Lily and Henry in Chapter 3, Roma frequently fear for their safety if they speak up in any way: "people are terrified of what could happen to their relatives". This is also the case for Romani clients of the RCC who are brave enough to come forward with their stories. In an effort to raise awareness, the RCC created its own YouTube channel. One of its earliest videos is an interview with a newcomer Hungarian Romani woman, describing her reasons for coming to Canada. Many YouTube commenters dismissed her claim to Romani identity at all, while others decried the criminal nature of Gypsies the world over. I was later told that this video had been referenced in a hateful phone message to the RCC; specifically, people had threatened to find her remaining relatives in Hungary. Although not a daily occurrence, it is unfortunately not uncommon for the RCC to receive threats such as this. Whether these messages target specific people, or the organizations itself for its advocacy work, all of these factors influence the environment in which Roma develop, mobilize, and put forth their own messages.

This chapter explores media representations of Roma with regard to how they affect Romani identity processes. This process influences public discussions and attitudes,

ultimately demonstrating a mutually affected relationship. Therefore, the first section considers how to define media-scapes and their wide-ranging consequences on Romani perspectives. The second section explores media in a Canadian context, which provides the background for understanding the discourse analysis of the third section. Finally, the fourth section refocuses on Romani representations, highlighting some problematic areas, as well as providing some indication that Canadian media can potentially provide spaces that encourage and enact positive social change for Roma (especially with regards to providing a space for Romani voices). In each section, discussions exploring Romani perspectives show that Roma are not only influenced *by* media, but are also using media spaces as a means to challenge racist ideologies (shown in news coverage, comments, and ethnic terminology). This serves as demonstration of one aspect of their negotiation and contestation in identity processes in Canada. Roma are thus challenging definitions of belonging to Canada (and what it means to be Canadian) as they concurrently negotiate among themselves what it means in practice to be represented as Romani.

#### 4.1 Conceptualizing media-scapes

I think the media is really powerful in terms of maintaining the status quo, or promoting change. But, increasingly though, I think it's become a more and more conservative weapon, as who owns the media is more and more consolidated. So unfortunately, as monopolies grow stronger and stronger, the opportunities to use the media progressively get weaker and weaker. But then there are changes in technology [that] have been able to show much more independent media happening, like through blogging online, a news service, or a podcast. Or certainly, it's much easier to get a lot of progressive news than it used to be: you're able to organize a flash mob by text message, even if the Ontario media won't admit that there's basically a revolution going on right now. So I think that there's definitely been cool ways that social media has been used in human rights work right now... There doesn't seem to have been any positive news [on Roma in the media], except for what we've made ourselves. No, I shouldn't say that, not just ourselves. We've certainly got good allies out there, you know, and some research being done... [But] I do think it's pretty startling how much the stereotypes have been perpetuated in *The Sun*, and in the *Hamilton Spectator*, especially on Roma issues. How can they still get away with this? (Interview with Livia, 2012)

As Livia explained above, Canadian media-scapes are important signifiers of a number of issues that concern Romani individuals and advocates. For example, Livia pointed out the multi-faceted and sometimes conflicting or contradictory ways that people can use media. This includes how media can challenge people's preconceived ideas about many things, but similarly how it can be used to reinforce the *status quo*. Moreover, recent changes can be useful for mobilizing community action (like technological advances), but concurrently, some may see their access (and thus potential for self-representation) decrease. Livia additionally pointed out how communities and allies can create positive messages, only to immediately remind herself that frustrating negative stereotypes frequently occur. Power structures influence how media creates and reproduces information, narratives, and reproductions of people and their identities. As with identity processes in general, examinations involving media requires a perspective that can incorporate its complex, multi-faceted, and multi-layered realities.

As Appadurai describes, "the suffix -scape allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes" (1990:7), which aligns with how I have chosen to understand and apply the concept of identity as fluid and dynamic, and at times, seemingly irrational. Media, as with history in the previous chapter, cannot be simply viewed as a single truth, perspective, or fact. Moreover, when examining how Roma interact, engage, and are affected by the Canadian media-scapes, we need to remember that all '-scapes' "are not objectively given relations which look the same from every angle of vision, but rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors" (Appadurai 1990:7). Different actors include nation-states and countries, multinational institutions, diasporic communities, sub-national groupings of all sorts (e.g., economic, political, religious), minorities, neighbourhoods, families, and the individual (Appadurai 1990:7). Appadurai notes that the individual actors are especially important within media-scapes because they are the agents that navigate, constitute, and experience such larger influences, bringing to them their own interpretations, perspectives, and worldviews (1990:7). A conceptualization of media-scapes that incorporates global disjunctures and differences thus influences how anthropology can critically study "imagination as a social practice" (Appadurai 1990:5). Metcalf notes these contributions as a watershed, and emphasizes the growing relevance

of including ‘-scape’ perspectives in anthropological projects and sites (2001:165). The frequency with which informants raised media issues in conversation signified to me the significance of using media-scapes in this work. I also realized that many Romani advocacy and community events involved various aspects of media-scapes, especially the media’s role in reproducing histories, knowledge, misinformation, and stereotypes.

My media-specific methodology included analyses of Levant’s television segment, Romani narratives, interviews with journalists, and newspaper articles and headlines, as well as newer forms of media such as those raised by Livia. Therefore, discussions include examples from public Facebook posts (e.g., by RCC members or Canadian politicians), debate topics among Roma listserv members (permissions granted by originating senders), film and television depictions of Roma in general, and general commenters in online forums (e.g., news sites, YouTube).

I used *LexisNexis* searches for newspaper articles, available through Western University library access. I conducted key term searches in the following four newspapers for 2012: *The Globe and Mail*, *The Toronto Star*, the *Montreal Gazette*, and *The Hamilton Spectator*. These sources were specifically chosen for representation across provinces and nation, with an emphasis on locally relevant sources and high readership/circulation. To this end, I included a nationally-distributed newspaper, *The Globe and Mail*, with a weekly readership of approximately one million (Newspaper Audience Databank for 2011-2012) and regarded as Canada’s “newspaper of record”; Canada’s highest-circulated newspaper, *The Toronto Star*, with a weekly readership of almost 2.5 million; two local newspapers in high-Roma population areas, *The Toronto Star* and *The Hamilton Spectator*; and a non-Ontario provincial newspaper for coverage comparison, the *Montreal Gazette*, Quebec’s highest-circulated English newspaper with a weekly readership of over 500,000. Using the terms “Roma”<sup>80</sup> and “Gypsy” produced a total 235 articles for 2012.

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<sup>80</sup> Search results for “Roma” automatically include all references to “Rome”; such articles were not included in the final count of articles.

Articles were then coded using *NVivo*. I focused specifically on the use of the terms “Gypsy” (including variants like gypsie), “bogus” refugee terminology (including words like fraudulent, illegitimate), and “safe” terminology (including references to “Designated Country of Origin”/DCO). Articles were further subdivided by content: those pieces that contained issues specifically relating to Roma totaled 95 out of the possible 235. This was defined as containing more than one reference (either “Gypsy” or “Roma”), with at least three to four sentences focusing on real-world issues that affect Roma. For example, an article reflecting on the Holocaust that mentioned Romani victims in passing, even in two or three different places, was not categorized as “Roma focused” because the vast majority of the piece was not framed in reference to the Romani victims. However, an article dealing with a fictional opera was categorized as “Roma focused”, because its main analysis reviewed and contrasted the fictional Romani representations on stage with real-world Romani issues such as persecution and discrimination. Pieces included as “Roma focused” could also have been immigration/refugee-focused articles, as long as they included specific and detailed information on Roma (even if they were not the main priority of the article). Further divisions and/or key term searches of these newspaper articles are provided in the following sections when relevant. All of these techniques enabled me to contextualize aspects of Romani representation in the media in Canada; as the next section explores, the Canadian context itself is complicated and dynamic.

## 4.2 Canadian context

Notice how many women there are on this list [of Gypsy criminals]. Of course, it’s kind of like the Hell’s Angels or the Mafia—there’s no such thing as a woman as the boss of a biker gang, or a woman as a godfather—but for Gypsies, it’s a family affair. In fact, women and children are the best at it, because we liberal Canadians or Europeans would never suspect a child, or a mom, or both working together. (Levant segment, 2012)

As a Canadian citizen and a journalist, I enjoy freedom of speech. Without that right, we would not be a democracy. But as someone who seeks to influence the public debate, I have to think about the words I choose. It’s

just wrong to slur a group of people. I made the moral mistake of judging people collectively. (Levant apology<sup>81</sup>, 2013)

The perception of Canada as a nation-state is immensely complex, constantly changing, and dependent on who is doing the perceiving. The Canadian mainstream media frequently references Canada as a liberal and multicultural democracy (such as seen in Levant's quotes above). Such branding is also witnessed through commercialized patriotic advertising (e.g., *Tim Horton's*, *Molson*, *Roots*), Canadian holiday or commemoration coverage (e.g., the recent 1812 commemoration, any Canada Day celebration), etc. As this section later points out, Canadians in general (not including First Nations or other marginalized groups) often subscribe to these positive characterizations reinforced through media channels. In both Levant's original segment and his apology, he makes a special point of defining positive Canadian values, albeit for different purposes; in the anti-Roma segment, Canadianness is used as a contrast. "Liberal Canadians"—supposedly—would hardly be able to imagine the despicable criminal behaviour practiced by Roma. In the apology, Canadianness is used as a demonstration of Levant's own sense of justice and belonging, including terms like "freedom of speech" and "moral mistakes". However, words and their meanings should not be a given, even for something as definable as democracy (being generally understood as a form of government with equal citizenship participation). As noted by Ethan (an immigration and refugee lawyer) when discussing the DCO list with me in an interview: "So what if Hungary is a democracy? What the fuck does that mean? So what? America was a democracy and they lynched blacks and Jews and Italians for centuries." Ethan's frustration stems in part from the point that the word democracy is an empty one if its corresponding democratic principles are not practiced. Simply bandying the term democracy—and its associated values—around in media and policy is not, in Ethan's view, a predictor of fair or just structures as experienced by those who access them.

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<sup>81</sup> This apology aired on *The Source* on 18 March 2013, approximately seven months after the original segment aired. It also occurred as *Sun News* (which was losing millions of dollars) tried to negotiate with Canada's broadcast regulator for basic cable airtime; for more information and the full text apology, see Ladurantaye (2013).

Alison, another refugee lawyer, explained her perspective on the context in which we must understand media in Canada:

In terms of what the government is doing...the government has an agenda. I mean, a really right-wing social agenda, as well as a more right-wing economic agenda. I think we've never been faced with that before...But in terms of society, everything is so tainted by who has the loudest voice, and what the media actually reports on. I think that people are quite tolerant and open to diversity...[but] I think the government plays on people being disgruntled, people feeling that there's an economic downturn that lets people scapegoat. I mean, that's just a classic strategy. It's effective, you know, and when you're involved in advocacy on a particular issue, you realize how skewed the media could be. So it's very hard to know if an absence of reporting or view in the media is representative of the lack of that view or portrayal, or that the Minister saying "bogus, bogus, bogus" means that this is what people want to hear, you know? (Interview 2012)

Suspicious of the government's role in shaping media (by using selective and manipulative tactics), Alison represents only one of many informants who noted a seemingly contradiction in Canada. On the one hand, an assumed Canadian identity draws heavily on notions of freedom, fairness, and multiculturalism. On the other hand, the lived experiences of those engaging with immigration and refugee policies and other Canadian institutions describe a very different scenario, including concerns about governmental interference, direct manipulation, and exclusionary/anti-immigrant attitudes<sup>82</sup>. These disjunctures most often appeared when I specifically asked individuals about their experiences with Canadian bureaucratic systems (e.g., immigration processes, settlement services, community activism) and/or representation systems (e.g., policy definitions, media portrayals) and/or their identities. For example, I asked Livia, as a

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<sup>82</sup> There are many journalists and articles discussing this very disjuncture and/or how Canadians and non-Canadians perceive and experience Canada. Examples (with their corresponding details) include: Paikin (2013), "Canada: Still a Land of Opportunity?"; Angus Reid (2013), "Asked for their views on 'a law in Quebec that prohibits people who are public employees from wearing religious clothing or symbols while at work', two-thirds (68%) of Quebecers express general support for such a broad prohibition (fully 46% indicate strong support). Canadians living outside Quebec oppose the proposal by a margin of 53% to 37% (33%, the plurality, strongly oppose)"; and Leroux (2013), "Whose Values? On Nationalism in English Canada and in Quebec", which notes that "it's an auspicious moment indeed when stories in the *National Post* and the *Globe & Mail* sound very much like the ones penned by activists on social media".



Canadian-born Romani activist, about her thoughts on whether there were any differences between Canada's reputation and its reality. She explained:

Oh yeah, I would say maybe more than anywhere else in the world. I would say that we are the biggest—the number one country for having multiple personalities identity to what we're actually doing. In terms of environmental destruction with the tar sands, in terms of our involvement in war, in terms of our colonial practices. Like, the South African apartheid system is based on the Canadian model that's being replicated in Palestine right now—we train the Afghani Army, we train Iraqi police, we're involved in Libya, Syria. It's incredible, and then, still, this bizarre international reputation of Canadians—it's mind blowing to me... I think it's just being a colonial country. I think there in particular are real myths about Canada, and I don't know, maybe it's its proximity to the US, if we just kind of get glossed over, or if we're just a little bit more backdoor version of the US... I think that we maybe have one of the most fascist governments in the world right now, but no, I think it's the identity of colonialism. (Interview 2012)

Her perspective on Canadian identity ended up including an essentializing and psychological diagnosis (“multiple personalities”) in order to make sense of the disparity she sees between so-called Canadian characteristics and their enacted realities. It is also interesting to note that she positions Canada firmly within a colonial framework (recalling other examples from Chapter 3).

What further kind of Canadian context is relevant for understanding Romani identity processes and representations? The Levant segment purposefully juxtaposed a sense of belonging to Canada against Romani individuals and identities. He refused to acknowledge any kind of ‘authentic’ Romani ethnic identity or heritage, reproducing age-old stereotypes and erroneous mythologies.

But 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. (Levant, 2012)

To emphasize this artificial juxtaposition, Levant uses phrases such as “we liberal Canadians”, while stressing how “Gypsy criminals” are targeting Canada (both through specific “scams” as well as affecting the larger economy through immigration fraud).

This juxtaposition, in addition to his denial of Romani ethnicity and heritage, highlights his ideal of Canada as something not belonging or aligned in any way with Roma. Although no less excusable, Levant's words would not have been perhaps as surprising if heard from a European broadcaster. Many European countries and peoples have openly expressed anti-Roma sentiments without fear of reprisal for centuries (Fraser 1995; Klímová-alexander 2005, 2010; Petrova 2003; Pogány 2004, 2012). As recounted by Goldston:

In Europe today, negative myths about Gypsies penetrate childhood stories, family legends, and the fabric of everyday life. People reveal their anti-Roma prejudice unhesitatingly, in the most casual conversations. "I don't like them," says a Budapest florist as she wraps up some daisies. "Can't trust them," warns a taxi driver. The stereotypes about Gypsies are so insidious that even some leading human rights activists share the tendency to minimize the extent of Roma mistreatment, to react defensively when their national governments are criticized for their Roma policies, or to blame the Roma for their own troubles. (2002:147)

Even as awareness of Roma rights and ethnic identity/collective mobilization has grown, Roma continue to experience widespread prejudice and discrimination. "Although Roma media in [Eastern Europe] have quickly proliferated, and there is evidence of enhanced public awareness and acceptance of Roma populations, stereotypes persist... perpetuat[ing] the long-held stereotype of the Roma as exotic, colourful and innately musical beings, completely unsuited for participation in the serious matters of a nation's politics and economy" (Mihelj 2012:79). Tileaga's work (2005) is an example that demonstrates some of the discursive, rhetorical, and interpretative ways described above in which Roma are delegitimized as people in Romania. This occurs through extreme prejudiced talk and discourse in mainstream and official media, which remains a persistent issue Roma face in European media-scapes. Tileaga also explores through discursive psychology how Roma have become a "preferred topic" in Romanian public discourse and mostly right-wing press since the 1990s, serving to legitimize the positioning of Roma as "outsiders" and scapegoats (2006:21–22).

There are worrisome similarities between these hostile European stereotypes of Roma in the media and the kind of coverage Romani issues receive in Canada. Journalist Gerald

Caplan, referring to the Levant segment, summarized this trend: “Somehow, it’s okay to utter the most viciously racist slurs about the Roma that would be wholly unacceptable if said about any other group on earth” (Climenhaga 2013). Although we continue to witness ethnic slurs and derogatory comments about other ethnic minorities (“terrorist” Muslims, etc.) in Canada, many informants feel that Caplan’s point rings true. Roma are specifically targeted in the media with ethnic slurs and they are discussed in opposition to perceived Canadian values, such as that of a “multicultural” and “welcoming” nation.

#### 4.2.1 A ‘welcoming’ nation

There were some criticisms afterwards, but I dismissed them as coming from the usual soft-on-crime liberals and grievance groups. But when I look at some of the words I used last summer, like “the Gypsies have gyped us”, I must admit that I did more than just attack a crime or immigration fraud problem. I attacked a particular group, and painted them all with the same brush. (Levant, 2013)

Many in Canada responded to Levant’s racism with frustration and anger; according to Hancock, this may in part be due to Canadians having less of a cultural legacy of outright racism towards Roma, like that which exists in Europe (Hancock 1987, 2005; Lee 2010; Pogany 2012). Although Roma have lived in Canada for at least a century, only the relatively recent arrivals of refugees from the Czech Republic and Hungary have permeated public consciousness and garnered widespread attention. For example, I found newspaper headlines on Roma-related issues tend to increase accordingly with Romani refugee claim patterns (seen previously in Figure 1). Coverage of Roma-related issues increased exponentially in 1997-1998 and 2008-2011, following significant increases in the number of Romani refugee claimants coming to Canada. Prior to 1996, there were only a handful of articles that dealt with Romani issues, and the vast majority of these were foreign-correspondence pieces and did not refer in any way to Roma in Canada. A headline search for “Gypsy”, with Canada in the body of the text and prior to 1993, yields 27 results; 12 of which referred to “gypsy moths”. Only seven dealt with Romani issues or Roma as an ethnic group. Four of these articles specifically discussed Roma in Canada, two of which framed Roma in an explicitly negative and criminal manner (crime and/or arrest). The third article (from 1978) was not much better, using words like

“controversial” and “band of gypsies”, in order to describe how they have “run up” unpaid bills and mentions that they were denied refugee status in Canada. The fourth article (from 1985) examined various aspects of Québec Romani culture through an exoticized lens of arranged marriages, although it did include some accurate information on Romani history, persecution, and language. Overall, Roma have only been a focus of news in Canadian media for the last 15 or so years, compared to centuries’ worth of coverage of Romani stereotypes as reproduced in Europe.

There is a persistent popular perception that Canada’s multicultural model translates into a welcoming nation that encourages immigration; this may in part be why some Canadians did not appreciate Levant’s segment. Levant’s rhetoric clearly encouraged governmental practices of interdiction for Romani refugees from Hungary, even going so far as to wish Roma would be denied access altogether of the refugee determination system. Such generalizations (and the wish to refuse Roma access to basic human rights) go against the belief that welcoming refugees is intrinsic to Canadian identity and its genesis. This is, in fact, not consistent with the historical record of Canadian reception of immigrants, as the next section will demonstrate, but does underscore the importance of examining the perception against historical and present realities.

The perception by Canadians that their country wholeheartedly welcomes refugees has its foundations in past policy. For example, Chapter 3 provided one historical watershed for refugee policy in Canada’s reception and settlement of Hungarian refugees in 1956. In 1986, Canada was awarded the Nansen Medal for its refugee system (Dauvergne 2012) as its Federal Court decision in 1985 (*Singh v. Minister of Employment and Immigration*, 1 S.C.R. 177) created a system that allowed refugee claimants to state their own case to a government representative, marking Canada as a front-runner in comprehensive and reflexive refugee rights. Reflexivity in this context means that refugees could represent their case in person and on an individual basis, allowing overall for more nuanced decisions based on specific contexts and narratives. Canada even expanded the UN refugee definition to include “persons in need of protection” (Showler, 2006: 216), securing international praise for such policies. Various aspects of Canada’s general

immigration system, such as the points system instituted in 1967, were specifically designed to attempt to remove racial discrimination from policy.

These policies and more have created a strong belief that Canada is welcoming and multicultural. “Canada’s reputation for welcoming immigrants and celebrating diversity” helped *The Economist* declare Canada as notably “cool” (i.e., successful) in 2003 (Drohan 2013; Anon. 2003). As recounted by Engler (2009: 4), a 2005 study showed that “94 percent of Canadians believed their country was well-liked around the world, the highest percentage of 16 nations surveyed”. More specifically with regards to immigration, a 2007 poll showed only 16% of Canadians disagreeing with the statement “Canada’s multicultural makeup is one of the best things about this country” (illustrated by Saroka and Robertson (2010:3–4)). Only 32% of Canadians felt that racism was a significant problem in Canada in 2012 (AR 2012).

Canada, as a perceived immigrant nation (Knowles 2007), has thus built a reputation as a multicultural country. However, scholars have noted that in reality, Canada retains an emphasis on English/French nationhood (Sojka 2007). This is partially evidenced by the interesting category “visible minority”, signifying any person in Canada who is not “white”/of European stock (Bannerji 2007; Hutcheon 2007). This term similarly demonstrates how “the early narrative of Canadian nationhood did not leave space for indigenous peoples” (Sojka 2007:10). Somewhat more optimistically, Kroetch maintains the fact that “Canadians cannot agree on what their meta-narrative is” actually unites them in common nation-ness (2007:21). However, I agree with Gullestad’s proposition, whose research on Norway’s immigration system (2002) bears striking resemblance to Canada’s role as an agent of influence on its peoples’ identities. For example, “a racialization of difference takes place, as immigration emerges as a site for racial and racist discourse, as a site of conjuncture between the welfare state and its citizens... [which] demonstrates how equality conceived as sameness (‘imagined sameness’) underpins a growing ethnification of national identity” (Gullestad 2002:46-47). I find the term “imagined sameness”, especially linked to larger issues of egalitarianism (Gullestad 2002:46-47), an incredibly useful way to build on Anderson’s (1991 [1983]) notion of “imagined communities” in a Canadian context. These assumptions and contradictions

regarding Canadian attitudes and policies are explored in the next section, focusing specifically on anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, and anti-Roma sentiments.

#### 4.2.2 Anti-immigrant/anti-refugee attitudes

The history of Canadian immigration and refugee policy reveals an approach that has differentiated among various groups, selecting those that responded to general market needs and excluding those considered undesirable and/or of particular ethnicities.

Although there are some voices raising awareness that “Canada’s immigration history is one of discrimination and exclusion” (Black 2013), the idea that Canada *used* to be welcoming and is only *now* experiencing a shift also needs to be challenged. As noted above, there is a similar tendency regarding Canada’s international reputation and self-perception as a welcoming, generous, multicultural nation-state that is at odds with growing anti-immigrant rhetoric in recent media-scapes (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). More specifically, an increase in anti-refugee and anti-Roma sentiments also challenges these conceptualizations.

There has been a dramatic transition of Canadian immigration policies to favour only those who can immediately drive and contribute to the economy, a trend that Smith notes as generally unnoticed by a Canadian audience (2012). Researchers Alboim and Former IRB Chairperson Showler have produced reports (Alboim and Cohl 2012; Showler 2009; 2012) conclusively demonstrating through long-term policy analyses how Canada is now favouring temporary migrants<sup>83</sup> (i.e., those who contribute to the economy yet are required to leave before they can become permanent residents and citizens with rights and access to public services), while severely limiting other forms of migrants (e.g., permanent residents, citizens, refugees). Dauvergne has noted that 1986 (when Canada won the Nansen Medal) may have been “as good as it gets”, as she then further describes in detail how contemporary “noncitizens in Canada often do not benefit from the protections offered by international human rights” (2012: 306-307).

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<sup>83</sup> For an understanding of how this shift translates into increased precariousness and vulnerable status, see Goldring, Berinstein, & Bernhard (2009); Marsden (2012).

In 2010, 50% of Canadians were in favour of deporting the Tamil passengers on board the MV *Sun Sea* from Sri Lanka back to their country of origin, even with the understanding that their refugee claims were legitimate and there was no link to any terror organizations (AR 2010; for further information, see Neve and Russell 2011; Rygiel 2012). In other words, half of the Canadians polled believed that because of their mode of arrival, refugees were no longer entitled to a fair hearing or even provided the right to make a claim; only 32% favoured allowing them to stay as refugees in Canada. This kind of attitude towards migrants who arrive by boat has precedence (for example, see Beiser 1999; Gale 2004; Pugh 2004). As researched by Krishnamurti, such attitudes are likely a result of the deliberate “Conservatives’ characterisation of the MV *Sun Sea* as a boat operated by human smugglers, occupied by terrorists and navigated primarily by greed...even though proof of such allegations has so far been limited to small number of individual cases” (2013:139). Specifically, Krishnamurti explains why the perception of asylum seeker-containing vessels “as portents of an imminent flood of illegal migrants to Canada must be understood as part of an ongoing trend in public discourse about Canada’s global role in accepting refugee claimants, the legitimacy of refugee claims and the Canadian conception of citizenship” (2013:139).

Indeed, this hardening of the definition of refugees and “deserving” immigrants can be seen beyond “boat people”. Despite its well-established and heralded “multicultural” official policies, 29% of Canadians polled in 2012 believed that multiculturalism has actually been bad for Canada (AR 2012). Over a third of Canadians in 2012 felt that immigration has had a negative effect on the country (39% according to AR 2013). Although neither of these numbers reflects a majority of Canadians<sup>84</sup>, the fact that well over a third believe this is troubling for a nation-state that believes itself to be welcoming and generous towards immigrants. Canada proudly touts its history as the first country in the world to adopt multiculturalism as an official policy (CIC 2012). Such statistics as indicated in the polls, however, demonstrate there are significant dissonances occurring within Canada regarding its perceptions about its identity and immigration policies.

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<sup>84</sup> The same sentiment was expressed by even more, almost half (46%), in 2010 (AR 2010).

In general, refugees are often represented as objects of humanitarian intervention (or perhaps as ‘undesirables’, disruptive to the national order of things); Limbu notes that such discursive modes are routinely found in news media and journalistic writings (2009:268). Furthermore, “these representational forms come into play not only in media reporting on refugees but also in the policy discourse of humanitarian agencies, national governments, and nongovernmental organizations” (Limbu 2009:268). Clark-Kazak explores some of these such effects of refugee representations in UNHCR documents and reports (2009). Malkki also describes how victimized images and representations of refugees are reflected in historical and contemporary policies (1996). She explains why, although it may not be evident at first, it is problematic to only view suffering through “humanitarian concern” and “human compassion” perspectives (Malkki 1996:389). Instead, we must acknowledge that our methods and processes of humanitarian representations are reflective of their embedded, complicated histories (including practices such as charity, philanthropy, peacekeeping, international law, diplomacy, empiric and colonial rule, missionary work, development, and more) (Malkki 1996:386). As they stand, these standardized representational practices produce “anonymous corporeality and speechlessness. That is, these practices tend actively to displace, muffle, and pulverize history” (Malkki 1996:389).

#### 4.2.2.1 Anti-Roma sentiments and context

Two weeks ago on the *Sun News* program *The Source* we looked at the issue of Canadian refugee claims by the Roma people. Following the broadcast we received a number of complaints from viewers who felt the broadcast reinforced negative stereotypes about the Roma people... It was not the intent of *Sun News*, or anyone employed by *Sun News*, to promote negative stereotypes about the Roma people. (Sun News apology, 2012)

In the above apology issued by *Sun News* (not Levant himself) two weeks after Levant’s segment had aired, the language and sentiment chosen did not actually correct any of the statements made by Levant; rather, they merely demonstrated they had not intended for anyone to take offense. Romani community members and advocates have pragmatically explained this to me, even in their frustration: they understood *Sun News* as not having to be held accountable since Roma are already considered negatively in Canada. When there



is little respect for Roma as individuals or as an ethnic community, especially when reinforced as criminals through governmental policy, stereotypes are unapologetically perpetuated. It thus becomes very difficult for Roma, who do not have a strong media presence, to not only effectively mobilize their own messages but also dedicate effort to dispel falsehoods. As I explore in the following sections, Romani refugee claimants are triply condemned in media portrayals in Canada: as immigrants/refugees, as “bogus” criminals, and as “Gypsies”.

As noted in the previous section, immigrants in general are facing more intense suspicion. Research has shown that during various times of economic downturn, negative attitudes towards immigrants increase dramatically, even when there is no actual correlation between immigration and the local/national economy (Esses et al. 1998; Harell et al. 2012). Many scholars agree that such negative, binary, and/or scapegoating terminology is simplistic or erroneous at best (Dauvergne 2008; Espenshade and Hempstead 1996; Zimmerman 2007). Additionally, research suggests that such discourse has a detrimental effect for equal treatment under law and often serves to de-humanize whole groups of people, ergo justifying negative policies enacted against them (Berg 2009; Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013; Leudar et al. 2008). As Bryan and Denov critically note, “more recently, this binary—deserving/undeserving—has come to include immigrants who arrive in Canada through *regulated* channels” (2011:248, emphasis added), such as refugee claimants.

The growing tendency to slot refugees in an ‘undeserving’ category is partially demonstrated by the frequent use of the term “queue-jumpers” for those who are, in reality, in-land refugee claimants (Bates (2012) provides an excellent deconstruction of this myth; see also Krishnamurti (2013) and Marsden (2012)). The erroneous belief that in-land refugee claimants are queue-jumpers is a similar view as that perpetuated by government officials, who describe rejected, abandoned, and withdrawn refugee claims as fraudulent cases. As summarized by Chris, a former IRB Member:

I think the government has failed to distinguish between fraudulent claims and claims that are unsuccessful. So first of all, you have to get in there and dissect those two different groups...Fraudulent means you knowingly misled the government of Canada. If you're a Roma refugee, and you're

refused because the board says there is state protection available, it's not a fraudulent claim if the claim is refused on a technical point of law. So that right away is a problem. Fraudulent claims mean you have made up a completely untrue story for the purpose of gaining status in Canada. Those decisions by the board are rare. I rarely see a decision where they say, "everything you say is untrue, everything". Maybe they'll say one event, because you omitted to mention it in your PIF [Personal Information Form], so I'm excluding that from the equation, or maybe two events—"You didn't testify consistently with your PIF, so I don't believe you were actually ever arrested". (Interview 2012)

This conflation of definitions has very real effects for claimants navigating the refugee system and is examined further in the next section. Ultimately, the ramifications of Canada's willingness to interpret and alter legal discourse to suit its ulterior motives do not bode well for anyone. "People have also become dependent on states for the possession of an 'identity' from which they can escape only with difficulty" (Torpey 2000:4). Torpey also critically notes that states will continue to try to construct homogenous nations through such re-definitions despite the ultimate futility of doing so (2000:167), demonstrating why paying attention to refugee policy definitions is critical even for citizens. Similarly, Silverstein (2005) describes how racialized definitions enter into and reflect immigration categories. I asked Mike, a journalist, about the power of words and their definitions, specifically inquiring how he felt about the choice of the word "refugee" and whether it had any possible negative associations present in Canadian media-scapes. He explained earlier in Section 2.2 how words change meaning over time, and continued with the following:

You try your best to find the most neutral words, like when I've used "influx", it's more neutral [than] arrival, I think. So I think the use of words in the media really frames things, the perception of an issue, the perspective of an issue—it's very powerful...I think that's partially why the Immigration Minister has been really successful in framing the issues. Not even just Jason Kenney, but also people [in general] just use different words to their advantage at different moments, depending on the issue. I think in the past, probably— [pause] but you know what? It's not true. I think even back in the 60's, when Hungarians fled to Canada, or the time when Vietnamese boat people were arriving, there was always this sentiment that some people in society were against refugees...And I don't feel the word itself has more negative connotations now than it did 50

years ago, but what I think matters is context. When the word is used in different situations. I don't think it's particularly negative now, but I think you have to look at it in terms of intentionality. For example, how this Conservative government is attacking the rights of refugees and human rights, and you've probably looked at the totality of their policies—the news stories being churned out by Jason Kenney's office, how refugees are being described. It's the description that is more important... [The] better word to use, I feel, is asylum seeker. Whether they are bogus or authentic. (Interview 2012)

Although he oscillates slightly on how he perceives the ways in which the term 'refugee' has been understood in the past and present, he acknowledges—above all—the importance of context (and modifiers) when describing these issues in the media. Mike also notes the government purposefully and effectively using such discourse to its advantage.

Finally, Canadian media-scapes have also depicted Romani representations as intrinsically negative, through frequent depictions as a mere-criminal-lifestyle (not an authentic or legitimate ethnicity), as a homogenized racial group with inherent criminal tendencies (e.g., “stealing is in their blood”), and/or as generally maligned, exoticized, or undesirable “Gypsies”. Altogether, these perceptions contribute to a generalized portrayal of Roma as bogus refugees who are part of a “Gypsy crime wave” intent on scamming the Canadian system and taking welfare/jobs away from deserving Canadians. Berger and Rehaag (2012) noted this criminalization of Romani refugees in the media as a key example of “something dangerous [that] is happening in our public debates about immigration and refugee policies”. The next section explores these trends in more detail.

### 4.3 Media discourse

Now, stop before you blow your hate crime whistle at me for saying Gypsies, or gyped. See, political correctness and euphemisms like calling them “Roma” instead of Gypsy or as the BBC calls them, “Travellers”. Well, the point of that is to obscure the truth. But these are Gypsies! And one of the central characteristics of that culture is that their chief economy is theft and begging. Sorry, it's true! (Levant 2012)

“Roma” is the name of a kind of tomato, as you know, but that’s what some people call Gypsies. You can call them whatever you like if you’re arresting them, that’s fine by me. (Levant 2012)

I think it was a bad attempt at humour and satire as opposed to, you know, how it came across...I’m not saying it isn’t racist, I don’t think the intent was one of spreading hatred. (Teneycke, *Sun News* VP, apology 2013)

The significance of terminology in a real-world media application was demonstrated recently when the Associated Press (AP) released an updated style guide in April 2013 specifically forbidding the use of the term “illegal immigrant”, or any derivation thereof (including “undocumented”), except when used as a quote from a source (Colford 2013). As this section demonstrates, the choice of words for objects, situations, or people in media-scapes has many very real effects. For example, vocabulary and tone influence how the reader incorporates new knowledge and remembers past events (thus affecting identity processes). Some academic works have similarly focused specifically on the effects of such language on Roma, refugees, and immigrants (e.g., Ana 1999; Pérez et al. 2007). Therefore it is important to consider specifically how Roma are discussed in Canadian media-scape discourse, as illustrated in part by Levant’s comments above.

Gypsy stereotypes and beliefs affect Roma in both overt and subtle ways. There exists a strong belief by many Europeans that Roma are sub-human and animal-like, thus not deserving of human respect, rights or services. Pérez, Moscovici, and Chulvi (2007) explore this animal ontologization specifically in relation to real life treatment of Romani groups, while Ana’s (1999) study of anti-immigrant discourse through animal metaphor underscores just how systematically public beliefs can affect policy regarding a perceived Other. What little information the public has, therefore, is likely heavily influenced by Gypsy stereotypes. This makes every mis-fact and false belief even more problematic and furthermore feeds into justifications of violence against perceived Others. “Violations of human rights most often take place as a result of defining Others as less than human. They are beasts or subhumans in some way (Rorty, 1993). This, again, is in part related to language and the inherent ‘prototype effect’ in speech. ‘We’ see ourselves as prototypes of humanity; we are ‘better’ examples than the Others” (Hastrup 2003:314). This underscores the significance that depictions have on influencing public beliefs and

attitudes towards Roma. In a perceived vacuum of information, false depictions and erroneous examples easily cement into beliefs, especially when repeatedly reproduced.

The power of the media should not be underestimated. Corrigan-Brown completed discourse analyses of newspaper coverage of First Nations and immigration issues (Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes 2011; Wilkes and Corrigan-Brown 2010; Wilkes, Corrigan-Brown, and Myers 2010) and noted that, when discussing general public knowledge regarding the Oka crisis in Canada, most people do not actually have any kind of first-hand experience with such ethnic movements or protests (2013). Rather, most of their information, and thus the foundation for their opinions, came from newspaper coverage (Corrigan-Brown 2013). She noted that they, however, believed themselves well informed because of what they gleaned from media sources. Furthermore, Loftus and Palmer's well-known study on language and memory served to demonstrate just how significantly terminology affected people's memories and perceptions (1974). In their study, they showed participants clips of automobile accidents and then used different vocabulary when asking the subjects what happened. They found that using different words (i.e., smashed, collided, bumped, hit, or contacted) created a disparity in the subjects' recollections of how fast they thought the car had been traveling, and even whether the subject remembered broken glass at the scene (there was no glass). "The results of this experiment indicate that the form of a question (in this case, changes in a single word) can markedly and systematically affect a witness's answer to that question" (Loftus and Palmer 1974: 586), even causing a "shift in the memory" (588).

These kinds of psychological findings are extremely relevant when examining the discourse used to discuss immigration, refugee, and Romani issues in Canadian media. For example, as outraged informants repeatedly informed to me, the Conservative Party of Canada frequently employs leading vocabulary or questions when polling the public. One mail-out<sup>85</sup> began with the statements: "New arrivals have received dental and vision

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<sup>85</sup> Many different mail outs have been recorded in 2012-2013, such as MP Scott Reid's "Closing loopholes on bogus refugees" and MP Bev Shipley's "Foreign criminals and bogus refugees are not welcome in our country". The websites provided on some of these mail outs no longer have active links and are thus not

care paid by your tax dollars. They've had free prescriptions. Not anymore". They then posed the question "What do you think?", with the choices being either: "I agree! Newcomers don't deserve more benefits than Canadians", or, "I disagree. Refugee claimants should get dental, vision and pharmacare even if I don't." It is evident that neither choice would satisfy Mike, the journalist referenced in the previous section; these statements are misleading and designed to garner a specific response. Similarly, questions designated yes/no/undecided on other various Conservative Party polls were purposefully skewed. For example, the question "Should refugee claimants get better health benefits than Canadian citizens?" does not allow an opinion that health care should be equal for all. Many other questions used directed vocabulary to achieve the answers they want:

Do you support our move to scrap the wasteful and ineffective Long-Gun Registry? Do you agree with our plan to allow Family Income Splitting to give families a break on their tax bill? Do you support Thomas Mulcair's \$21-billion job-killing carbon tax? Is a strong military important for Canada? Do you support our plan to help connect Canadians with available jobs? The Conservative government is also investing in world-class research and innovation. Do you support this? (Warick 2012)

Perhaps even more contentious were the health care questions regarding refugee claimants, which received particular scrutiny by advocates, health care professionals, NGO representatives, and many more. Dr. Brindamour, a refugee advocate, stated at a rally, "They are intentionally sowing division for their own political gain... This offensive flyer fosters intolerance by pitting Canadians against each other and against some of the world's most vulnerable populations" (Wherry 2012b). As reported by the CBC, a medical student who also works with refugees believed the Conservative message is misleading: "In addition to disagreeing with the cuts and the fact we believe it is bad policy, the protest is kind of directed at the conservative campaign to basically educate the constituents about some of these issues" (CBC 2012). Thus, time and energy from advocates are directed away from their primary projects because of an urgent need to

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included in the Bibliography (however, I do retain photographic evidence of the flyers). For coverage of these flyers, see (Warick 2012; Wherry 2012b; Wherry 2012a).

correct misinformation reproduced through such flyers. James, a Romani-Canadian, after discussing with me the aforementioned Conservatives' list of survey questions, drew connections to dystopian governmental strategies:

This is worthy of Orwell's *1984*. These are loaded questions unworthy of consideration... This is like asking do you think John got wetter than Jack when they both fell in the river. Harper is taking advantage of the fact that the average Canadian does not know anything about refugee health care and the widespread antagonism of the uninitiated against all refugees. (Correspondence 2013)

I concur with James, in that there is a general lack of accurate information or knowledge regarding refugee issues, and that these issues are frequently framed in a disingenuous and/or inaccurate manner. This is also the case when examining public knowledge about Roma in Canada; articles and quotes that do hit mainstream sources thus carry extra weight. Unfortunately, as demonstrated in the next sections, when Canadian government officials discuss Roma in the media, statements repeatedly revolve around worries regarding their criminality, bogusness, fraudulent behavior, and/or illegitimate claims for refugee status.

As mentioned earlier, Romani refugees began arriving in substantial numbers around 1997, coinciding with a dramatic increase in the number of articles dealing with Roma issues. Although I do not provide here a detailed analysis of these headlines, they are listed in Appendix D to provide the reader the opportunity to see how headlines focused on problems such as illegal border crossings, welfare fraud, "overwhelming" the refugee and social services systems, etc. Headlines can be key sources of analysis because they "provide the readers with the optimal ratio between contextual effect and processing effort" (Dor 2003:695). Journalists are aware of this process and its limitations, and tailor their stories and headlines accordingly (Saxena 2006). Mike summarized this idea: "We all know that not everyone reads the entire story. They probably read the first four to six paragraphs. That's the attention span of a regular reader". The ambiguity that thus corresponds to headlines' "syntactically sparse" characteristics (Perfetti et al. 1987:692) and other such assumptions that can be drawn from headlines (Ifantidou 2009; Kronrod and Engel 2001) means that newspapers become demonstrations *and* reflections of the writers, audiences, and subjects in multiple and concurrent ways.

With so much information available at our fingertips nowadays, these thematic trends in Romani issue coverage are especially significant. McCormick argues, “the news media fills our days with information from everywhere about everything, and we do not have time to reflect on its meaning or to know what weight or value to assign to any of it. We are information junkies, demanding more and more but without any notion of what to do with it” (2010:11).

#### 4.3.1 In the newspapers

I always feel that the best stories come from the grassroots. Yet 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. (Interview with Mike, 2012)

Well you know, the other thing [Kenney] does is [publically identify those he wants to make an example of<sup>86</sup>], and word gets out and around. And that makes people even more afraid. I don't doubt that it was no accident that he did that. It was no accident, and he chose someone with a nice fat criminal record too. It's like the one Romani person who steals something, and then that is their whole life when they come to Canada. And 100 Roma come and don't steal anything, but it's the one person, it's the one person. (Interview with May, 2012)

Mainstream media is strongly connected to state institutions, which are aimed at creating shared narratives and values (Nordberg, 2004:87–88). However, in this role, newspapers are also considered a key site of citizenship agency (Nordberg 2004), in part through their opportunities for participation from the public. As an arena of negotiation and contestation, ordinary citizens participate alongside elite actors; this “potential for diversity of voices turns the daily press into a powerful arena for empirical analysis of citizenship agency” (Nordberg, 2004:88). This is not to say there is equal access to all forms of various mainstream media outlets. Although the internet and free local papers have leveled the field somewhat, there are still major inequalities in access to, and participation within, various media forms. There are many past and present barriers that

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<sup>86</sup> She was referring to the news story recounted in footnote 54 where Kenney had released the name and other identifying information of a failed refugee claimant (Keung 2012).



have contributed to stereotyping processes and the purposeful directing of coverage. Thus, even as individuals can see their opinions printed alongside official institution reports, they represent only a select few (and who are chosen specifically by the editor). Community leaders or government officials representing their respective agencies may have their side of the story in print, even as journalists must report the stories handed to them by their organizations<sup>87</sup>. Thus, as with all forms of media, newspapers present a skewed version of reality. This happens for a variety of reasons, one of which is illustrated in the above quote by Mike, describing how some may not understand how media operates in Canada, assuming they need to pay or bribe journalists in order to have their stories told. He went on to describe some further difficulties when trying to produce the news, from the informants' perspective.

You don't want to waste your contacts' time for a story you knowingly know that won't make it into the paper...especially refugees and their stories. It takes a lot for them to share their stories with you, to overcome that fear or just to be identified and talk to the media. And they're taking the time, while they're often working two or three jobs. So to make that call to go to a place to meet you—sometimes financially, even a bus token can be a challenge, right? (Interview 2012)

In terms of the actual writing process, even the interview process, who you choose to contact is all a very selective and subjective process. But at the same time, as a journalist, you don't always have to agree with everyone, even the NGOs or politicians, but you make sure you have both sides of every story... You can try your best to find a third-party, someone who has no affiliation with the NGOs or who has no affiliation with the government. We may count on an academic who has expertise on these issues, but even that can be questionable, because as we all know, they are people too. There are right-wing think tanks, and left-wing think tanks out there, but you're just trying your best. You know, I don't feel there is objectivity: it's not absolute, it's all relative. But you still try to achieve that objectivity. (Interview 2012)

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<sup>87</sup> It is worth noting that the overall goal, and therefore underlying motivation, of a newspaper is to sell papers and earn profit through stories deemed of interest.

Beyond the choice and availability of informants, newspapers also face obstacles based on the selective nature of their stories, which include influence from political and governmental agendas, echoed by Livia:

It's a very selective process. This is a general overall comment: many media outlets have their own political leanings, and they all have their own core values and beliefs. I think one thing that's really important is that your personal values are in harmony with your employer that you work for, the media outlet that you work for. (Interview 2012)

Akin to how Livia was well aware of her own parameters of advocacy work in relation to her employer, journalists are also cognizant of their parameters as employees of a specific company. It is especially interesting to focus how they experience negotiations within media-scape processes, being critical actors in the production of information for newspapers, but also being agents who feel direct effects from the government.

The news cycle is being driven by the government, the province. If you look at newspapers, a lot of those stories come from, you know, Queens Park, Bureau, Ottawa—that's the bread-and-butter of any newspaper, right? And then on top of that, you have crime stories, those are driven again by bureaucrats and police officers, and you have education stories that came from politicians. (Interview with Mike, 2012)

More than three journalists I spoke with described incidents where, after running a story on immigration, spokespersons of the CIC and IRB contacted them, critical of their reporting or story. In one case, a journalist recalled a personal phone call from Minister Kenney who was displeased with the story. Later on, I was in contact with another journalist who was similarly contacted after producing a sympathetic article regarding the struggles of Roma facing deportation. Multiple examples of this kind of occurrence lends credibility to the general concerns of Romani individuals, refugee lawyers, and more who worry about government attempts to control public information through intimidation. Edgar, a Romani informant with experience in other advocacy networks agreed, stating that “sometimes they even plant[s] the seed somewhere—they have newspaper writers, and they just say, ‘put this in the newspaper because we want this’”. When discussing media coverage of a specific Romani criminal case, Alison, a refugee lawyer, repeatedly phrased this governmental interference as “manipulation” and “purposeful damage” to encourage negative stereotypes about Roma and refugees in general.

After these conversations, I became interested in conducting a discourse analysis of four major Canadian newspapers in 2012 (methods detailed in Section 4.1). I wanted to examine whether terminology and article content would correlate with the troubling trends regarding Romani issues that various sources raised to me. There are a number of conclusions based on these findings, summarized in Figure 3. I have broken this data into sections arranged by the “triple condemnation” described earlier regarding Romani media coverage (4.3.2, on “bogus refugees”, 4.3.3, on “Gypsies”, and 4.3.4, on “criminality”). In general, the discourse was based on oppositional binaries along “deserving” (e.g., authentic, legitimate) and “undeserving” (e.g., criminal, illegal) categories, which are entrenched in everyday immigration debates.

This dichotomy has been frequently taken to task and explored by many scholars in different disciplines who emphasize just how powerfully this kind of language serves to affect personal and public attitudes and beliefs. For example, Dauvergne’s

<b>Total articles</b>	235
<b>Roma focus</b>	69
<b>Gypsy</b>	163
<i>Music</i>	40
<i>Adj (other)</i>	15
<i>Proper name</i>	41
<i>Ethnicity/People</i>	76
Issues	27
Stereotypes	14
No context	24
<b>Roma</b>	95
<i>uses Gypsy</i>	20
<i>Canada refugee</i>	80
bogus	54
DCO/safe	37
<i>Sources</i>	49
Roma	39
non-Roma	87
Official	49

**Figure 3 -Summary of Newspaper Analysis, 2012<sup>88</sup>**

<sup>88</sup> The categories and terms in this table are further explained in Sections 4.3.1.2, 4.3.1.3, and 4.3.1.4.

work on the term (il)legal migrants shows how the word has developed so that it is today even used as a noun—a construction that circumscribes identity solely in terms of a person’s relationship with the law (2005). ‘Illegals’ are posited as having broken ‘our law’, and so pejorative characterizations are attached to them, constructing and imagining them as poor, brown and destitute (Dauvergne 2005:16). Ultimately, binaries, such as legitimate/illegitimate create a dehumanizing effect (Esses, Medianu, and Lawson 2013). The media reinforces such images in numerous ways (e.g., as examined by Chavez 2001; Flynn 2011; Sassen 1999; Silverstein 2005). As my examination of newspaper coverage grew, I found it was additionally important to include other media forms, described in the next section.

#### 4.3.1.1 Medium as message, or, why commenters also matter

Contemporary media-scapes are composed of a tremendous amount of sources, including things like podcasts and blogs, as mentioned by Livia in the beginning of this chapter. Although newspapers and television continue to produce important insights and are significant areas for examination, it is critical to include other forms of news media where we witness identity processes, reproductions, disjunctures, and/or debates. Nielson describes how in the last decade, online forums on newspaper sites have become commonplace, “allowing readers across the globe to instantly and anonymously express their opinions about articles, journalists, sources, headlines, photographs, the newspaper and other commenters” (2012:86). Such an opportunity is “unprecedented”, and allows readers to share unverified and unedited comments; this challenges traditional journalistic norms of accuracy and transparency (Nielson 2012:86). However, it also “represents a dramatic shift from the daily newspaper as a one-way communication medium limited to a specific circulation area. It also created an alternative for reader participation beyond signed letters to the editor vetted to avoid libel or inaccuracy” (Nielson 2012:86).

Wherever people present, produce, or otherwise engage with information, this act represents potential areas for research. This thus includes online commenting systems as described above, as well as forms like listserv correspondence. Much has been written on these technological innovations as significant areas of cultural progress and change, but with little consensus. Arguments range from those who believe these are new and

beneficial ways of connecting with one another, to those who believe these processes can be detrimental to the fabric of society (as summarized by Oxley (2010) and Shepard (2011)). The sheer range of newly accessible opinions parallels this range of beliefs regarding the possible outcomes of new media on human society. For example, Gregg describes how “we now live in a digital world where there is ‘evidence’ for every and any view one might want to embrace”, using flat-worlder beliefs as an example (2012). His main point is that, when so inclined, people need never be exposed to contrary views, only those that reaffirm their pre-existing beliefs (Gregg 2012). This creates the opportunity for people to have completely closed minds while simultaneously having “nonsense disguised as fact” (Gregg 2012). “In a brand new way therefore, the internet democratizes not just individual opinion but legitimizes collective ignorance and spreads a bizzaro world of alternative reason. When this occurs, prejudice and bias is reinforced and the authority of real science and evidence is undermined or even more likely, never presented” (Gregg 2012).

I heard this sentiment echoed when I asked Mike about his views on whether technology had changed his job. He was not very optimistic regarding its role:

It does bring out the worst in people. It brings out all the bigots, and loudmouths. And they’re making ridiculous comments that are not based on facts but on opinions...They’re giving out misinformation, and I think that’s why, at [newspaper name redacted], we have moderators...but at the same time, the moderators, they are more like clerical assistants and probably not paid enough to do their job, so unless it’s something out-right racist they won’t remove it from the website...But the comments that include misinformation, [the moderators] don’t have the expertise on immigration policy, right? They don’t have the education, they don’t have expertise on health care, so that’s how misinformation gets recycled and re-circling. So there’s that. But it doesn’t affect what I do, and if there’s anything that affects what I do, it actually makes me more motivated to educate them. (Interview 2012)

He believes online commenting to be detrimental (full of bigots, misinformation, etc.) and has affected how he conceives of/writes up stories, pointing out his drive to correct the misinformation (which he views as a more insidious danger than outright racism). After surveying almost 600 journalists, Neilson likewise discovered that they “don’t want

to do away with the practice of online comments. However, journalists are unhappy with what they view as an unmoderated free-for-all on their newspapers' websites" (2012:97), discussing as well some of the implications of "'toxic' online comments" (98).

Similarly, Roma listservs, designed simply to be networks for Romani individuals around the world, frequently demonstrate how information-sharing emails become long threads with passionate and detailed responses from many members. Topics range from the significance of media portrayals of Roma, to how Roma themselves contribute or should manage such media processes, and more. Complex and nuanced discussions are initiated, raising the nature of ancestry and identity (as discussed in Chapter 3), activism or mobilization strategies, as well as comparisons with other disadvantaged or racialized groups (including many references to the Canadian First Nations "Idle No More" movement, sparking many sympathetic emails during this time).

Through these examples and more, we can identify that media-scapes are enormously complex. Regarding such forms of media-scapes as "disposable" would ignore critical issues. As Bird notes in her ethnographic study dealing with online communities, people talk differently in different mediums (2003). There is not, however, an essential truth one can get at by examining Twitter that one could not achieve with personal interviews. Rather, examining multiple avenues of communication is a more holistic method for understanding these intersecting processes. This is especially relevant when dealing with immigration issues, ethnic groups, and marginalized individuals. People discuss ideas and thoughts differently in different contexts, which reflects the varied contexts of our realities, as well as how certain identity aspects are used to distinguish between groups.

Different media forms have different contexts and there are certain aspects regarding the media that deserve consideration. First, individuals are often not aware of their prejudices and reproduce these biases in their everyday actions. For example, Kawakami et al. has found that even people who saw themselves as tolerant and egalitarian unconsciously had strong hidden racist biases (2009b; 2009a; and Dovidio et al. 2009). Such biases might be more easily demonstrated in online (and usually fairly anonymous) settings (Hlavach and Freivogel 2011; Nielsen 2012; Reader 2012). In such areas, the need to couch one's

words as politically correct may slip, and even people who declare themselves non-racist may in fact end up stating racist beliefs<sup>89</sup>. It is interesting to note that the nature of online contributions to media-scapes does often create a space where researchers believe the audience is more honest/truthful, especially with regard to racist commentary (Hlavach and Freivogal 2011; Kawakami et al. 2009b; Neilson 2012; Reader 2012). However, this may not make a huge difference when examining comments or commenters discussing Romani issues. I have found that, usually, a majority of comments on many articles dealing with Romani issues are extremely racist, even when linked through a real world, non-anonymized system (i.e., not using a pseudonym or fictional avatar and/or linked to accounts like Facebook). This can be understood as an example of how “Romaphobia” manifests itself as a unique and particularly blatant form of racism (by Ljubic et al. 2012), whereby people do not fear social judgment from anti-Roma statements as they might when expressing similar racist views towards other groups. Overall, this demonstrates a further reason to include online comments in media analyses.

Current psychological and communication research shows how social media, as a channel for distributing information, may further push people’s emotional buttons (such as through name-calling and inflammatory speech) and create a polarizing effect on the public (Runge et al. 2013). Runge et al.’s study involved examining reactions to nanotechnology, a purposefully “neutral” topic (compared to topics like immigration policy). However, we can extrapolate these findings to predict similar reactions to topics regarding Roma, especially when compounded by the anonymous nature of some commenting systems.

After coding commenters and their statements (such as those weighing in on Ezra Levant’s “The Jew vs. The Gypsy” television segment), I found that almost 60% of one group of commenters produced extremely negative and often racist statements towards Roma, while only 27% of the comparable group attempted to counter anti-Roma

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<sup>89</sup> There exist many venues dedicated to showcasing these kinds of statements. For example, websites including [notracistbut.com](http://notracistbut.com), [imnotracistbut.tumblr.com](http://imnotracistbut.tumblr.com), [publicshaming.tumblr.com](http://publicshaming.tumblr.com), [twitter.com/YesYoureRacist](https://twitter.com/YesYoureRacist), all of which reproduce statements made by people on Facebook, Twitter, and other online arenas in order to draw attention to the widespread racism that is commonly espoused online.

sentiments. In conjunction with this, and further demonstrating why this tendency of online anti-Gypsy racism is problematic, Anderson et al. recently concluded that negative comments on news articles actually change a person's perception of the article itself (2013). Individuals who were exposed to an article on nanotechnology (an unfamiliar, purposefully "neutral" topic to the readers) that included negative or uncivil comments (including *ad hominem* attacks on the author) ended up more polarized and prejudiced regarding the information presented in the article itself (Anderson et al. 2013). In sum, even "troll" commenters<sup>90</sup> have the very real effect of influencing and altering readers' processing and understandings of the topics discussed in an article. Together with the above study by Runge et al. (2013), such research affirms that information itself is frequently not as powerful as the tone in which it was presented, and even further discussed amongst a general audience. Consequently, commenter reactions to the Levant incident can demonstrate a number of interesting points to consider regarding Roma issues in Canada. The original commenters on Levant's segment adhered closely to close-minded and racist ideologies suggesting (and applauded by others) the use of bullets (i.e., murder) in order to deal with "the Gypsies". Nerenberg (2012) noted this as an incited threat of violence, placing it well within hate speech territory in Canada's Criminal Code. However, such remarks were not limited to the original post, occurring also on other media outlets that later reported on this incident.

I found two articles that covered Levant's segment (Farber et al. 2012; Green 2012)<sup>91</sup>; not many articles on this topic allowed (or continued to display) full commenting abilities. I created the following break-down of all of the comments (numbering in the hundreds). Over half (52%) directly related to the issues (i.e., no tangents) supported Levant, while 37% disagreed with Levant, leaving 11% ambiguous. Exploring these

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<sup>90</sup> A slang term frequently used online, meaning those who purposefully incite negative reactions from the wider audience. Trolls may or may not actually believe the opinions they are espousing, and their main goal is to create anger and frustration. For example, they frequently attack superficial aspects of news pieces, create false conclusions, and slander the author(s).

<sup>91</sup> Comments from Green's article were taken from the *Moneyville* site where it was hosted, and the link has since been taken down. The article itself continues to be visible on the *Toronto Star*, but without comment capability.



results further, most commenters who aligned themselves with Levant and his views did so for one of two main reasons. The first: they believed Levant is a straight-talker who had done nothing wrong and was now simply a victim of anti-free-speech proponents (19%). The second, and by far majority, believed (or frequently knew “first-hand”) that Roma are criminals and should not be allowed in Canada (58%). The remaining 23% supported Levant for various other reasons, such as a general dislike of “the left’s political correctness”, dislike of Bernie Farber (author of one of the articles), or simply enjoyed Levant’s personality and past record. Of the commenters who disagreed with Levant, 20% specifically railed against his “hate speech”, 27% defended Roma in some way, while the majority 53% disliked his segment for another reason (e.g., a general dislike of Levant’s personality or a dislike for *Sun News* in general).

Another communications study demonstrates the significance of such comments in a different way: how “irrational herding” tendencies affect people’s understandings of news and issues. Muchnik, Aral, and Taylor (2013) demonstrated that how we read news and information is influenced by the opinions expressed by other users. This further illustrates that rationality is no match for collective herd behavior—social influence biases are omnipresent. In sum, we make decisions (such as rating a product or idea) based on the prior rating; this particular study showed the most important indicator was the very first comment, regardless of its quality (Muchnik, Aral, and Taylor 2013). When someone agreed with the first comment, this effect snowballed: the researchers suggest that positive social influence tends to accumulate, giving rise to stronger herding effects (Muchnik, Aral, and Taylor 2013)<sup>92</sup>. In my own analysis, pro-Levant comments greatly outnumbered anti-Levant comments. Furthermore, anti-Roma comments greatly outnumbered pro-Roma comments. Both of these patterns suggest not only a very prevalent and racist attitude towards Roma in Canada (which creates a loop of justification reinforced through herd behaviour), but also suggests that otherwise uninformed or unbiased readers of these articles (if they read the comments) came away

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<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, comments related to culture, society, business, and/or politics saw far greater herding effects than those relating to economics, general news, or IT. Thus, Roma-focused pieces stand to be greatly affected by such behaviour.

with a much more negative view of Roma as well. “Much in the same way that watching uncivil politicians argue on television causes polarization among individuals, impolite and incensed blog comments can polarize online users based on value predispositions utilized as heuristics when processing the blog’s information” (Anderson et al. 2013:11).

#### 4.3.1.2 (Re)producing bogus refugees: A “scourge” of fake claims

Now don’t worry, I won’t show you all the suspects on this list, there are just too many, but every last one of them is a Gypsy. Just some of the 5,000 who’ve gamed our system and are causing a “Made in Europe” crime wave on our streets. (Levant 2013)

Now the scourge has come to Canada through fake refugee claims. Over 5,000 of them in the past five years, all from Hungary. The Canadian Border Services Agency estimates that just the paperwork, the cost of processing of these fake refugees costs upwards of a quarter billion dollars a year. (Levant 2013)

As previously discussed, even legal and established terms such as “refugee” are actually relative, non-objective terms always dependent on context. This section illustrates how popular media often uses the term “bogus refugee” (and its related terminology), which thus reinforces particular definitions. Creating or reproducing dichotomous notions of ‘authentic’ versus ‘bogus’ is problematic and raises a false choice, intertwined with concepts such as agency, power, and hegemonic processes (e.g., who gets to define/decide?). Dauvergne raises these points and more in a reflection piece, noting that there remains a dangerous lack of information on the integration of refugees in Canada as well as problematic understandings regarding how refugees are discussed (2007). A conflation of refugee with immigrants—in discourse, in integration measures, and other benchmarks—is particularly disturbing: “Expecting refugees to behave like immigrants, and to conform statistically to our pictures of immigrants, will lead to failures of law and policy, as well as failures of compassion” (Dauvergne 2007:14). This conceptual blurring has many negative ramifications.

There is an increasing global tendency to prevent many asylum seekers and ‘undesirable’ migrants from entering into rich industrial countries (mainly, Western Europe, Australia and North America). The term “fortress” emerged to describe how these countries erected

physical and legal barriers to prevent refugees and migrants from crossing into these countries and/or accessing refugee systems (e.g., as used by Basok 1996:141; Nordberg 2004:725; Showler 2011; Zetter 2007:191). Canada is no exception (for example, Arbel and Brenner 2013 just released a comprehensive report examining Canadian refugee exclusion policies), and its increasingly restrictive policies have been justified by some claiming that in-land refugee claimants in Canada are generally bogus applicants. The media has been complicit in spreading this bogus image, in part through the (mis)use of the term “queue”, as already raised in interview excerpts by Chris (a former IRB Member), and in Section 4.2.2.1 (see also Bates (2012); Krishnamurti (2013); Marsden (2012)). As noted in my summary of the refugee system (Chapter 2), in-land claimants are not the same as GARs, despite this persistent conflation, which is largely responsible for the stereotype of bogus refugees. Such beliefs are based on erroneous understandings of the refugee system. The main pattern here is that there is an increasing tendency in Canada to deem and treat all in-land claimants—whether successful or not—as bogus and illegitimate by casting suspicion on any refugee claimant who is able to physically escape and get to Canada. Producing and reinforcing negative stereotypes about refugees and migrants matter, as public opinion influences policy (not to mention influences people’s actions and/or behaviour on an individual level towards refugee claimants, migrants, etc.).

Minister Kenney has reinforced the idea that all in-land refugee claimants in Canada are suspicious. As summarized by Aiken et al.: “Kenney misunderstands refugee realities and refugee law. In blatant disregard of international law he insists that those who arrive without prior authorization are here illegally. Despite the absence of any possible ‘queue’ to join, he calls asylum seekers ‘queue jumpers.’ The real refugees, we are told, are not to be found in Canada. They are somewhere else, waiting their turn” (2009). This widespread perception of refugee claimants as illegitimate has been the justification and catalyst for a myriad of policies designed specifically to “keep refugees as far away from Canada as possible” (Aiken et al. 2009). Visa implementations, tightened refugee quotas, and Bill C-31 (including related measures like refugee health care cuts and the DCO list) are all facets of this current policy. Limiting access to the refugee determination processes while simultaneously encouraging and ensuring negative public perceptions

towards claimants (partially evidenced by the lower success rate for those who do access the refugee system) builds on well-established media patterns already in place. Leudar et al. (2008) examine this trend as “hostility themes”, which portray refugees and immigrants as “threats” (e.g., Chavez 2001) or through negative metaphors such as “floods” or “disease” (e.g., Ana 1999). Roma-focused articles in the media frequently use such vocabulary and patterns, and ultimately homogenize what is an incredibly diverse community or group of people. The Levant excerpts at the start of this section are only two examples from his original segment that refer to *all* Roma as fake refugees; he incites the audience to believe that all Roma are “gaming” the Canadian system and costing Canadians extreme amounts of money. His discourse builds on previous news cycles referring to Roma “flooding” the country and wreaking havoc on social service programs.

Through these processes and more, even legally recognized refugees may continue to face continued assumptions and judgments regarding their character, narratives, and/or behaviour. In addition to the presumption that a genuine refugee must be “grateful”, there also exists an image that “authentic” refugees are “silent” (Malkki 1996), “innocent victims” (Ndongozi 2007:269), and/or “poor” and “unwanted” (Moloney 2007:63). These kinds of polarized attitudes displayed towards refugees affects their individual experiences and identity processes but also their legal rights and access to resources. For example, Harrell-Bond (2002) witnessed humanitarian aid workers in refugee camps react negatively to refugees who did not ascribe to the above refugee stereotypes. Louis (2009) similarly related findings that indicate it only takes one encounter by an aid worker with a perceived problematic or “negative” refugee (her example was someone who requested basic human and/or legal rights) for a humanitarian or NGO worker to become frustrated and even deterred from further work with refugees and/or humanitarian efforts. There is a particular perception of how refugees and migrants *should* act, because they are positioned on the receiving side of public hospitality and resources. That is, they are positioned as unequal and rendered vulnerable. This is especially clear today under the Conservative government in Canada.

Newspaper and print media discourse serves as further demonstration of this negative perception against Roma as asylum seekers and migrants. I examined the same

newspaper article sample from 2012 with specific reference to “bogus” refugee vocabulary. I found 95 articles used the terms “Roma” and/or “Gypsy” as an ethnicity somewhere in the article. Of these articles, the majority (84%) dealt in some way with (if not focused entirely on) Roma as Canadian refugee applicants. Such an overwhelming majority of articles focused on these issues further homogenizes Roma to the average reader as *only* refugee claimants. Although there are indeed significant numbers of Romani refugee claimants, this effectively ignores the substantial and diverse Canadian-Roma community and population (and the issues they face and experience). Furthermore, 67% of the articles that discussed Romani refugee claimants also included some kind of reference to “bogus” vocabulary or issues. This does not mean all 67% uncritically perpetuated a “bogus” correlation; rather, some specifically critiqued this tendency. Unfortunately, however, the frequency with which Roma are discussed within this conceptual framework of fraudulency creates a link between the two subjects for many readers, whether intentional or unintentional.

Similarly, almost half (46%) of the Roma-Canadian-refugee articles also referenced European countries in some way as “safe” (i.e., using a “safe”-related vocabulary and/or explaining why refugees cannot come from the EU). Similar to the “bogus” articles just described, there were some critical discussions of the Designated Country of Origin (DCO) lists describing the EU as wholly safe and as a non-refugee producing area. However, many pieces did problematically label the EU as completely safe for Roma. Again, such a persistent vocabulary coupling between “Roma” and “safe” countries likely has the effect of reinforcing the belief that Romani refugee claimants *do* come from completely safe countries, especially to general readers who are otherwise not informed on Roma issues or who only skim such articles. Research has demonstrated that one’s existing political beliefs deeply affects one’s ability to reason or perform simple quantitative analysis (e.g., when the math in question is contradictory to one’s political ideology, as per Kahan et al. (2013)). It is therefore not surprising that vocabulary choices in the media shape and reinforce negative perceptions of Roma, especially Romani asylum seekers. As restrictive refugee and immigration policies are created and enacted, we see how media depictions of bogusness can have far-reaching consequences; this is further explored in Section 4.3.1.4 on reproductions of criminality. The trends as

summarized above result in representations of Roma as *de facto* bogus refugees, simply because they tried to access the in-land refugee system. Such correlations are troubling, especially when understood in context with pre-existing negative associations that Roma face on a daily basis—namely, “Gypsy” stereotypes.

#### 4.3.1.3 (Re)producing Gypsies: “Historically inaccurate and culturally loaded”

Being a Gypsy isn’t like being black, or being gay, or being a woman, or even Romanian, where many Gypsies come from. Just like being from Sicily doesn’t make you part of the Mafia. Being a Gypsy is a positive choice, like being a Blood or a Crip, like joining the Cosa Nostra. For centuries, these roving highway gangs have mocked the law and robbed their way across Europe. (Levant 2012)

Look at this list of suspects released by Durham police: Gypsy, after Gypsy, after Gypsy. They *gypped* their way into Canada, and now they’re *gypping* the rest of us. (Levant 2012; emphasis from verbal intonation)

Much as Levant describes above, the terms “Gypsy” and “gypped” are frequently misunderstood and used in derogatory ways. As discussed in earlier sections, Roma are negatively homogenized and exoticized as Gypsies in general beyond refugee definitions; this is founded upon centuries of mythical Gypsy stereotypes (see Dobрева 2009; Hancock 2008). Unlike many other ethnic slurs, Gypsy and gypped are repeatedly reproduced uncritically in many different formats<sup>93</sup>. One of the very first campaigns by the RCC, “Call Us Roma, not Gypsies”, remains necessary still today, as popular use of the term Gypsy continues. This means that for over 15 years, an already marginalized and vulnerable community has needed to continue to devote their limited resources towards what should be considered a basic human right: the ability to name themselves, and ensure that when they are discussed, people will not use an ethnic slur.

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<sup>93</sup> For example, it is not unusual to find the term gypped in the local Toronto *Metro* crossword (as I have).

Media-scapes include the entertainment sector<sup>94</sup>, which frequently reproduces stereotypes and tropes. News productions, however, are generally understood as more reliable and trusted sources of information; therefore, the ways in which they depict people carry great power. News media organizations and corporations are not homogenous, and many who work for them come from diverse ideological and political backgrounds. Thus, many working within news organizations understand the need for non-derogatory language regarding ethnic and disadvantaged groups. Yet the Levant segment was allowed to air, and even the *Sun News* network Vice President (one excerpt of his 2013 statement on this matter opened Section 4.3) did not seem to understand why there was a backlash against Levant and his anti-Roma discourse. This partially demonstrates just how ingrained Gypsy terminology and anti-Roma sentiments are within popular culture.

Looking again at the newspaper sample I examined, out of the possible 235 articles that included the terms Roma and/or Gypsy, only 69 (29%) actually focused on Roma issues. The majority (almost 70%) of the total 235 articles also used the term Gypsy at least once, demonstrating a lack of regard for Romani labeling preferences and/or politically sensitive behaviour. I broke this kind of vocabulary use into different categories: 24% of these pieces included a reference to music style (e.g., “Gypsy jazz”); 25% used Gypsy as a proper name (e.g., the musical *Gypsy*, “gypsy moths”, as a song/book/film title); 9% referred to Gypsy as another kind of adjective (e.g., “gypsy-on-acid wardrobe”, “gypsy skirt”, “Gypsy sauce”); and 47% used the term Gypsy in conjunction with people (i.e., ethnicity)<sup>95</sup>. Of the articles using Gypsy as an ethnic identifier, 35% in some way referenced real-life issues faced by Roma, 18% reproduced negative Gypsy stereotypes (e.g., “Gypsy fortune-teller”, “gypsy has put the evil eye on...”, “secretive Gypsy lifestyle”), and 32% had no context beyond the label Gypsy (e.g., “a family of Gypsies”).

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<sup>94</sup> For example, recent popular films and shows have shown Gypsy characters as sociopathic murders and kidnappers, suspicious, con artists, magical cursers/paranormal agents, and sexual predators, among other things (Beaudoin 2015; Kabachnik 2009; Leudar and Nekvapil 2000).

<sup>95</sup> Percentages do not add to 100% as they are not cumulative: an article that was counted as using “Gypsy” may have contained more than one kind of usage of the term.

This kind of coding provides an overview of the kinds of articles that discuss Roma issues. Less than half of the time, Gypsy was used as an ethnicity or personal characteristic identifier; this demonstrates how entrenched the term is in everyday language, as well as a lack of knowledge and/or respect for Romani people. Music, clothing styles, song or book titles, and even insects constitute the majority of the way Gypsy was used in English-speaking Canadian contexts. Such common usage necessarily relies heavily on stereotypical imagery and, without any further contexts, ultimately reifies Gypsy stereotypes. This aligns with research on Romani issues (e.g., Dobрева 2009; Gabor 2007; Glajar and Radulescu 2008; Hancock 2008; Sigona 2005; Theodosiou 2010) that demonstrate Gypsies are seemingly well-defined in public consciousness as fictional characters and/or as an adjective<sup>96</sup>. Such usage implies no further explanation is needed with Gypsy adjectives; it is not surprising this is happening in conjunction with an under-representation of Roma in political and/or media discussions (McGarry 2010).

Lily describes her relationship with the word Gypsy:

All my dad said was, “they call us Gypsies because they thought we came from Egypt”. And so I really have a personal dislike for that word because it’s historically inaccurate, it’s culturally loaded. And yet I have no arguments with all kinds of people who say, “I can call myself Gypsy if I want to”. Well, go ahead, who is stopping you? But I don’t like that word...I think it’s insulting. (Interview 2012)

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 (especially when described as an identity juxtaposed with Canada). Roma (and/or Gypsy) and Canadian, as terms, are so at odds with one another that to some people they cannot be reconciled. James told me a story about traveling in Europe and being stopped by border guards:

They look at my passport and they look at me, and he says, “You’re jingo, you’re Gypsy.” “No, I’m Canadian.” And he couldn’t understand how a Gypsy could be a Canadian citizen. It was kind of weird, because in Italy they have people of Roma descent who are educated, but I guess he just thought Roma never got to Canada. (Interview 2011)

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<sup>96</sup> For example, discussions near Halloween exploring “acceptable” ethnic costumes as discussed in Section 2.2.2.



These kinds of disjunctures regarding the use of the term Gypsy are meant to demonstrate a few of the ways that “terminology about identities is a minefield, given the history of stereotypes and legislative divisions, *real* cultural and historical differences” (LaRocque 2010:6, emphasis in original). LaRocque refers here to work by First Nations/Native people to have the ability to self-identify their own, recognized terms; this is similarly a contested issue for Roma in Canada. Words loaded with negative stereotypes have real life consequences. As I found through previous research on the topic, neo-Nazi protestors (in a federal Canadian court case) were found not guilty because they rallied against “Gypsies”, whereas the prosecutors at one point referred to “Roma”. The judge erroneously ruled they were different groups and the protestors were not sentenced (Butler 2009).

Examining newspaper references to the word Gypsy is significant because, as noted earlier, what little the public may know about Roma usually derives from such media. When there is a vacuum of accurate information on Roma realities—compounded by historical and mythical Gypsy stereotypes—media fills a factual void. In this way, fictional characters, or even flitting references in otherwise factual newspaper articles end up serving as the basis for understanding and categorizing an entire ethnic group. Similarly, for many people, the “reality” show *Big Fat Gypsy Wedding* constitutes the whole of the body of knowledge regarding Roma, despite condemnations by and petitions from by many Romani communities and advocates: it remains a major, if not sole source of information for the public. Indeed, this particular show and its various offshoots present an excellent Roma-specific example of Kuppens & Mast's (2012:799) description of the significance of exoticized Others in intercultural reality television. “Exoticism is based on a dichotomization between the Self and the Other, in which the other is valued as primitive, savage, underdeveloped, simple, authentic, close to nature, dirty, animalistic and the like, while the Self is regarded as the absolute opposite (modern, civilized, developed, complex, inauthentic, alienated from nature, clean, human, etc.)” (Kuppens and Mast 2012:804).

The uncritical reproduction of Gypsy stereotypes through discourse as a quintessential Other in Canadian media-scapes intentionally and/or unintentionally supports the de-

legitimization of Romani claims to refugee status. Roma face the same obstacles as other claimants in the refugee process, but they must additionally prove themselves to be exceptions to the stereotypical Gypsy image. The IRB process strongly focuses on determining the strength and validity of refugees' narratives and stories. Roma thus face 'credibility' issues when asked to prove their ethnicity; stereotypical imaginings of Gypsies must be confronted and dispelled while simultaneously proving the veracity of their Romani identity. In general, a refugee claimant is put in the position of straddling his/her tumultuous and uncertain past, present, and future (and all the identity process complications of each), while his/her story is presented and accepted as true and authentic—or at least believed by the IRB. To this end, IRB officials are trained to look at body language, among other things, as a means to help figure out who is telling the truth (Showler, 2006:125–143). However, human beings do not have a universal language or means to share emotions and thoughts, much less the individual experiences of traumatic memories and fears. There is also a reported lack of training possessed by some IRB Members (Rousseau et al. 2002:60; Showler, 2006:225–230), and the question of *who* has the authority to decide who and what is considered authentic becomes even more important. Dauvergne supports these findings, explaining “IRB decision makers work in a very stressful environment with high workloads. A significant proportion of them are not legally trained, and they rely on a legal services support division to supply legal analysis and conclusions” (2012:323). In this way, specific people are designated as the sole proper authorities defining individuals and groups without any acknowledgement that conceptualizations of authenticity in this manner are contextual, dynamic, and varied. Multiple lawyers I interviewed similarly concurred, noting that it is common in their experiences that IRB Members did not have sufficient or knowledgeable backgrounds in Romani/Gypsy discourse and stereotyping issues.

Although the Gypsy stereotype commonly includes within it supposedly inherent criminal tendencies, the two concepts—Gypsies and criminality—have been divided here so that each can be examined specifically. This section focused on exoticized and racialized Gypsy stereotypes, while the next section discusses accusations of crime and fraudulent refugee claims that surround Roma in Canadian media.

#### 4.3.1.4 (Re)producing criminality: “We have enough problems”

We’re used to biker gangs, we’re used to the Hells Angels, or the Mafia. They’re not races or religions, they’re cultural groups, subcultures, deviant groups that choose to steal for a living. Look at this!...Gypsies are charged with murder at least six times more frequently than their population would suggest. (Levant 2012)

Look, refugee-fraud, fraud-fraud, you know, stealing credit cards and laptops, continuing welfare fraud even once they’re kicked out? They’re gyping us! Sorry, that’s a word for a reason, they’re thieves! And women and children, their own wives and kids, are the main tools of it. (Levant 2012)

There’s nothing wrong with going after a criminal gang. But it’s wrong to brand an entire community with a broad brush—I wouldn’t like it as a Jew, and the whole point of my crusade against the Indian Act is to free ordinary Indians from the corrupt chiefs who rule them. (Levant 2013)

According to Nacos, Bloch-Elkon, and Shapiro (2011), fear sells. The media, as a business, finds it thus quite effective (Custers and Van den Bulck 2012) to capitalize on the ability to reinforce fears in the public, who will then continue to consume their ‘product’ (Lowry 2013). Since fear sells, media-scapes quickly spread news on criminality, especially regarding Roma. Roma have centuries of misrepresentation, and a lack of powerful lobbyists, and are thus relatively easy media targets. Bird explains in her research why the media tends to favour criminal stories/scandals (2003), while McCormick demonstrates the consequences of media fear-mongering on many different levels, including sex workers, HIV/AIDS carriers, crime rate sensationalization, race riots, and more (2010). We see similar patterns for Roma in newspaper coverage in Canada, and they have traditionally occupied a scapegoat position in European coverage (Hancock 2008; Iordanova 2008). Scapegoating, and negative depictions of migrants, encourages people to confront the idea of an Other—whether a traveler, ‘guest’, visitor, foreigner, immigrant, refugee, or, law-breaker/criminal (Sassen 1999). Similarly, Hall (1990; 1991) described how people do not fully realize their own identities until they are called into question through such a conflict or tension. Therefore, criminal representations of Others affects—and reflects—the identity processes of all agents involved (e.g., Romani and non-Romani). Thus, “crime news is ideological because

through the media we acquire systematic misperceptions about the world...but news is not simply exaggerated or unreal, it has real consequences” (McCormick 2010:13).

Yet constructing criminality in television shows and media-scapes is quite common. A recent example of this is the controversial Canadian-produced reality television show, *Border Security: Canada's Front Line*, which follows CBSA agents as they ferret out would-be criminals in airports, land border crossings, and more. It came under increased fire from critics after news of its filming deportations of refugee claimants was made public amidst concerns over privacy laws (Stueck 2013) and has been described as “exploitative” (Walia 2013) and “a diabolical partnership between broadcasters that need cheap programming and a Tory administration that wants free publicity” (Mulgrew 2013). Another television series on policing in Northern Canada was a further example of such a “partnership”, though it was cancelled soon after public backlash. Described as “demeaning” to the police, the latter show was accused of trivializing the justice system, being detrimental to RCMP respect, and taking advantage of unfortunate individuals who “have a right to justice in the courts, not on television” (former NDP and Yukon MP Audrey McLaughlin, quoted by Quan (2013)). Yet another example is the *National Geographic* series *American Gypsies*, which similarly uses criminality as a key focal point of show but has not been cancelled. Backlash from the Romani community included the following points regarding exploitation of supposed Romani criminality for profit:

It is probable that *National Geographic* is aware that “Gypsy culture” has been a popular subject in the media recently, and it seems possible the Channel may want to feed off of this trend at the expense of the people involved despite its not-for-profit status. The only possible outcomes of airing the program are that it would provide a poor understanding of who and what the Roma are, and the knowledge that the Romani American population is not sufficiently equipped to combat racial stereotyping legally. Furthermore, if one were to consider the making of a series presenting a family of American Jewish crooks as Jews generally, or a black street gang were presented as representing African Americans generally, there would be a massive outcry, and such projects would die aborning. The proposed *American Gypsies* is no different from these hypothetical, backwards, examples. Already a proposed series on an

American Muslim family has been cancelled, presumably for fear of legal backlash. (See for Appendix E for Hancock and Yoors' full letter)

It is evident that Romani criminality is profitable, and backlash from the Romani community has not affected decisions to air anti-Roma content. In this context, it is hardly surprising that Romani criminality remains a popular news topic.

I examined the same 2012 sample of newspaper articles with regards to the supposed criminality of Roma. Sixty-nine out of the total 235 articles were coded as dealing in some substantive way with Roma issues, and out of these, 30 (43%) had headlines directly characterizing Roma in some way as negative/criminal. For example, these articles referred to Roma as smugglers, bogus, welfare frauds, failed and detained claimants, international agreement problems, liars/thieves, and so on. The majority of these (21, or 70%) 30 articles referenced the smuggling/slavery/trafficking case involving a single extended Romani family network in Hamilton, Ontario<sup>97</sup>. This case was responsible for over 30% of all the Roma stories in 2012 about Roma. However, the fact that Roma were also victims—not only perpetrators—in this case was consistently absent from the majority of these articles. It is apparently more media-worthy to report Roma as criminals than victims, as well as common to neglect inclusion of important contextual background for Romani persecution.

Comparing a criminal theme (43%) to others found in the same sample, only 12 headlines (17%) explicitly drew attention to issues like intolerance and/or hatred, persecution, or other harsh conditions Roma face, while 15 story headlines (22%) specifically addressed a variety of day-to-day issues Roma face in Canada (e.g., Parkdale residences, a hit-and-run accident, health care, settlement). I am not asserting that these headlines comprise the sole source of public knowledge regarding Roma; however, as described earlier, headlines and articles do constitute a major source of information. McCormick describes how such snippets of information serve quite significant roles in setting agendas and reflecting political points of view, “a fact recognized and often exploited by politicians”

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<sup>97</sup> This refers to the Hamilton criminal organization and human smuggling/trafficking case whose coverage mainly focused on the sentencing hearings in early 2012. This is separate from the December 2012 news of the Romanian “organized crime ring”, which only had one article in 2012 in the newspaper sample.

(2010:10). Since such depictions of criminality fuel people's fear of crime, resulting in stiffer penalties for those convicted of crimes, media "has the power to rock the foundations of a community when it reports on crimes that appear to threaten the very fabric of social life" (McCormick 2010:10). Considering how unproportional criminal-themed articles were for Roma, it is no surprise that Levant's excerpts at the beginning of this section neatly ensconce the "Roma as criminal-bogus-refugee-non-ethnicity" ideology. Even Levant's delayed apology merely emphasized criminality as justification for the original segment (before he ironically went on to use the same "broad brush" in describing how he wants to free "ordinary Indians" from corruption).

Beyond the issues of perpetuating an image of bogus and/or criminal Gypsies in Canadian media, there is also a need for more acknowledgement overall that the media indeed plays a large role in educating the public about world politics, local affairs, inter-ethnic group relations, and everything in-between. To this end, Shumow calls for a "more nuanced understanding of the production of immigrant media" (2012:828). "To watch, read and hear about such spectacles is to rely less on direct experience of the world and more on extra-locally produced knowledge. Subsequent gossip about crime is based on information brought by others via these stories, texts and pictures. And the technological fact of production and delivery gives these stories added weight" (McCormick 2010:11-12).

Whether being (re)produced as bogus refugees, undesirable "Gypsies", or outright criminals, it is clear that Roma engaging with and reacting to Canadian media-scapes face enormous pressure. Gina Csanyi-Robah, the RCC Director, explained how she has been repeatedly contacted by businesses seeking to produce Gypsy-focused shows or pieces:

*National Geographic Channel* had contacted me, looking for people doing stereotypical Roma occupations. "Well", I said, "what are those?" They only said, "Well, do you know anyone doing that [kind of stuff], out there training?" And I was like, "Huh?" So I didn't bother—they kept on asking a few times more for me to help them find people, and I was like, "No", and I told them, "I'm not trying to promote any stereotypes. We have enough problems trying to improve our own public reception of us." (Interview 2012)

She continued to explain how she understands the significance of media portrayals and the role they play in daily life:

[If you go on] the media education foundation website, all of the critical media studies stuff—they look at stereotypes, they look at power dynamics, they look at the effects of pop culture, especially in music videos. Like the treatment of women and the perception of women, and the message that they're portraying through this stuff... And they do stuff about Arabs, about how Hollywood vilifies an entire people. The only one they don't have something on is Gypsies or Roma! (Interview 2012)

With these specific examinations in mind regarding how Roma have been portrayed in media in Canada, I will now discuss how Roma respond to representations of themselves.

#### 4.4 Representing Roma

[Levant] said he made some inappropriate remarks... Well, hello, he made racist remarks. He compared us to the Bloods and the Crips, he said the only true Roma were tomatoes, he denied our existence as an ethnic group...if he's really sorry, he should show he's making an effort to learn about our community. (Gina Csanyi-Robah, 2013, in reaction Levant's apology)

The history of our people has been fraught with obstacles; our very identity has been, and still is, in the hands of outsiders, who present us as figures of fun, or of mystery or, too often, of criminality. It seems that things are getting worse now, rather than getting better. But I urge you not to give up. There are oppressors, and there are victims, but there are also bystanders, and if we just stand by and give up in hopeless despair, we will be bystanders, not fighters, and nothing will ever improve.

We must find our voice and make it heard—loudly. The non-Romani world has permitted us entry in one area in particular, and that has been entertainment. It has helped foster the stereotype of the “dancing and singing Gypsy,” but we can use that to our advantage. It opens a door for us through which we can bring our message. Today, modern technology unites us, a diaspora medium for a diaspora people. Instead of giving up, remember that even though we have no country, no government, no military, no economy, despite slavery, despite holocaust, we are still here after a thousand years. This force to survive should drive us to continue the fight, and I urge you to do so with all my heart. (Ian Hancock, Correspondence 2012, as part of a larger email, encouraging Romani participation in a World Arts initiative/cultural and media project)

Levant's segment and the ensuing reactions are an egregious example of the kind of racism Roma face in Canadian society, however, it was not the first such case. RCC Executive Director Gina Csanyi-Robah publically stated that although "this wasn't the first time Levant targeted the Roma community on the air...this instance went way above and beyond anything I've ever witnessed in Canadian media against any group in Canada" (Do 2012). Gina also described it as "one of the longest and most sustained on-air broadcasts of hate-speech against any community in Canada that we've witnessed since our organization was established in 1997" (Green 2012). Hancock's above quote articulates some of the main issues surrounding such representation patterns regarding Romani portrayals and discussions. He pointed out that Romani identities are largely still controlled and mediated through outsiders (usually in entertainment venues). Yet, Hancock also pointed out the potential change that can take place from within (such as through different media), emphasizing uniting factors for Roma that can serve as a catalyst for participation to create a different message (versus those created by non-Roma like Levant). I interpret his argument to mean that disjunctures and dissonance within Romani communities are not cause for a weakened sense of self, but rather, the potential for stronger identity processes. In order to explore this further, the following sections are some of the themes regarding the complexity of identity representations in the media that repeatedly came up in interviews, conversations, and events.

#### 4.4.1 Agency, voicelessness, and/or being "spoken for"

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. And as long as societally, an ethnic group is an object, then it's kind of like *Gone With The Wind*, you know...there might be a normal person there, but then everyone else is out doing whatever this old view of them is, obstructing...Anything that furthers untruths about people [is significant]. Perhaps it is fiction, but that fiction serves a particular purpose, if it contributes to the understanding or the misunderstanding of the people. I mean look at all the fiction that has been written by white people about non-white people, and how did that fit into or further stereotype, demonization, exoticism, the exoticization of those people?...It



is entertainment, but at whose expense? I don't want anybody to be entertained at my expense. (Interview with May, 2012)

Historically, there has been a lack of Romani voices and/or representations reflecting their own perspectives or experiences. Today, such voices are needed more than ever in order to more accurately reflect the Canadian “multicultural” society in which Roma live; Romani voices are needed as well to counter the well-entrenched racial ideologies as already described. Some allies and other non-Romani sources have partly addressed this lack of Romani perspective in the media, who are aware of Romani issues and are sympathetic to and/or outraged by the biased and unequal human rights protection witnessed. However, such an arrangement parallels a problematic tendency for people who “speak for” refugees. Malkki has demonstrated that “one of the most far-reaching, important consequences of these established representational practices is the systematic, even if unintended, silencing of persons who find themselves in the classificatory space of ‘refugee.’ That is, refugees suffer from a peculiar kind of speechlessness in the face of the national and international organizations whose object of care and control they are” (1996:386). Refugee narratives are “disqualified almost a priori, while the languages of refugee relief, policy science, and ‘development’ claim the production of authoritative narratives about the refugees” (Malkki 1996:386).

Roma are similarly “spoken for” in different contexts. For example, as a marginalized and exoticized ethnicity; as a non-territorial group often denied official political representation or lobby (McGarry 2010); as fictional portrayals (perpetuated in entertainment and other media); and as vulnerable refugees who are presumed by the public as “objects of humanitarian intervention” and “undesirable elements disruptive to the national order of things” (Limbu 2009:268). Within such contexts, it is not surprising that May requests that she does not want to be the subject of entertainment for others based on her ethnic identity. She points out how Roma are still objectified and exoticized and how anything contributing to these processes indeed have significance influence on how Roma then feel about themselves.

There are a number of ways being “voiceless” or “spoken for” influences identity processes. May lays out a compelling argument for how Roma continue to be objectified,

and thus why she generally disdains work by non-Roma. Only a few examples of this include: a CNN photo essay on Romanian “Roma witch doctors”, published 1 March 2013 (Varzariu 2013); a 2012-2013 kickstarter fund for “Gypsyland”, an “exciting documentary about the Gypsy festival”<sup>98</sup> (Bray); and a CBC episode of *The Passionate Eye* entitled “Gypsy Blood”, that explored the “gypsy code of honour” as part of a “haunting study of masculinity and violence” (Maguire 2012). Such works, regardless of their intent or vision, are produced by non-Roma and include many problematic representations. Much like the outcry over *Border Security*, May critically questions “entertainment, but at whose expense?” This query is further poignant, as Romani ethnicity remains is a concept defined and reproduced largely out of her (or other Romani) control. As explored earlier in this work, Romani ethnicity has been historically misunderstood (and they have sometimes been denied ethnic origins at all). Additionally, Roma must further grapple with romanticized or stereotypical depictions of themselves (including as exotic Others or as criminal refugees). Through these processes and more, Roma must engage with the ramifications of, in effect, being ‘told’ by numerous others in many ways, who they are as individuals and as an ethnic group.

Agency can be broadly understood as the ability to act or make independent choices, while acknowledging there are factors of influence that limit, restrict, determine, or otherwise open up one’s available choices or engagements with the world. Bifulco examines this dynamic in relation to citizen participation in European countries, and concludes that “if we concentrate on the relation between participation, capabilities and capacities to aspire, it becomes clear that the differences depend on freedoms and powers, the conditions for exercising voice and the possibilities of mobilizing in order to think and realize one’s future” (2012:183). She also observes that policies which “more or less directly insist on participation nourish agency and voice, freedom and desire” (Bifulco 2012:183). The exclusion of Romani participation in policy creation and implementation

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<sup>98</sup> One of the rewards for pledging donations to this fund to “help unravel the mystery” include “a personalised horoscope divined by a gypsy fortune teller. This is the real deal.” Another lists: “Have your fortune told by an experienced gypsy fortune teller.” (Bray) This project was unsuccessful as it did not raise the necessary funds in the given time.

over centuries has influenced their ability to participate and thus represent themselves.

Understanding voice as a critical aspect of agency means that a similar understanding is useful regarding the absence of voices as well. In many cases, people choose to be silent, and the underlying causes vary with context. For example, Farah has researched how certain silences or omissions by Palestinian refugees are telling of the larger political and personal contexts in which individuals tell their pasts in particular presents (2006). This informs us of the interplay between private and public representations, as well as of the relationship between the individual and collective. In her work, Farah showed that the reasons for omissions of particular events by first generation refugees—especially men—had to do with their unwillingness to speak of humiliating experiences, such as having to line up and almost beg for basic rations to survive (2006). In contrast, women were much more open in describing personal trajectories. Moreover, the silenced experiences of suffering and humiliation sometimes reappeared in their children’s narratives, who prided themselves of their achievements in refugee camps, despite family histories of uprooting and dire poverty (2006:245). Silences are important in that they remind us that the voices and experiences of refugees are often muted by powerful institutions that exert influence over what is remembered, especially when it contradicts their official versions (Eastmond 2007:257). Visual representations of refugees (described earlier, such as “huddle masses”) often rely on such silences as well, being purposefully repetitive and reductionist (Rajaram 2002:253). These representations of “anonymous corporalities” reinforce a conventionalized refugee image, designed to “cut across cultural and political difference” in part to emphasize helplessness and speechlessness (Malkki 1996:388).

Almost all Romani informants expressed anger and frustration at being effectively silenced by non-Romani depictions and discussions of Roma issues. Milosh, in an email deploring the state of “real” Romani performances in the area, described a local example of this pattern:

This is the Toronto Artsy-Fartsy Brigade. They never cover anything that is genuinely Romani in Toronto like our April 8<sup>th</sup> celebrations, benefit

music shows, or *The Gypsy Rebels*<sup>99</sup>, but delight in portraying non-Romani caricatures of real Romanies and phony *Gadjo* productions with stage Gypsies in a plastic forest with cardboard caravans, stuffed horses, *gazhya* in long skirts, earrings, tambourines, and witches. They would revel in rubbish like *MBFGW*. (Correspondence 2013)

Many community members are especially disturbed not only by the fact that there is a vacuum of Roma-produced work (whether artistic, musical, performance, or other endeavors), but that they are actively eschewed in favour of non-Roma produced such work. Thus, it is important to examine what influences the kinds of Romani participations and voices that are actually present in media and public areas.

#### 4.4.2 Romani sources: “If you speak, you’re dead”

I coded the 2012 newspaper sample described earlier to evaluate representation in the Roma-focused articles. I coded all direct, quoted, and named sources; this did not include when an author/journalist referred to a source/person in the article and only paraphrased their thoughts or perspective. Of the 49 articles that contained direct quotes, there were 39 Romani sources. This count refers to the number of people that were cited, not the number of times they were cited within any given article (e.g., a single Romani source quoted more than once is counted as one, while one article could have more than one source). Likewise, there were 87 non-Romani sources, 49 of whom I considered officials—people with the power or ability to represent a government or governmental organization or enact or create laws and policies (e.g., CIC representatives, court judges, police officers, mayors). The general public, NGO representatives, refugee advocates, former position-holders, and regular lawyers (versus Crown Attorneys, who represent the Canadian government) were counted as non-official sources.

Although Romani sources only constituted 31% of all the named sources, this is an improvement when considering past coverage of Roma-focused pieces<sup>100</sup>. Lily describes

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<sup>99</sup> A band headed by Michael Butch, a long-standing member of the Romani community in Toronto and an active RCC member.

<sup>100</sup> It is my intention to conduct further quantitative content analysis to provide statistical evidence for this statement. After years of informal newspaper content examination, I had expected lower statistics. Many

fear as one of the most poignant limiting factors for Romani representation in mainstream media:

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. (Interview 2012)

Lily's understanding is that having a voice is deeply dependent on historical patterns. Persecution against Roma is widespread and largely unacknowledged; many Roma remain fearful that speaking up will incur further violence. Thus, in order to challenge the *status quo*, Romani voices are needed not only to work against centuries of stereotypes, but also so that there are spaces where Roma have safely voiced their experiences. That Romani sources made up almost a third of sources quoted in these newspaper articles suggests that Roma are beginning to assert their voices. Moreover, I found unexpected diversity in the Romani sources. I had anticipated that only a handful of Romani individuals would be quoted, in part because of the difficulties in finding informants (noted previously by journalists), but also, as Lily noted, because Roma often fear retribution. Instead, I found that Romani sources ranged from RCC members, to current refugee claimants, to Romani European organizations and/or council spokespersons, to those currently living in Europe, to Canadian-born community members, and more. Some could speak English, others needed translation; some were well educated and had held significant positions, others were less educated and spoke about the difficulties of finding decent work. In sum, although the focus on the majority of the newspaper articles dealt more homogeneously with Romani refugees, the voices chosen to represent Roma were diverse and more closely reflected the realities of the heterogeneous Romani population in Canada and abroad. I believe this is in part because of the directed efforts by Romani organizations and advocacy work examined in the next chapter.

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Roma with whom I spoke similarly were surprised by the actual figures (they had also expected lower numbers).

I also examined articles and quote sources with regards to official representations. Thirty-nine percent of sources were officials; 61% of sources were non-officials. Interestingly but not surprisingly, official sources largely outnumbered Romani sources overall and often spoke disparagingly about Roma, while the majority of non-official sources presented sympathetic and critical information regarding Romani issues. Typical statements by officials included:

“Yes, there was a problem in Cegled,” Jobbik Party official Pal Gabor said in his speech at the Jobbik rally. “Only because the *Garda* were cool, there was peace. The gypsy horde was walking in the street, looking to cause problems.” (*Toronto Star*)

“These people are coming, they’re staying for a year or so...several going on social assistance on the taxpayer dime, and then they just up and leave, which is their own admission they’re bogus refugee claimants,” said Ana Curic, spokeswoman for Immigration Minister Jason Kenney. (*Toronto Star*)

“We’re facing a large wave of unfounded asylum claims coming from the European Union in particular,” [Mr. Kenney] said.’ (*The Globe and Mail*)

Or consider former Conservative MPP Toni Skarica, an Ontario Crown Attorney who, speaking at a parliamentary committee, said Roma refugees from Hungary come to Canada because “we have the most generous welfare package for refugees in the world. That’s why they’re coming here, because they get the best deal here.” (*Toronto Star*)

Statements from governmental or institutional representatives, as authority figures, may carry more influence to general readers (compared to “person on the street” perspectives). For example, “teacher authority” extends far beyond classroom interactions and necessarily relies on unequal power relations in the propagation of information (Buzzelli and Johnston 2001:873). Milgram’s research famously demonstrated the impact authority can have on people (even when that authority was asserted through merely wearing a lab coat): when ordered by an authority figure, people could be influenced to cause significant harm to others (1963). This research has been shown to remain relevant today (Brannigan 2013; Burger 2009). It is therefore significant to consider the impact of statements by authority figures and officials in newspapers, both how non-Roma then perceive Romani issues as well as how Roma react to such opinions and statements.

May likened media exposure of constantly negative representations as “low intensity warfare. It’s not full out bombing, but it’s keeping you just anxious enough that you are just treading water all the time, and it’s a luxury to even go to a meeting with other groups who are experiencing [similar issues]”. Henry also used battleground vocabulary, echoing the sentiment that this is an orchestrated kind of discourse designed to show Roma in a negative light by authoritative means: “Yeah, [Minister Kenney] has to know better, in my opinion. He’s an educated man, he’s a government guy, but he’s using psychological war against Gypsies. He wants to scare us, and he wants to destroy our reputation.” Romani community members are clearly frustrated with how officials represent and portray them (Chapter 5 explores in part how advocacy efforts often end up largely devoted to countering such messages). Reichertz examines the dynamics regarding the power of communication in general over identity, and how respect factors into this relationship (2011). “History teaches us that arguments do not have any force or power of their own. If they are to have an effect, arguments need to be voiced in surroundings and in a society in which arguments count for something. The argument requires a specific political and intellectual climate in order to grow, prosper, and have an effect a climate in which one appreciates and respects the argument” (Reichertz 2011:148). This aligns with the questions I heard asked by Romani individuals in Canada who certainly understand these powers of communication: Are Romani voices appreciated, desired, and respected?

Certain journalists and newspapers are working with Roma to ensure participation and coverage, and more and more organizations are reaching out to the RCC and Romani individuals for information on their community. Thus, it is not an entirely bleak picture; change is occurring. After I received a community grant for the RCC, I was able to use the money to buy a portable projector (as requested by the RCC) so they could more accessibly share presentations and videos. The RCC Director told me that “this feels very empowering, to have access to be able to show and share information”. However, an unsettling fact remains: my authority as an affiliate of a university was the catalyst for receiving this particular grant, and as such, the budget had to be entirely controlled through me. The end result was a benefit for the RCC, but the means simply reinforced the same representation processes that I have been critiquing, where Roma are “given”

funding or resources but not deemed responsible enough to control (or voice) it themselves.

Therefore it is unsurprising that some Romani community members feel excluded from significant decision-making demonstrated in part through a lack of representation or participation in media-scapes. As described earlier, “it takes generations to change things”. Efforts to correct the lack of Romani voices are compounded by those who do not have any experience in speaking out. This unintentionally serves to frustrate fellow Romani advocates or community members and delay full participation by Romani agents. For example, Lily explains below how frustrating it can be to try and create a message within the community:

I think the worst is silence. If people start speaking out about a lot of things, and continue to speak out—I mean, they still don’t take them seriously, you have to speak out in a *huge* way. I was very disappointed—I wrote this letter to Jason Kenney, and to the whole lot of them, and CC’ed the opposition MPs about the refugee bill, and I put it on the Facebook page, and I said “Please, take it, copy it, and send it”. If we could just get 100 people to do that. Instead, I got, like, five ‘likes’. And I wrote again, “Don’t just *like* it, *do* it”. It’s really frustrating because people still have not made the connection between having to speak out and doing. Because the more you speak out, the more there is an opportunity that somebody will hear it in a place that matters. People are not being encouraged to do that. (Interview 2012)

#### 4.4.3 Appropriations and stereotypes

So I already had this huge tremendous sense of shame, before I ever started encountering societal attitudes, or discovered stereotypes about Roma. Like when I was [about my child’s age], I knew there was something really wrong about me, really wrong about us. I wasn’t one hundred percent sure what it was, but I knew something was wrong. (Interview with Beth, 2012)

Romani representations, and the ways they are discussed and portrayed, clearly impact identity processes, as just described by Beth. Before she was even six years old, she realized “something was wrong” with regards to her family’s background, sense of self, and ethnicity. This continued as she grew older:



I would see stereotypical stuff, the Gypsy costumes, and that confused me even more, because I was like, “Why would people be dressing up like that if it’s bad, and who dresses like that?” I don’t dress like that. Where are they getting the idea that we dress like that? There was no internet...but I was slowly coming to learn what the stereotype was, and it was so far removed [from my reality]. I mean, the only time that I actually saw that the stereotype fitted us was when was when my parents, my mother, or my grandmother would be mad, and they would yell about throwing curses on people [*laughs*] and I’m like, “Oh we can?” [*laughs and imitates her mother*] “Oh I’m gonna throw a Gypsy curse on you.” And they believe it themselves, from people telling them that they had this power to do that. My mother and her brothers and sisters were so influenced by that whole stereotype, especially the whole Cher, Sonny Bono “Gypsies, Tramps, and Thieves”. (Interview 2012)

The confusion about Gypsy costumes remains particularly relevant today, as debates continue to rage in the media and in various communities regarding what is ‘appropriate’ for Halloween costumes. Tremlett noted that these “same-old representations of Gypsies are common in the European imagination. Whether evoking Gypsy communities in fashion, media or literature, ‘Gypsy’ becomes akin to a fancy-dress costume” (2012:2). As noted in Sections 2.1.2 and 2.2.2, “the general population remains in blissful ignorance except when it’s time to think about a Halloween costume” when it comes to thinking about Roma. The following narrative comes from an article discussing the similar impacts that ethnic mascot costumes have on First Nations/Native American individuals and communities:

Students wore goofy, cartoonish costumes of our mascot (and his equally tasteless “warrior princess” girlfriend) at pep rallies and games...I didn’t understand how face paint purchased from a drug store and a faux headdress made of brown construction paper and dyed arts and crafts feathers was respect. How does celebrating Native people with war imagery honor a living people? Well, it doesn’t...Plain and simple, cultural appropriation—especially when members of the culture protest the appropriation—is not respectful. It’s beyond me why people are okay with this...The American Psychology Association (APA)...found that the stereotypical images were harmful for the development and self-esteem of American Indian students. That wasn’t all. The portrayals had a negative effect on *all* students. The problem, according to the APA, is that American Indian mascots are “undermining the educational experiences of

members of all communities-especially those who have had little or no contact with Indigenous peoples.” And, it “establishes an unwelcome and often times hostile learning environment for American Indian students that affirms negative images/stereotypes that are promoted in mainstream society.” (Stretten 2013, emphasis added)

The above reasoning as set out by the APA holds true for Gypsy costumes as well. Roma similarly drew connections to their treatment and stereotypes by the general public to First Nations experiences.

There are certain underlying problems. Now, [redacted], who has worked for at least a decade with Native rights in Canada, is finding a real parallel between the problems facing Natives and civil rights activism and Roma. First of all, the squabbling between different tribes and groups. The inability of those who have the culture and the language to work with the more educated, who in many instances have lost the language and the culture. (Interview with James, 2011)

James recognizes a fellow Romani community member who has experience working with both Romani and Indigenous organizations. He also notes a comparative struggle, especially the challenges both groups face in uniting their respective, diverse communities. Beth described another kind of connection:

Beth: My whole life people always thought I was from the First Nations community, so that’s why I feel more First Nations in some ways than I do Roma because everybody’s always thought that about me. Even First Nations people asking me, “What clan do I belong to”, you know, speaking the language to me, thinking that I understand the language. I’ve even had racial slurs said to me. [laughs]

Julianna: Really?

Beth: Yes, oh my God. And when I’ve been in the States, people start to just assume, actually, when I visit [other places], that I’m Spanish or Mexican. And then I start getting Spanish slurs at me. Like, I’ve received so many racial slurs from so many different racial groups that I don’t even belong to! [laughing] (Interview 2012)

Whether she is mistaken for First Nations, Mexican, Spanish, Romani, or more, these identity characteristics may not define her, but they show shared experiences of racism with others: being a “visible minority”, a “Native”, a migrant from the South, and more, subjects one to discrimination.

It is worthwhile to consider how these connections link up with Gypsy representation processes. The RCC has experienced growing recognition in Canada, which is significant; this has translated into a greater opportunity for Romani voices to be present in public spaces like newspapers. For example, consider the practical nature of the news production system, in that journalists need initial contacts for stories: the RCC provides a public contact to reach out to access informants who are otherwise marginalized and not easily accessible. This demonstrates a shift from invisibility to participation that ultimately encourages attention to issues with Romani perspectives. Dreher's (2010) research calls for listening to "community media interventions" as a response to racialized media critiques; similarly, Lester and Hutchins' (2012) research explores how invisibility functions with regards to social movements of groups in the media. Romani identity processes and media representations engage with both of these influences, responding to racialized Gypsy stereotypes while also struggling with invisibility in all other aspects of Romani issues. Beth provides her recollections as a teenager, struggling to make sense of a simultaneous lack of accurate information combined with stereotypes:

It was just a crazy bunch of messages of hate and disgust from my father, and then the playing-out of the stereotypes by my family, believing that [they had to do certain things] or else they weren't authentic Gypsies. Like if they weren't moving us around every four months. So by the time I was nine, I went to like 14 different schools, and I didn't know it then, except for this one teacher, this librarian. She asked me in front of my entire class when I came in after lunch—obviously the teachers were talking about me behind my back, because she asked me in front of my entire class why I was late and why I had been to 14 different schools already. And I had no idea that I'd been to 14 different schools because I didn't remember. And I remember to this day that I was so hot—my face was so hot, I felt like I was going to faint from embarrassment. So, after that, it really just came down to me realizing everyone is saying "Gypsies don't like school". But I liked school, and I looked forward to going to school, and I used to feel really good when I got good marks, because I felt validated. And I thought, "Maybe I've taken after my father's side more", you know, [laughs] "Maybe I'm not such a Gypsy, maybe I'm not an authentic real Gypsy". And then I started to think, "There has to be other Gypsy people out there that like school, I can't be the only one" [laughs] and then of course, the more stereotypical stuff kept happening along the way.

Especially in the media, especially in the '90s when everybody started [arriving], there were terrible things in the media. (Interview 2012)

Beth specifically brought up media reactions to Romani refugees in the 1990s as an example of the further reinforcement of detrimental Gypsy stereotypes she was already having to challenge as a child/youth. Elena similarly recalled how she believes that Roma have come to internalize media and public beliefs about Romani people:

The Gypsy people, they have a very bad record. If you say "Gypsy", the people say everything bad. They don't say even one good word about Gypsies. They say "Gypsies are stealing. Gypsies are dirty". But what can [Gypsies] do? If you think logically, if you had this information about the Gypsies: Yes, they may be stealing, but what can they do? Let's say they have two or three small children and they are hungry, they are dirty... they're stealing. But then again, if the Gypsy people in Europe want to go shopping, like [for] basic needs, bread, water, or whatever, they can't. If the salesman kicks them out, and they say "you are Gypsy, you are not allowed to shop here", what can they do to feed their family? [The public] don't see this. Or they don't want to see this. You know what I mean? That's why we have a bad reputation about these things. (Interview 2011)

Henry proposed the following explanation for how such stereotyping processes work, paying particular attention to how members of the Romani community (such as above) internalize these beliefs.

Yes, stereotyping and perceptions are very important aspects. The image is a very important aspect in the human mind, that's why you remember easier if you see a symbol... We have put the Gypsies in this caste [system], where they have this stereotype where they're bad, but really, it's not true. Because every group of people has their own good people and bad people: it's only a trick that you can use against a race to destroy their image or perception. And it's bad, because even people who don't know how it's working [use] these tricks—they use this, because they're programmed. Their mind is programmed by their parents, and their own culture, and it's the distributing of history. (Interview 2012)

All three informants quoted above had diverse experiences and backgrounds. Beth was born and raised in Canada, Henry was born and raised in Europe but has lived in Canada for decades, and Elena was born in the Czech Republic and had lived in Canada for one and a half years at the time of our interview. Yet, they all had similar concerns and

perspectives regarding the significance of media on Gypsy-stereotyping processes; they similarly all demonstrated the implications of Roma internalizing Gypsy stereotypes.

#### 4.4.4 Reactions to Levant

“Wow, this was amazing. Out of Canada. This is really shocking racist journalism. Watch [the] video. I feel this is a priority to organize against this.” (Correspondence from a Romani listserv, 2012)

“I don’t think there was any sincerity whatsoever,” she said late Monday. “At the same time I’m glad [Levant] finally said something, even if it was six months after his vile hatred was strewn across the airwaves.” Ms. Csanyi-Robah said she would invite Mr. Levant to a film screening on Thursday in Toronto to learn about the plight of the Roma in Europe, and said if he was serious about wanting to learn she would be willing to go on his show to set the record straight. (Gina Csanyi-Robah, as quoted in Ladurantaye (2013))

This final section of this chapter returns to the Levant segment in order to begin discussing the context in which Romani advocacy (Chapter 5) has emerged in Canada. I have already demonstrated some problematic aspects of this event, such as its discourse and issues with commenters. However, the reactions by Levant and his parent company *Sun News* were also problematic. Although *Sun News* did eventually remove the segment, it has been criticized for taking too long to respond, allowing the violent comments to stay up for days. *Sun News* did issue an apology statement two weeks following Levant’s segment:

Two weeks ago on the *Sun News* program “The Source” we looked at the issue of Canadian refugee claims by the Roma people. Following the broadcast we received a number of complaints from viewers who felt the broadcast reinforced negative stereotypes about the Roma people. We have completed a review of the material and we agree that this content was inappropriate and should not have gone to air. It was not the intent of *Sun News*, or anyone employed by *Sun News*, to promote negative stereotypes about the Roma people. We regret our error in these broadcasts, and we apologize unreservedly to the Roma people and to you, our viewers. *Sun News* is on your side. (Public Statement 2012)

This apology does not satisfy Gina Csanyi-Robah, RCC Executive Director, nor many other Romani community members. She and the RCC had requested and expected the

apology to come from both the network and Levant himself. Moreover, Csanyi-Robah believes “it wasn’t even a true, legitimate apology that people would be aware of” (Do 2012). As already noted (Section 4.2.2.1), *Sun News* never actually contradicted or refuted what Levant said; it merely apologized that the content was inappropriate and that it did not *intend* to promote stereotypes.

This lack of accountability by the host network is compounded by the fact that the RCC had requested, in addition to an apology by Levant himself, a counter segment or materials provided by the network to counter the misinformation presented by Levant. The RCC had even provided suggestions, complete with advice for sources and citations, such as an equivalent piece accurately describing Romani issues in Canada and Europe. Yet no such action happened, and in follow-ups regarding the CBSC complaint, the RCC was told that the above *Sun News*’ apology fulfilled CBSC obligations so no further action was necessary. Since the original video links only to a standard 404 Error message, and the apology aired only once on their network—not posted to their website at all—many RCC members and other advocates were frustrated by the lack of visibility of this “so-called apology”. Their move to simply take down all traces of the video has been interpreted as attempting to bury the evidence (Climenhaga 2013), and a demonstration of insincere motivations.

In September 2013, the CBSC rendered their decision into this inquiry, declaring that Levant had violated broadcasting standards; however, no further actions were deemed necessary. The following excerpt includes some of the main points made by the RCC in reaction to this decision, detailing their points and concerns:

Hate speech and human rights abuses must be challenged or they will grow. Toronto’s Roma Community Centre is pleased that the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council has upheld most of our complaint against Ezra Levant’s *Sun News* broadcast “The Jew vs the Gypsies” on Sept. 5, 2012. The ruling, under the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Code of Ethics and Equitable Portrayal Code, is an important milestone in the struggle of Roma people for fair, honest and equal portrayal in the Canadian media.

The CBSC announced its finding yesterday (Sept. 9, 2013) that Mr. Levant had clearly violated CBSC broadcasting standards...But the CBSC

ruling also reveals how far industry standards still have to go. In concluding that Mr. Levant did not violate Clauses 9 (b) (Language and Terminology), the CBSC suggests that the term ‘Gypsy’ is not pejorative. We regret that the CBSC based its ruling on offensive, inaccurate and outdated references in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and in British legislation...

We find that the CBSC’s resort to such egregious and discriminatory citations—while ignoring current international, scholarly, and journalistic best-practices regarding the naming of our community—particularly egregious...The term ‘Gypsy’ is an exonym and historically inaccurate (based on the misunderstanding that Roma people came from Egypt); while ‘Roma’ is an endonym, based in Romani language and self-identity. Media should prioritize the use of endonyms (self-naming) over exonyms (what other groups call an ethnicity/race).

Roma Community Centre is happy to work with media to bring the real story about our community to Canadians, and to educate people about us, as well as work with and train media and journalists in reporting on Roma issues. Ronald Lee, co-founder of the Roma Community Centre, said “It is a shame that Ezra Levant and his editors chose to ignore one of the basic requirements of journalism, such as research into his subject. He claimed that Roma were not an ethnicity, did not have a language, and were just a collection of criminals. That is simply ignorant and insulting. As long as people like Levant and those media outlets who support them put profit above journalistic ethics, the business of disinformation will flourish. His tongue-in-cheek ‘apology’ was a farce and had no effect on those who listened to his rant.”...during this past May, two separate Ontario police forces had recommended that Ezra Levant be charged with hate propaganda. Apparently, the Deputy Attorney General of Ontario, Patrick Monahan, felt that the apology was enough to not proceed with prosecution.

Yesterday, after a yearlong investigation, the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council has also found that the apologies made by *Sun Media* and Levant were sufficient. “When hate speech will be allowed to continue without serious consequences for the offenders as long as they make a public statement of apology, sincere or not, many Canadians will not feel that justice has taken place”, said RCC executive director, Gina Csanyi-Robah. (See Appendix F for full text)

This letter is significant not only for its intended purpose of drawing attention to areas that the RCC feels need further examination, but because it draws together the three main

areas that comprise this dissertation. This action was taken by the Romani community (an example of the kind of advocacy to be discussed in Chapter 5) in response to disparaging media representations and stereotypes (the focus of this chapter), while also using reclaimed historical examples and definitions (from Chapter 3), such as dispelling the Egypt myth. Overall, the RCC saw and reacted to a need to explain why homogenizing and Gypsy categorizations and terminology are erroneous and harmful.

This example also serves the purpose of demonstrating how Romani individuals must engage with their own identity processes in reaction to non-Romani catalysts and representations (such as Levant's hate speech). After hearing it from so many people at different times, I believe one of the single largest obstacles facing many Roma in Canada is the reactionary cycle they are enmeshed within:

Instead of focusing on the hardships of refugees or the positive things we are working hard at with Canadians who care—I have been mobbed today by media to answer questions about Romanian Roma being smuggled into Canada who are likely to commit criminal acts. Is anyone else getting damn tired of hearing about Gypsy criminal propaganda?! I sure am. It has shaped my entire life. (Online correspondence by Gina, 2012)

Farah describes how “political realities have often forced Palestinians into a defensive posture; refugees have waged a constant battle to preserve, remember, and reconstruct what had been (and continues to be) erased” (2009:80). Similarly, Roma are engaged in a constant struggle to preserve, remember, and reconstruct their lives and identities. In addition, Roma are tasked with having to respond to every allegation and negative story that makes its way into media. It is their choice to respond to these stories; however, the consequences of *not* responding are often too great a risk to take.

Yet responding to all anti-Roma stories and stereotypes would be a herculean task, even for a well-funded organization. The nature of media life cycles means that press releases are usually needed within 48 hours of breaking, lest they become superfluous. Such responses to stories and policy changes need to be well-reasoned and articulated, not an easy task when Romani-focused organizations in Canada simultaneously juggle other, main responsibilities towards the community, including settlement and refugee system assistance, cultural programming, and more. The pressure to respond to media stories is



reinforced by the needs of the RCC itself: in order to compete for funding (a very scarce resource among NGOs), one must convince the public and/or granting agencies that you are deserving of funding. This is difficult when the majority of news stories about Roma are negative, stereotypical, and/or homogenizing. And here emerges the Catch-22 in which the RCC finds itself: how can you successfully challenge the basis of such stories, when you are having trouble finding funding to cover the costs of operations and staff, and/or when you are not sure where you might be located next month?

These concerns clearly highlight the complicated relationship between media and advocacy. For example, more than one CBSA report in the last year using flawed statistics has blithely categorized Roma as criminals. These reports, being from official governmental organizations, had the real potential to negatively impact the lives of many Romani refugee claimants and more. Therefore the RCC knew it needed to quickly devote energy into penning a response. Ronald Lee stated:

It is unfortunate that we have to devote time to this infantile misuse of statistics by the current government. Harper did this with the issue of abandoned and failed Hungarian refugee claims from shyster lawyers who signed up too many refugees for legal aid to deal with them properly. They feed *ovis Canadensis* [a referral to the Canadian public as sheep] these slanted statistics and of course, the brainwashed creatures believe what they hear on TV and read in the Ministry of Truth bulletins called the Media, or the daily dump of verbal diarrhea from Ezra Levant.  
(Correspondence 2013)

Roma are clearly and understandably feeling frustrated by the kind of news that is produced, one of the main reasons behind their advocacy work in media-scapes. They are trying to make their voices heard regarding the discrimination they encounter, as well as articulate their rights. This struggle for media attention provides insight into how Roma negotiate their identities in the context of representations: how do I see myself? How are others viewing me? How do I *change* this perception? The following exchange happened after some negative anti-Gypsy media stories occurred:

Too much unnecessary suffering, sometimes I feel helpless and don't know what to do about anything. Stay strong and united, and never back down, is the best thing I can think of sometimes. Of course as well as education and keeping good karma so to not "fall" into the stereotypes.

Even a peaceful protest gets me called a “fucking stupid, dirty bitch.”  
(Listserv correspondence 2013)

We need our own journalists, and that means education. (Listserv  
correspondence 2013)

Our own Romani journalists might help, but it is the policy of the paper and its politics that are more important. With far-right media Moguls like Rupert Murdoch who despised “Gypsies” and “Travellers”, and control huge numbers of news outlets, this type of tabloid sensationalism is the norm, especially in the *Daily Mail* and other British tabloids. A story about “Gypsy child thieves” will sell papers and boost circulation and attract more advertisers who monitor sales of the papers. There is a tabloid adage as follows: “Never let the contradicting facts stands in the way of a good story.” The fact that the use of fossil fuels, Tar Sands extraction, and fracking are poisoning the air we breathe and the water we drink is not news and won’t be until we start dropping dead in the streets from air pollution and killing one another over fresh drinking water. The regular dailies are no better, nor is the electronic media. They are all out for sensationalism at the expense of useful information that could save the planet. (Listserv correspondence 2013)

These were only three responses from many, selected to demonstrate how media can provoke feelings ranging from helplessness and disappointment, to ideological solutions, to relations to other current events, and more. Advocacy—especially in light of Romani-run organizations and Romani voices in the media—is frequently described by Roma as one of the most critical and significant issues affecting their experiences and identities, which thus serves as the focus of the next chapter.

## Chapter 5 – Romani Advocacy in Canada

### 5 Introduction

After centuries of facing retribution for speaking out for their rights, Roma have made significant inroads towards the long and difficult path to self-representation in public arenas. This chapter examines these processes in the Canadian context, illuminating some of the many ways that advocacy by and for Romani persons represents an important intersection of identity, ethnicity, community, and governance processes (the concepts raised in Chapter 2). Advocacy offers an ideal platform from which to understand the significance of the other two main chapters. Historical representations of Roma inform how communities engage with their members, which in turn also influence the messages that activists reproduce in mainstream and other media. “Gypsy” stereotypes that are rooted in historical misperceptions not only have an effect on knowledge production today, but can be clearly witnessed in media depictions as well.

Romani advocacy and activism often purposefully combines these topics in order to challenge hegemonic and popular conceptions of their community and histories. Through such projects, Roma must often speak and respond as a collective; through this kind of unified voice (which does not preclude their diversity), they can emphasize their shared experiences and goals. In this way, Romani identities are further made and unmade, over time, and with relevance to their particular contexts. Advocacy sheds light on the issues that are most significant to its members and offers insight into their conceptualizations of self and community. For example, discussing the concept and lived experiences of community with Roma often led to interesting comparisons and/or descriptions that encompass a range of inclusion and exclusion beliefs. When describing how the Romani community in Canada conducts activism, Livia suddenly brought up the topic of US President Barack Obama’s autobiography. It dealt with his experience as a community organizer: “I read it during the election, because when he started running, I was like, ‘I have no idea who this man is’, so I read it, and what I found so striking about it was that [*now whispering, emphasizing*] he actually *gets* it.” Her experiences working with various other marginalized people in Canada, in addition to her experience as a Romani

community member, are characteristics that created a connection for her to Obama through his community actions. Livia's earlier quote, in Section 3.3.2, similarly demonstrated how directly she connected her feelings of historical memory and identity with her activist work.<sup>101</sup> This process of making links beyond traditional boundaries of communities through advocacy efforts is something that I found repeatedly raised in various ways by the Romani people with whom I spoke.

Just as connections were made, so was the idea of community also used as a means to differentiate and emphasize dissimilar priorities or characteristics. One Romani activist and leader, after I asked who the RCC might be able to work with in the future, stated: "I just find so much tension and animosity and, just, *discouraging* attitudes and feelings and behaviors that come from people from an Eastern European background, when it comes to us [Roma]. It's so much easier dealing with the Canadian community". This statement generalizes three communities at once—Roma, Eastern Europeans, and Canadians—but nonetheless demonstrates an example of the tensions that exist between perceived and/or enacted communities when advocacy efforts are designed and implemented. For a further example, the below is an excerpt from an email to Romani listserv recipients, discussing frankly the pros and cons of making allies and alliances with other groups:

After writing about the stress of our general situation here, I realize that I was losing focus: with whom are we really willing to make alliances? I believe the first [choice would be] our worldwide community beyond borders, historical separation, acculturation, states and governments politics, etc. Let's see, then, who is left for us from mainstream societies:

--The rich and powerful minority (in which we can certainly find some authentic human rights defenders), but still, this minority has its own agenda. Are we looking for charity? A Native, First Nations activist told

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<sup>101</sup> An excerpt from her earlier quote that is especially relevant in this section: "It is also very political, trying keep pieces of histories and ethnicities of people that we're not proud of normally, that they tried to hide, or tried to put down, as part of selected things to try and hold onto and reclaim them and find a connection to them, whatever that is. And you know, [I've]...been involved in activism, human rights work, anti-racist organizations, so it makes sense particularly, as in the last few years of what's been happening in Hungary, that I would get engaged in that, given that that's where my family identifies from. And not just the involvement in Palestinian solidarity, like First Nations activism—I would have a connection to the racism happening in my country of origin" (Interview with Livia, 2012).

me once in Canada, “When a white man offers you help, it’s time to run away”. That is a favorite joke [of mine].

--The middle class (which is, in fact, disappearing in ‘Southern’ or third-world countries, like Mexico), who don’t shine particularly bright; only aiming to get into the rich and famous, whatever it takes, so as not to fall down into the degrading “poor” section of society, that in Europe we call the working class. (Once again I’m not generalizing, they are certainly good people there too.)

--The lower class, which are here a humongous group (the famous 99% with no voice) of people regrouping in many communities: indigenous, Metis, farmers, and working class from many different ethnic groups, all marginalized—politically, socially and economically.

To contact any of these groups, looking for alliances, from the richest to the poorest, includes risks. But I think it has to be done, wherever we are. And it has to be of course with the willingness of our community. If not, we’re still throwing stones into the sea expecting to grab a fish. Too many people are throwing stones into the sea, and they even expect to get paid big money for that. Especially when many others don’t even have what is needed to feed their kids, which is very sad. (Correspondence 2013)

This email illustrates the complexity of how Roma must often engage with non-Romani communities for advocacy purposes while considering such questions as: Is one’s local Romani community on board? Have you tried to make connections with other Roma worldwide? What are non-Roma motivations and what can we expect from them? Are there people looking to just profit from such community building? Belton observes the notion of community for Roma specifically as both a product and root of “weak power” which can limit individual expression and maintain social marginality or exclusion (2013:282). As mentioned above, it is not only Roma who face such difficulties.

However, these issues reflect an increasing urgency to understand Romani perspectives as their communities face myriad issues needing attention and activism, including increasing violence from non-Roma and exclusion from rights and in policies.

Another facet of Romani advocacy focuses on how Roma are often ignored, or considered insignificant and/or abstract agents. This process is described below between two listserv members discussing the comparison between Romani, Jewish, and *gadje* (non-Romani) communities:

One of the points I make about sensitivity to the Holocaust is that nearly everybody has a Jewish friend, and so there is a personal connection—you know someone Jewish (“I wonder whether Mrs. Gold down the street lost family...”). But very few *gadje* have Romani friends, and so it remains abstract. For the same reason, Western countries respond to news reports of atrocities in the Western world (in the Balkans, in Northern Ireland, etc.) more than they do for atrocities in Asia or Africa. (Correspondence 2012)

Yes, you’re right about atrocities or racism against Roma being an abstract notion for *gadje*. Especially when they feel that this has no personal impact on them. I am astounded time and time again at the responses, comments, or sheer indifference. Here in Canada we do have support from some teachers, members of Parliament, and churches with strong human rights activism built into their mandates. But this is such a small segment of society. The general population remains in blissful ignorance except when it’s time to think about a Halloween costume. Of course, none of this has stopped us from doing what we need to do. If more Roma were active, it would make a difference up here. But it’s so hard for those families living in fear of being deported—they’re in a constant state of anxiety and fear. How can their kids ever settle in school or in their communities? They’re afraid they’re going to be sent back to Hungary or Czech Republic. RCC has had a great deal of support from non-Roma volunteers, Jewish and non-Jewish. Without their active help we would be in a more difficult situation. We go one step at a time. (Correspondence 2012)

These perspectives help to understand the complex identity dynamics between processes including community advocacy efforts (such as by the RCC), collective memories of specific events (such as the Holocaust), other groups’ collective memories of the same events, governmental policies (such as the referenced deportations), and “general population” perceptions and popular culture stereotypes (such as “blissful ignorance” and Halloween costumes). All of these areas are reflecting and influenced by varying identity understandings of memory, history, media, community, and more. The above exchange also illustrates the acknowledgement that allies and advocacy relationships between communities similarly inform Romani community experiences and identity processes.

Therefore, we can clearly see there are many types of agents and factors involved in community advocacy and activist movements. Advocacy can be simply defined as active

support for a cause, whereas activism is the action of attempting—through a specific campaign—to bring about change. Advocacy and activism are thus directly enmeshed with governance and representation processes; advocacy causes and/or activist actions must challenge or show support for particular policies, whether they be on governmental, organizational, international, local, or other levels. Complicating advocacy and activism further are the varying ways that people may coordinate their actions/beliefs on both collective and individual levels. For example, a person may belong to any number of organizations, including but not limited to non-profits, non-governmental (NGOs), charities, or coalitions. Individuals may volunteer out of their own convictions or because of requirements, occupy paid or unpaid positions, be titled persons (e.g., Board Member or Director) involved with running organizations, and/or may contribute monetarily or other forms of contribution. Furthermore, the policies that advocacy organizations and individual activists are challenging or working to change do not stem from homogenous or transparent governmental institutions and representatives. Advocacy efforts of any kind necessarily weave complex relationships between governmental institutions, local organizations, individuals, and more, with constantly shifting dynamics (often resulting from changing policies).

Advocacy represents an active engagement in the creation of community representations and ethnic identities. Advocacy also illustrates some of the specific and potential struggles and implications for Romani identities, especially when framed in terms of their access to human rights processes and systems. McGarry explores Romani representations and social movements with such regard to identity processes as well, though in a European context, noting that advocacy organizations can be an expression of culture and identity (2008:450). He explains that, regardless of whether identity is seen as a strategy, choice, or given, “identity always works in relationship to, and interacts with, other social processes and variables, which is why it is futile to analytically separate identity from interests in the Roma social movement” (McGarry 2008:450). Positing that various constructions of identities are a key task for all social movements, we can thus understand these movements as “socially constructed collective realities” where Roma “construct this reality with reference to their ethnic group identity with the purpose of articulating their shared interests” (McGarry 2008:450). The advocacy efforts I examine

here are largely comprised of Romani voices and narratives that challenge and influence their own—and others’—definitions of Romani ethnicity and identity. It is therefore useful to question what kinds of messages are prioritized and how such efforts (and the relationships that emerge) are experienced and negotiated.

The foci for this chapter include Romani responses to education programs, refugee policies, and advocacy work with non-Romani allies. Examining education issues pertaining to Romani refugees illustrates some of the far-reaching consequences of advocacy and community-based actions. For example, a recent incident in France demonstrates how education, refugee policies, and non-Romani partnerships all work together in influencing Romani advocacy efforts. In September of 2013, the French government tried to forcibly deport a Romani schoolgirl from Kosovo while she was on a school field trip (Llana and Inzaurrealde 2013). In response, her classmates and other community members gathered *en masse* to protest, blocking school entrances, and demanding explanation (Anon. 2013; Fraser 2013; Lazare 2013). Canadian Romani community members reacted to this incident:

Canada doesn’t have a monopoly on deporting Roma students, it seems.  
(Correspondence 2013)

Yay! The quick action of the high school students is encouraging.  
(Correspondence 2013)

If only we had the same kind of student actions here when so many Roma students are being deported from Canada. (Correspondence 2013)

It is heartening to see French students standing up for a Romani girl deported to Kosovo. Will the government listen? (Correspondence 2013)

This example demonstrates a number of important factors the Romani community engages with regarding advocacy efforts. For example, there is now transnational and/or global awareness of policies targeting Roma through shared information networks. Having access to breaking news means the immediate ability to make multiple connections (and contrasts) between other (in this case, French) and Canadian communities. The response in France to the girl’s deportation was admirably envied, with many Roma wishing they could see similar levels of engagement by both Roma and non-Roma regarding concern over Romani deportations in Canada.



The significance of advocacy efforts and responses by the community play large roles in identity processes and Romani representations. McGarry explains that Romani advocacy messages and interests can be general, such as addressing discrimination, but also very specific, such as targeting negative Gypsy stereotypes (2008:451). However, his point is that regardless of the level of activist interest by Roma, “ethnic identification will dictate which interests are articulated” (McGarry 2008:451). It is precisely because Roma are discriminated against as a racialized group that informs and coordinates their interests and efforts, creating a pattern whereby “Roma are marginalized and oppressed collectively because of their ethnic group identity, resulting in their interests being informed by this collective experience” (McGarry 2008:451). The following subsections represent some of the main themes informants repeatedly invoked or discussed that had significant influence on how they think about themselves and their community.

### 5.1 Education: “Now, people have a voice”

Education has long been one of the most important goals and priorities for many Romani community members in Canada, and education advocacy extends far beyond the classroom. For example, Canadian Roma have some parallels with the transnational intersection of education, immigration policy, and community reactions that the French Kosovo Roma schoolgirl example just raised. One of the impacts of recent Canadian refugee policies includes the massive loss of Romani community members in local Toronto areas through deportations, which in turn affects various education initiatives and methods. A recent newspaper article (Brown 2013) documented how, in Parkdale (a neighbourhood that has been favoured by Romani refugees), the large-scale deportations of Roma significantly reduced Parkdale’s local student community. Only a few years prior to this, Romani youths in Parkdale were in the headlines for their unexpected and numerous arrivals, described as a “school population explosion in Parkdale” (Macdonald 2010), leaving education system and officials scrambling for Czech and Hungarian translators, support, and more. Now, however, all of the efforts and programs in place to accommodate Romani students are going largely unused. As described by the principal of Parkdale Public School in a recent news article: “We invested so much in helping them

succeed, and now the energy they brought is gone...Our staff are grieving. It's a huge loss to the whole community" (Brown 2013).

Not only does education in this sense depend on the presence and stability of its students and their communities, it is also an area that illuminates some of the underlying prejudices, patterns, and power dynamics that Roma must face and engage with daily. In a very different context, Clark-Kazak notes similar issues for Congolese refugee youth in Uganda, where the politics of education are also firmly enmeshed within class and power relations (2012:57). "Schooling facilitates young people's access to, and visibility in, formal community decision-making structures" (Clark-Kazak 2012:58). Schooling for Romani youth have different challenges, but their access to and participation within formal education in Canada has numerous consequences on the community. In early 2012, I interviewed a school official, Pat, who described the challenges of dealing with a large increase of Romani students to their school. Pat also discussed the changes that were happening within the Romani community regarding their stance toward education. For example, Amnesty International (AI 2013), among many others, has expressed significant concern over how Central and Eastern European countries continue to place Romani children automatically in "special schools" for the developmentally disabled (simply because of their ethnicity), an assumed belief that Romani children are inherently less intelligent. These schools do not benefit Romani children, and often create further struggles for them (graduating with such degrees actively hinder their employment). Newcomer Romani families in Canada are likewise often not invested in the established education system (as they have thus far witnessed) and do not "buy into the idea" that education is worthwhile. This is one of the reasons that established Roma in Canada have prioritized education initiatives in their community, as a means to demonstrate to newcomer Roma that education can be beneficial. Pat explained to me the complicated process by which newcomer Roma engage with the education system here:

There were many who didn't want to buy in at first. Now over time, they would buy in. And a lot has to do with, I think, how their education system was back in the Czech Republic...But a lot of the Roma—and there's a bit of the difference between the Czechs and Hungarians, it was more the Czech that were trying to get out of class—they've bought into what we're doing here, and it improved. The behaviours improved. Things like this

aren't really an issue anymore—students are going to class. [*Voice lowers, emphasizing the next points*]

What I find is that because of some of the Roma are refugee claimants, and because what they see are their friends being sent back—the immigration is not happening—it becomes kind of a hopeless thing. Because why invest in education if you don't know if you're going back tomorrow? Is this going to count for anything? Are these courses here going to account for anything if you're sent back? So getting students to buy into the value, to buy into the whole idea of staying here, and that these courses will help them eventually get somewhere, you know, career-wise, has been the real challenge, and a struggle. But I think who we have right now, our students, who are pretty motivated to get the credits, and maybe there's more hope, theirs may be a glimmer of hope, but they're maybe able to stay. We have had several of our Roma students deported. Basically, they get the deportation letter, they're at the airport in a week with all their stuff, and, you know. I guess when you see your friend being sent home, every time another friend is sent home, you're kind of less and less motivated to work. (Interview 2012)

In essence, Pat summarizes not only the important work that has taken place at schools with large Romani student populations, but also emphasizes the relationship between uncertainty and education/learning. When Romani students and their families see the point of education in Canada, they break out of long established patterns in European school systems. This is true for Romani refugee youth in Canada as well. Yet, when students realize they will likely be sent back, they re-learn to not invest in education. Romani parents expressed to me simultaneous pride and concerns: although proud that their children were quickly learning English and succeeding in Canadian schools, they often grew concerned at the increasing likelihood they will be deported. Thus, they rightly worried that their children will not only be farther behind in the programs there (having focused on English, and not, for example, Czech or Hungarian<sup>102</sup>) but also be

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<sup>102</sup> This is compounded further by the fact that if they spoke Romani/Romanes as a first language, then the children were often already lagging behind in Czech, Hungarian, or whatever other majority language was taught in their region. If these children return to their original countries having focused on English instead, their parents knew that their children would be so far behind in their language abilities that they would undoubtedly be placed in “special” schools with no hope for quality education.

further disheartened at the lack of true opportunity and education provided by the “special schools”.

Elena already noted this pattern with her classmates when we spoke in 2011:

Elena: Before, here there were many Gypsies. Hamilton, Toronto, who we know, our friends from the school, like this. But many people, many Gypsies, they’ve returned to their countries. Because their refugee claims were denied.

Julianna: Did you know some students who have already gone back?

Elena: Yeah. And some classmates, they’re right now here, waiting for a hearing. There is not much hope. [Redacted] has also a wife and children and they have their hearing, and they have lots of proof from the police reports and others, and they had the same situation like us—they were attacked, the same. And in the Czech Republic, she was pregnant, and during the attack she lost the baby. And still, the application was denied. So. Every Gypsy family, they have their own story, but it’s almost all similar. Attacks from racism. And during the last two years, we haven’t had positive news, like, somebody is allowed to stay here. And from the families who lose, they appeal or something, who were denied, but they said the reason why the application was denied is because the Czech Republic is safe for us. But it’s not true. And we know about one family who came back who were sent back, and right away in the airport of their country they were attacked. So you want to tell me that the Czech Republic is safe? (Interview 2011)

Elena was describing the situation in Hamilton, the location and focus of another newspaper article (Ruf 2012) that described the effect of deportations on the local Romani community there, through the lens of a Romani-attended church. Jaroslav Mitac, the pastor there, described how he must console congregants regarding their deportations: “‘I talked with one family [Friday],’ the 47-year-old said, speaking through an interpreter. ‘They were so unhappy because they had to go home on Monday’” (Ruf 2012). Many of his Eastern European Romani congregants have been deported after receiving negative refugee decisions, while others “fearing they too will be denied and deported, are leaving Canada and heading to other countries before they have a chance to make their case before an adjudicator at the Canadian Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB). About a year ago, Mitac’s church had nearly 300 members. Now, that number

stands at around 120” (Ruf 2012). The effects of deportations contribute to both the causes and effects of Romani-based advocacy efforts, as the refugee system is a key catalyst for organizing events and programs yet also keeps the Romani community in flux. Their members are often caught in a transitory state and frequently end up having to leave suddenly. At the very least, many Roma need to focus their already limited time and energy on their own claims and requirements rather than participate with advocacy projects.

Romani advocacy efforts focus heavily on other forms of education as well, beyond the traditional classroom. To highlight some Romani perspectives regarding how education influences and can be used as a part of collective experience/community identity, the following two excerpts are purposefully compared. Gina and Henry describe what it means to feel Romani and, critically for this chapter, their feelings on how Roma can or should connect with one another to achieve their goals through education and advocacy.

I’m educating my family as I’m educating myself. Even the word ‘Roma’, they’re still trying to [learn to] use that word, and some of the truth about our own history. My mom is really proud of what I’m doing, she is crazy proud. And she’s trying to actually get herself in a situation...where she can come here and spend a few months, because she’s dying to come and help at the Roma Community Center. She’ll fit in so good—oh my God—it would be the first time in her life that she’ll feel like she belongs. And so many people have told me that. They have come to the doors, and they tell me, “For the first time in my life, in this city, or in general, I feel like I belong somewhere”. And it’s encouraging when you hear that, you know, it feels good for me. When I used to hear people say “You don’t look like a Gypsy”, I would think, “What the fuck does a Gypsy look like?”. Like, you’re too light? Too light? “You don’t look, you don’t act like it”. Well, tell me then how I should do it then, how should I do it, be it? (Interview with Gina Csanyi-Robah, 2012)

Gina envisions education as a comprehensive process that affects family, community, and self-image/identity. Through education, terminology can be used to their advantage and a sense of belonging can be established that ultimately can challenge those who attempt to perpetuate stereotypes. Henry, in turn, expresses his perspective on how and why Roma need to re-learn their history, and why that should be a critical focus for Romani advocacy education initiatives:

Gypsies, they don't know how to survive anymore in society...they don't know how to be a doctor, they don't know how to be a lawyer, they don't know how to open a business, they don't know anything. They're ignorant about it because...from day-to-day they live in survival mode, so they don't learn how to do things in society. You know, when you tell them how to open a business, they're shocked. Even if you tell them that you could get a grant to open a restaurant, they've never heard of this...Because they think only the non-Roma can do this. Because they have this perception of themselves too, psychologically, that they are bad people, that we *have* to survive this way, we *have* to beg for money, our children are not *supposed* to go to school, we *have* to live in dirt, and all these things, the problems [that have been] building for 500 years. And that's why I think the solution for the Roma people is that the Roma have to have Roma leaders. And the Roma, they have to understand that we have to get on our own feet, that we have to become independent, we have to help each other, to survive and learn, to be 100% citizen of that country, and to do it ourselves. And learn that what they [non-Roma] did with you, you can never do the same thing with them...In my opinion, we are all Roma. This is the most important [thing]: that even if we're different, the basic thing is that we have to get back our own history. It means we have to go back our roots, where we came from—find this way back. And on this, you can build. Because you will have a foundation to build a new thing on it, and get information...We have to establish an organization where we can be independent and we can help ourselves to survive. This is the most, in my opinion, this is the most important thing. (Interview with Henry, 2012, emphasis based on tone)

Both of these excerpts represent a perspective I repeatedly heard expressed by Roma in Canada: education and advocacy help to build strong identities and communities. Henry and Gina have different backgrounds (Henry was born and raised in Europe, Gina was born and raised in Canada) but they both recognize the significant disadvantage that Roma often face when (re-)learning about their pasts as well as gaining access to education systems. Gina and Henry are both activists, having led various projects within the Romani community, yet they also had some differing views on the kinds of priorities that the Romani community and advocacy efforts should address. Gina, although initially proud of her own role in educating her family about Romani history, soon raises the issue of confrontation with non-Romani criticism, recalling being told she is “too light”. For her, advocacy is inextricably linked to having a place to belong, which is especially

pronounced when contrasted with both Romani and non-Romani perspectives on what a “real” Romani person looks or acts like. Her quote also serves as an example of how individuals reflect on their identities when confronting stereotypical and negative representations or perceptions regarding Romani issues. Henry focused on education and history as well, and believed it most of all necessary to have more Romani leaders, including a more independent foundation that can confront Romani-specific challenges (such as living in “survival mode”) and ultimately provide Roma and non-Roma with better education on these issues. This is not a juxtaposition of narratives, as neither Gina nor Henry eschews the respective points of the other (belonging; leadership); rather, they have both championed each of these points in various other conversations and advocacy projects. These two narratives instead provide insight into the various and multiple ways that Romani individuals may work towards creating and redirecting advocacy in relation to their larger community and identity processes.

Many other informants similarly linked education with advocacy efforts. For example, Adam, a journalist, emphasized education as the main priority or issue with which minority communities must engage. He ends up discussing advocacy by making connections to media representations, as well as the Civil Rights Movement in the US and the power that comes from dissenting voices (even those he disagrees with).

Julianna: What would you say are some of the most pressing issues now facing immigrant minorities communities in Toronto, in Canada, in general?

Adam: [*Deep sigh*] Education. I think about educating them to engage them into Canadian politics, to learn about—I don’t think such education is necessarily just for targeting immigrants and refugees, but also general Canadians as well. And I don’t know whether it’s the media, but overall in the education system, but to engage them in public policies, [you need to] have good journalism. I think [names of specific newspapers redacted] are doing a pretty good job because they shed light on the stories behind the stories—not just a report, or being a mouthpiece for politicians...But you know, just highlighting those challenges and problems is not enough; we need the public to take action. There’s only so much the media can do: all we can do is inform. We cannot organize the protests and rallies...I think we need to, in this one regard, we need to turn back the clock, return to the time in the last century—in the 70s. I’m not a big fan of the hippy lifestyle

[*laughing*] but I think that's the time when you see the blossoming of all this activism. You see Martin Luther King Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement. I think at that point, the economy was doing great, there was still a very strong union movement, it wasn't under attack, and that's why people could afford to smoke weed, right? [There was room] to care about others in the community.

Julianna: Why do you think it doesn't seem like that's happening right now, or maybe on a different scale?

Adam: [*Pause*] I think it hinges on the youth, because we need their idealism to do these things. That's one thing—like, Jason Kenney named “No One Is Illegal” as an enemy. Now, I don't agree necessarily with everything they do, because certainly there could be a better approach, but I think that their motivation, their intention is good...We need more people participating. (Interview 2012)

Similar to Gina and Henry, Adam did not stay on a single topic when discussing education. I found that many discussions or questions that began with issues of education ended up demonstrating the multi-faceted dynamics of participation in society in general, and thus relating to the larger issues involved with advocacy and activism. This sometimes occurred through anger regarding a sense of personal or physical characteristics (as with Gina), ideological beliefs about leadership and history (as with Henry), or thoughts regarding how media, government, and more are all part of how and why people feel invested in their communities and society overall (as with Adam).

Another important and related point that many people commented on was the need for youth education and involvement. Adam above describes a better future as hinging on youths' idealism and energy. This point was underscored to me during a recent event. A new Romani organization (created in 2012) invited me to participate in a general public education session at the Toronto Public Library to discuss the contemporary importance of historical context of Romani experiences. As the room began to fill, I worried whether there would be enough chairs. My Romani co-presenter, however, was more concerned whether more *young* people would show up. I had not realized but she was correct; the audience was mostly in their 40-70s. Fortunately, although we did run out of chairs, plenty of younger people did show up to listen. The tendency of the Romani community to focus on the need for youth participation and education is an important one, and in



many cases stems from their emphases on collective actions and desire for better futures for their families. This emphasis on youth participation and education is because Roma are attempting to break through historical and prejudicial barriers imposed on them and/or to gain access services and rights that have been denied to them for so long (such as education). The ramifications from “stolen generations” (such as through residential schooling) in other racialized minority groups are understood to not only refer to a loss of people, but the loss of culture and even identity that concentrates over time (Decle 2000; Fejo-King 2011; Garkawe 1997; Popic 2008). The effects of such actions continue to be felt today. Although Farah is below referring specifically to Palestinian and Sahrawi camps, her point that “education is key to institution-building and collective solidarities” (2009:84) is extremely relevant for Romani advocacy initiatives that seek to educate their members (especially youth). Farah explained that:

From the first years of their exile, Palestinian refugees were keen to educate their children to help them overcome their political dispossession and poverty. Whereas education was a national policy and a key component of a shared vision in the Sahrawi camps, the Palestinian refugees’ emphasis on education reflected the desire and hopes of individual families, and only informally intersected with the wider project of redeeming the homeland from occupation. National education was transmitted informally through oral transmission of family and village histories that enabled children to form strong connections to the lands their parents and grandparents were forced to leave. (2009:84)

Similarly, Romani leaders are keen on educating youth. Gina, the RCC Director, is also a teacher. She is extremely passionate about education and specifically about reaching out to Romani youth. To this end, she has initiated a great number of youth-oriented workshops, sessions, and other events aimed at furthering their education. I was able to attend one of these workshops that she coordinated in a secondary school attended by many Romani newcomer students. She brought along two well-educated Romani guest speakers who she believed would serve as good role models for the Romani youth there who were just beginning to find education important and beneficial. She described setting up this event as follows:

The vice principal of [secondary school name redacted] said “Yes”. Before he even hardly saw the flyer, he was like “Of course, yes!”. So he’s the one I’ve been responding back and forth with now. I suppose he had

that trust there [in me]. He has seen everything that I have tried to do, all the initiatives in the past, successful things that I have done for the kids. And the kids are engaged—he sees they’re engaged, they’re happy to meet somebody from their own background, someone who understands their struggle, who knows where they’re coming from. This is ideally what you talk about when you talk about education: you talk about role models, positive examples, being able to see yourself reflected in people around you. (Interview 2012)

The teenagers who gathered did seem receptive and interested in the program, even when it came time for them to open up and discuss their own stories and experiences of being Romani (and the hate that they often experienced). This is one further way that Roma are actively taking charge of their experiences and identities in order to achieve better conditions for their children in the future.

Education is not the only kind of advocacy effort undertaken by Romani individuals and organizations like the RCC, but it remains a priority. New Romani-run organizations—including the one that organized the library lecture and Romanipe<sup>103</sup>—are similarly focusing on education events (such as public lectures/talks) as an integral foundation for their messages as they build their organizations. Both of the leaders of these organizations have explained how important it is to first establish avenues for accurate information, upon which further Romani initiatives and programs may build and succeed. This process, however, necessarily entails coordination and mobilization of its own members (Section 5.2) as well as by ally advocates (Section 5.4).

## 5.2 Coordination and mobilization

“That’s when one of the greatest things we had—the most cooperation, the most Roma—in 1999, the first Roma day in Canada.” (Interview with Ronald Lee, 2011, in response to my interest in a flyer that commemorated Romani Day, 1999)

Romani advocacy efforts are complicated endeavors that draw on histories, memories, beliefs, and most of all, its members; as such, advocacy efforts are truly part of

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<sup>103</sup> A Montréal organization created in 2012 by Dafina Savic.

negotiating identity processes. Such negotiation occurs between individuals, among organizations, governmental institutions, and general society, through different forms and means of engagement and interactions (e.g., an individual contesting a governmental policy, or an organization responding to an individual statement). Organizations, however, remain a critical area where such negotiations are especially effective and contentious. As related in Chapter 4, messages coming from established groups can often carry more weight than a single voice; this is partly why people often band together when actively challenging issues. Nevertheless, individual stories are very powerful factors in bolstering advocacy efforts. An example of this could be the rallies and protests against the health care cuts for refugees: the message carried far greater weight when it was understood that many, many doctors, nurses, health care practitioners, and lawyers were also against such policies (not just refugees and their advocates). The message became stronger yet, however, when individual horror stories were shared, describing the specifics on how the cuts actually affected refugees.

As with any organization or community, there may therefore be frustrations or tensions when diverse members engage with the arduous task of promoting general and/or specific goals. For example, the following exchange posted to the RCC Facebook wall exemplifies some of the frustrations that occur as Romani-run organizations attempt to mobilize their own members even as they engage with anti-Gypsy/Roma sentiments, historical assimilation, and more:

Why won't more Canadian Roma get the hell out of their "Gypsy closets"?! Toronto is home to the largest concentrated Romani population living outside of Europe! I am deeply saddened and disappointed that no more than a handful have come forward to help our large community of refugees these past few years! (My comment was specifically referring to Roma who are either Canadian born, or who have been here for 10 years or more. People who are not needing help, but those who have the knowledge, skills, and education to help!) (Correspondence 2013)

--I wouldn't be surprised if more and more people would hide that their ancestors were refugees in Canada and forget why their ancestors claimed refugee status. I wish you all the best to be able to collect a strong team which will be working into the next

generation. Hopefully that generation won't forget that who they are and where they come from. (Correspondence 2013)

These messages show us how frustrating it can be trying to coordinate a community that has for so long been targeted (and is thus perhaps focused less on advocacy for others and more on simply surviving, as described earlier by Henry). This post also demonstrates the importance of understanding their own historical context when engaging with community projects (noted in the exchange as wanting to forget their ancestors' history versus remembering where you come from). These complicating factors are understandable; it has only been in recent times that Roma in Canada have begun actively having their own voices recognized by general media and society.

These issues are further complicated by political and assimilation processes, especially instances where educated or successful Roma have broken out of traditional stereotypes and either purposefully or inadvertently do not identify themselves as Roma or participate in Romani advocacy.

Because 80% of the Roma [in a particular region in Hungary], they were living in villages, the children walking naked in October. They don't have their own group of people who protect them. They need their own schools; they need their own restaurants; they need their own places where they can work; they need everything organized in a group by the village. If they can do this, if they have their *own* leaders, then things will be better...The problem is, we have to shine a light on the problems, we have to get the educated Gypsies, and [explain to them]: "Look, you're selling your own mother, you're selling your own father, your brothers, and sisters, just to survive"...[If we can get positions to represent ourselves,] everybody can win. Even the Hungarians will win because they won't have to support the Gypsies anymore, because the Gypsies would be supporting themselves. I think a very important aspect we need to show is the negative effects of what some of the Roma leaders are doing right now. They are 50% the cause of the problem, because they're with the non-Roma, they're pushing their own agendas...And at the same time [a Romani Hungarian representative] said that we don't have any Roma problems. He's even against all this at injustice, and yet you can see he's still dancing the way they want him to dance. (Interview with Henry, 2012, emphasis based on tone)

Henry again emphasizes the role of education (the need for “their own schools”) and overall focuses on the process wherein Romani individuals “sell out” their own community’s needs. Henry sees this as further proof that Romani leaders must be independent and remain accountable to their own community. As noted earlier, the creation of the RCC was borne out of the need by the Romani community to have a place of its own for organizing support for its newfound growing community of refugee claimants in the late 1990s. Therefore the RCC’s creation was a process coalescing out of the need of its community to deal with new issues and members (in other words, by its own members, for its own members). Since then, the RCC (as an organization and its leadership structures) has undergone significant changes; although it did operate independently for a short time soon after its creation, the majority of its existence was as an organization linked to the larger community organization CultureLink. Romani members frequently described this relationship as both a constraint and a positive influence.

One of the co-founding members of the RCC explained how important the RCC is, providing a place where Roma are actively involved in shaping the dialogue regarding Romani issues and initiating activities for the community. May was around at the beginning of the RCC’s creation and described to me the importance she felt the organization has for educational programs but also as part of a platform for voices in the community:

I think now, it seems to me, that the nightmare has kind of come to an end. There seems to be more of a common voice. And I think that’s really, really good—I think in the beginning, things were pretty amazing, and we started to make inroads with these tiny little things. Like, when I came in, they had gotten a heritage grant—the public campaign to “Call us Roma not Gypsies”, and *Romano Lil* [Roma newsletter/publication] was getting started...and it was really wonderful. And then it got bigger, and I think what happened was, people were saying, “Why are you not working for us? Why are you this tiny little clique, not doing things for the massive group of Roma who are coming here from England, from Hungary, and from that time, the Czech Republic”?

I think things now have really changed. I think Gina has been really instrumental in making that huge change. She’s young, she’s educated, I

think she has huge respect from the community, and because she's very passionate, but she's also very emotionally generous, and generous with her time, and she's not profiting off of anybody from that—she's not making a career for herself off anybody's back. I think that that is really bringing people together more... Now, people feel engaged, people feel like they have a voice, people feel empowered. And so, they know, if they say, "I think X should happen", they come, and they have every confidence through their participation that it will happen, so that's the big difference. We went through real dark ages for years, and let me tell you it was a nightmare, it was a nightmare... [There were] huge obstacles, huge obstacles. And I think, one of the obstacles was that that Czech Roma and Hungarian Roma—like, Roma from different cultural groups—they did not historically have any kind of relationship, so they were trying to figure out how to make this work [for the first time]. The people who can make it happen are the younger ones, and usually the ones who are serious about education. Because... when you get these culturally diverse Roma who have a larger perspective, they are the ones who have the luxury to be able to not be scrabbling to make a living to feed their families, they actually have an overview, so Gina is actually a perfect example of that kind of person. (Interview with May, 2012)

May provides us with not only an excellent summary of the kinds of changes that have occurred in the RCC over the years—and what that means for the community—but she also supports the point Henry made earlier regarding varying priorities ("survival mode") when understanding participation by the community. Her description illustrates part of the complex relationship between education and advocacy, as they both must overcome obstacles such as cultural differences, lack of resources/"scrabbling" to make a living, how to unite a diverse community, what characteristics are important for leadership, and more. For May, not only does community participation on education projects enable (re)learning Romani histories as an essential part of identity processes, but it is a way that demonstrates how a community can work together to create projects and respond directly to the needs of its members.

However, when discussing advocacy work (as we already saw in media-scapes), there is also often a fear of retribution by those who speak up. Many Roma cannot fully participate in advocacy programs as they would ideally like to because they have legitimate and founded fears after witnessing what happens to Roma who voice their

concerns openly. Participation by only some members necessarily skews the messages and priorities of the advocacy and community-based actions; it also denies Romani individuals the full ability to engage with each other's multi-faceted perspectives regarding education, identities, and more. Henry, having lived in Europe, understands this kind of fear and empathizes with some of the Romani newcomers:

It's very hard for [redacted] to talk about this, because the problem was that she was a leader of the Roma, she was a representative...she was afraid and she left Hungary...And you see, it's the politics, it's the same politics as when we were talking about the Indians, do you see it? It's politics. And the funny part is that recently in Hungary, a new party, they're called Jobbik—but you have to know when they started, it was with limited people, but now they have established a party to represent them themselves in Parliament. The Gypsies have one million people in Hungary and they cannot have an independent political representative in the parliament...And this is the funny part, because how is it possible that 2,000 people can be in the Jobbik party but one million people cannot represent themselves? And I think this is a very, very important question. It means every establishment status quo, the leaders: they're using the Gypsies to get money from the European Union, because if they have a cause, then they have a reason to ask for money from the European Union. The lower down you keep Gypsies, like the children walking on the streets naked, the more reason there is to ask for money...And this has been going on for 20 years, and nobody has gone to jail for this in this time. But the Roma steal a slice of bread? Ah, they use him as a special case and give him five years in jail because he was stealing. Make an example of him. Yes, when 280 billion dollars [reserved for Romani programs] is gone, ask the question who is actually responsible for it, and who should go to jail. (Interview 2012)

Henry began discussing the fear of specific individuals here and why they are reluctant to speak out, but quickly changed direction to emphasize to me how this process—this fear—keeps people from accessing justice or programs in general. The efforts involved in coordinating a community like the Roma in Europe are compounded by the silence of their more educated members (such as the representative mentioned above, who fears retribution and further targeting), as well as the purposeful limits imposed on Roma daily (who are jailed for stealing bread).

There are further areas that also affect how Roma mobilize and communicate their goals with each other. For example, speaking Romani/Romanes can be seen as a valuable identity feature, but many continue to learn the complexities and varying factors that perhaps influenced whether someone is able to speak it or not. Some may still use it as a defining identity characteristic (raising or lower the affiliation of certain members), but, as James describes, language need not be the defining factor if other conditions are met:

Julianna: It seemed like at the last Roma meeting, language was [*trails off*]

James: Yeah, it became an issue. [Redacted] is the one making an issue out of it. To me, it doesn't matter what language the Board is using, as long as it functions. I mean the Board Members who speak Romanes can discuss the issues in Romanes. But it's unfortunate—there's no way that people like [redacted] are going become fluent in Romanes even if they went and took a course. (Interview 2012)

James observes, in essence, that language does not have to be an issue, as long as decisions can get made. These differences among community members at meetings were echoed by Rachael, who described the RCC and its functioning body as a “different kind of activism” than she had participated in before. Despite its specific Roma focus, she described it as “less insular” than other activist communities with which she had previously worked: “I’m sitting around with people that I don’t necessarily agree with at all on the issues, and we don’t have the same perspective.” Although this statement may sound like the beginning of a discussion on the frustrations in attempting to mobilize or unify a diverse community, it was actually meant as praise for the community and the RCC. Rachael was cognizant of the difficulties that mobilizing a diverse community entails, and thinks that it is precisely their differences and varying perspectives that contribute to the dynamic and positive changes the RCC overall is working towards.

### 5.3 Reacting to refugee policies and legal challenges

How Roma are represented within the refugee system overall is considered very important for their community as whole (who gets to stay); this therefore also influences identity processes, community participation, and advocacy aims. I would frequently hear people consciously reacting and negotiating specific definitions of their own ethnicity and/or identity precisely because this category is reproduced through law and



immigration policy (and often defined or judged by non-Roma). Such processes have severe and life-altering consequences. I asked Lily her thoughts on any possible consequences of further refugee policy changes on Roma, and she explained that the stake are incredibly high:

It's going to be terrible. A lot of people will be sent back, and they will have no place to go. They're going to live and die in their old countries, and what country is going to take them, you know? No country will take them. Even France's socialist government is talking about having internment camps for the Roma... That is a long, slow road to fascism... Canada is kind of a handmaiden to all of that. (Interview 2012)

Lily succinctly sums up the problematic consequences of excluding Roma from national belongings (whether as refugees or as other residents) and further connects this specific problem with larger processes of political governance.

Elena further explained how the refugee process has created junctures in her family's experiences and identities (as well as demonstrates some of the unintended consequences of restrictive policies):

I can't find a job. Where can I get a job if I don't have great skill? I would get a lower job, like cleaning or something, if I could. I think, for me—I'm 22—I think things will be better for me if I can finish my education. After that, I can support my family, myself, and everything. My father says he doesn't care about the [kind of] work either, he just wants to support his family. "If I was to find a job, I would do anything—cleaning, whatever, and I would be proud to work." But there is the difficulty with the language, with the communication. When he tries to get a job—and I ask my friends in the school and everywhere to try everything—they say, "Does he speak English?"

Listen, we don't want to depend on the government on Canada. [My education here] will be beneficial, for me and also for them. And I would like to make family here, I would like to settle here and make a family. And I want my children to be proud of their mother, for them to say, "Yeah, my mom is doing good", you know?

But it's uncertain. You don't know what's gonna happen with you. You want to settle here, you want to start your life, you want to be beneficial to the people [around you]. Like, I was here for five months before I started interpreting. It was good help for people because I know how they need help—same as how I had the feeling then—but they just don't know how.

Through my knowledge of the language, I was beneficial for them. But you don't know what's gonna happen to you after the hearing, if they let you stay here or if you have to go back into hell. (Interview 2011)

As she discussed her lack of success in finding a job or being able to build a life here, she questioned why the Canadian public seemingly believes Romani claims are illegitimate and/or desiring to abuse social welfare benefits. Her perspective demonstrates that, although she clearly does not desire to be any kind of deadweight on the system, the system is (un/intentionally) extremely difficult to navigate. The consequences of obstacles to education, language classes, refugee decisions, and more end up contributing far more to her experience than perhaps some purposeful policies have had. Her experience thus demonstrates some of the many different ways that intention, governmentality, and even community identity all intertwine. Her newfound skills in English enabled her to feel good about herself and help her community and her family, and her father's lack of English skills make it near impossible for him to find work. They would be happy to invest their time and energy into building a life and learning skills, but they are "uncertain" about the eventual hearing/decision and therefore do not know where they should invest their time and energy.

Elena's, and many other Romani newcomer refugee claimants' experiences align with well-established research examining how refugees experience policy and deal with "refugeeness" throughout the determination system and in general (e.g., Harrell-Bond 1999; Lacroix 2004; Lee and Brotman 2011; Malkki 1995; Polzer 2008; Rousseau and Foxen 2010). Living in an extended state of liminality and uncertainty often wreaks havoc on a person's well-being even when not living in fear of being sent back to persecution. Such understandings, as examined in Chapter 4, are influenced by constant reproductions of bogusness or other negative and/or Gypsy stereotypes displayed in the media.

When your children ask who they are and what they are, it is so important that they be given positive information, facts that will make them proud of themselves. Gypsies get a very bad deal in the American media, and it is sometimes hard for Romani children to understand the image the media promotes. Last year [in 1992], *The New York Times* published the results of two surveys of negative American attitudes to 58 different ethnic

groups in this country over a 25 year period, and both times *Gypsies* were at the very bottom of the list. And this is in a country where most people don't even know what a Gypsy *is*; popular attitudes are obviously based not on familiarity with the real population, but with the Gypsy image. So you can see that prejudices run deep. Before the children are older, we should put some kind of pressure on television shows...to present Romani Americans accurately and fairly. (Email correspondence with Ian Hancock, Romani scholar and author, 2012)

The above excerpt was taken from an essay Hancock revisited in email correspondence. In it, he makes clear how representations reproduced through various mediums can have significant repercussions on Romani identity processes, but also with reference to all of the processes—including governance examples like refugee systems—Roma then further engage with throughout their lives.

There are many ways in which advocacy and refugee policy inform each other. However, a theme already raised by many Roma was their fear of speaking out (being as they are in especially vulnerable positions). Advocacy, as noted earlier, depends on the actions of people wanting to enact change. As such, activism and advocacy are often viewed as key components of healthy democratic participation processes (Paley 2002; Speed 2006; Vermeersch 2001:13), yet activists and advocates are simultaneously often the target of suspicion and negative attention, seemingly designed to scapegoat and frustrate their efforts. For example, in democratic nations, participation in the political process is generally viewed as a positive, at least when it comes to voting. Yet when voter advocacy groups mobilize and communicate concerns, they can be perceived as manipulative agents (e.g., accusations of ACORN<sup>104</sup> related to their supposed strategy to only register specific voters). Who is allowed to participate in democratic processes is far from a settled matter, as evidenced in part by some of the United States' lawsuits against certain states that enacted their own—more restrictive—voting laws (Bronner 2012; Mullins

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<sup>104</sup> The Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) in the US closed in 2010 after controversies regarding their voter registration drives and more. It was “a collection of community-based organizations in the United States that advocated for low- and moderate-income families by working on neighborhood safety, voter registration, health care, affordable housing, and other social issues” ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association\\_of\\_Community\\_Organizations\\_for\\_Reform\\_Now](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Association_of_Community_Organizations_for_Reform_Now)).

2013). Somewhere along the line between registering to vote and encouraging others to vote, one not only becomes an “activist” but also a perceived threat. Recently, there was an undercover police officer in the District of Columbia (DC) who purposefully infiltrated activist groups, rallies, and demonstrations that focused on sweatshop labour users (Elk 2013). The monitored activist groups were not suspected of any criminal or terrorist activities, merely voicing concern for sweatshop workers. “To leaders of some of the District’s many protest groups, the allegations offer proof of a long and deeply held suspicion: that police are running a domestic spying operation a decade after a law took effect restricting such activities. Advocates fear authorities are violating their free speech and assembly rights by collecting intelligence under the false guise of maintaining public order” (Herrman 2013). Earlier, Adam, a journalist, voiced his confusion as to why Kenney would name the activist group No One Is Illegal as an enemy; similarly, it is worthwhile to consider why DC authorities would find it necessary to monitor an anti-sweatshop group.

Even more recently, the British police targeted Grattan Puxon, long-time activist and author on Romani issues, in an investigation. His cottage was raided, laptops, books, and documents taken by police, and he was subjected to a body search and the brunt of intimidation tactics (Le Bas 2013; Roma Network 2013). There was no explanation given at the time (nor at the time of this writing) regarding why he was treated like this, beyond the fact that he is a long-time and outspoken advocate for local Traveller<sup>105</sup> groups in his area. His treatment by the police serves as a reminder to Roma all over the world—who share such examples and news widely through global listservs and online forums (as such topics are often not published in major news outlets)—that they should be justifiably wary of speaking up for themselves. Recent news also revealed that Sweden’s police created an illegal list registering Roma in Sweden, including the names and information of over 1,000 Romani children (Ek 2013; Huffington Post 2013). As described, it “is said to contain 4,029 names with information such as personal ID-number, address and known

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<sup>105</sup> A term that refers to traditionally itinerant people living in Great Britain. Their precise relationship within the larger Romani/Roma label is debated.

relatives” and “supposedly look[s] a lot like a family tree. The register doesn’t contain any criminal records...but is rather a biological register for no other apparent reason than the citizens being of this minority ethnical group” (Ek 2013).

These examples demonstrate one of the purposes that Romani advocates serve in their roles: by raising their voices to contest such treatment by authorities, they exemplify some of the major challenges they face as Romani activists. How do you effectively navigate a system that is biased against you? Does raising your voice change anything? How can you balance the need for reacting to these situations while also retaining a priority on your own community? These kinds of questions also raise the issues of representation (such as in Chapter 4) regarding how Romani refugees can be viewed doubly suspicious or inauthentic when they are *active* agents, rather than passive and/or grateful recipients. By speaking up at all about their concerns, ideas, or demands, they are immediately, and unfairly, framed in a negative light. Roma are therefore combating negative images correlated with being “demanding” when they describe their injustices as refugees. Yet their advocacy efforts have the potential to bring about policy change regarding refugee determination systems.

### 5.3.1 Representations of Romani claimants

One of the overall aims of this chapter is exploring some of the ways and methods that Roma are actively engaging with creating and producing narratives of their own (that in turn reflect and influence their identities). However, it is also important to consider two further ways that Roma are represented by others in Canada that also significantly influence identities and experiences. First, Roma are frequently categorized as particular kinds of statistics or numbers by the Canadian government; second, they are represented in the refugee system by their files, lawyers, and translators. These processes greatly influence the direction and responses of Romani advocacy.

As noted by lawyers, RCC representatives, and many others I spoke with, there appears to be a long-standing governmental strategy that purposefully reduces Romani refugee claims. Kernerman describes some of the ways in which explicit interdiction practices affect Romani refugee claims in Canada, as well as the more insidious “passive pre-

emptive” forms of interdiction (2008). The latter includes actions such as the billboard campaign previously described in Hungary, media statements, and more. “The Safe Country” list, or Designated Country of Origin (DCO) list, is one such policy implemented last year as a means to curtail refugee claimants from certain regions (such as Hungary). As described by Chris, a former IRB Member,

It sets up that the Minister can actually declare any country safe that he wants to declare safe. And the whole basis is clearly Hungary, there’s no doubt about it. I mean, there’s no other reason not to have the human rights panel anymore, and the whole reason the set-up about rejection and abandonment and withdrawal is based on Hungary... And if all else fails, you go on to the third one, which is the actual analysis of whether the country is safe, in one person’s opinion—the Minister’s. (Interview 2012)

As Kenney noted when he introduced the DCO policy, its keystone was statistics and thus supposedly not a political statement of any kind—only a logical one based on hard data. This argument, however, only works when there is a lack of transparency and advocates are not challenging and correcting this kind of proposition. Indeed, any policy based solely on governmental statistics does not hold up well: as pithily noted and popularized by Mark Twain, “there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics” (1906). Although there can be a great deal to learn from numbers and manipulation of them for understanding our interpretations of reality, relying on them as completely accurate or unbiased measures of reality is a fallacy. They are abstract concepts, translated and interpreted depending entirely on context. Indeed, there is even a concept—Simpson’s Paradox—that demonstrates how numbers and their manipulations depend entirely on their configurations<sup>106</sup>.

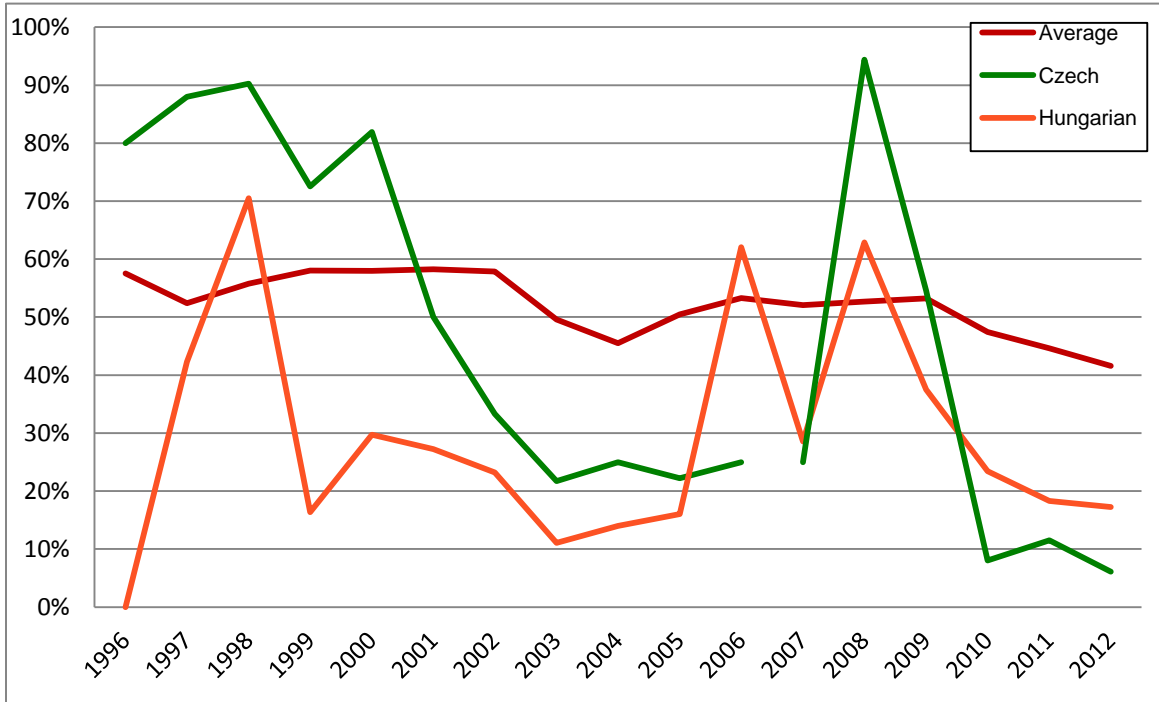
As an example in this kind of exercise, I am providing in this section a collection of graphs that I have created from data gathered from the IRB over the past few years. Data

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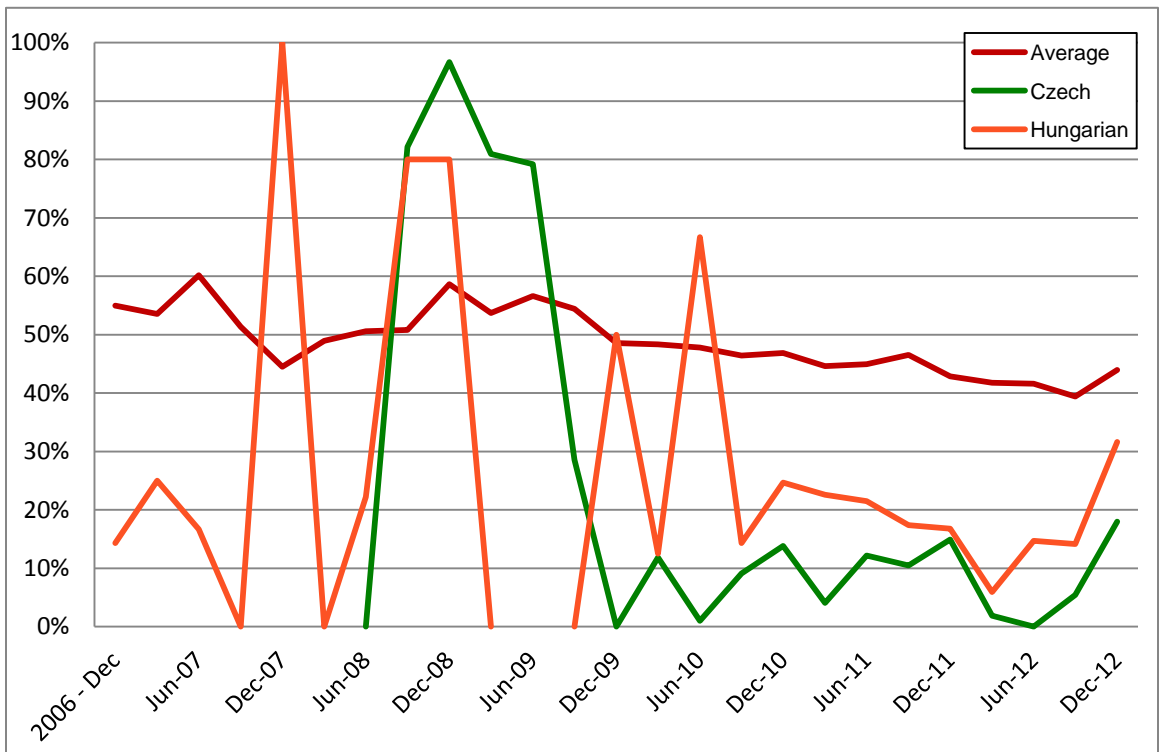
<sup>106</sup> Researchers have used this concept to prove inaccurate realities with studies on kidney stones (Julious and Mullee 1994) and smoking (Irwin 1998). Simpson’s Paradox demonstrates how large groupings of data end up with incorrect and opposite trends as observed in smaller data sets, since such manipulations frequently ignore the confounding factors in the circumstances. In the case of smoking, for example, it was proven that smokers live longer, and that low-birth-weight babies born to smokers are actually healthier (Irwin 1998). Neither of these findings is actually true, yet the data can be arranged in such a way that such a conclusion is merited. Thus, Simpson’s Paradox is a persuasive argument that demonstrates how the power of numbers may be used to bolster otherwise weak or incorrect arguments.

also offers us another window into the significance of advocacy and representation and their connections to transparency in government. I found it more and more difficult to access this data as the years went on, similar to my experience with the IRB in general. Other researchers have similarly noted a change; in fact, since the new IRB policies, getting information has been extremely slow and circuitous. Thus, numbers are significant not only for the narratives the government uses them for, but also regarding whether advocates can access and use them for their own purposes. Furthermore, Romani community advocates repeatedly told me that my work with numbers was important to them, another reason I have included this discussion. I use the following graphs to simultaneously tell specific stories, refute certain interpretations, and provide alternative narratives to those put forth by government officials.

Figure 4 illustrates the national percentages of refugee claim acceptance rates for three groups over the past 17 years: the overall national average, Czech, and Hungary. Acceptance rates are the percentage of accepted refugee claims when compared to rejected claims (i.e., a ratio of the decisions made following a refugee hearing). This same formula applies to Figure 5, which illustrates a shorter overall period of time (the last quarter of 2006 through 2012) but is more detailed, as it is based on the quarterly rates. Either of these graphs can tell its own stories, yet when they are compared to each other we can see more precisely why numbers are slippery concepts. For example, Figure 4 demonstrates how frequently Czech and Hungarian claims are below average (yet significantly spiking in certain years). Without further context, and assuming an otherwise fair and balanced refugee system, one might observe that such variances depend entirely on the legitimacy of the claims involved. However, when we include immigration policy context (such as visas and other forms of interdiction), we can understand the fluctuations in acceptance rates are influenced not only by the legitimacy of the claims themselves, but also by governmental pressures and discourse. “There are political underpinnings to the Canadian government’s strategies that restrict acceptances of claimants severely” (Levine-Rasky, Beaudoin, and St. Clair 2014:17). Therefore, I believe the addition of another set of numbers is needed for context: Figure 6, which illustrates the overall efficiency of the refugee system.



**Figure 4 - National Acceptance Rates 1996-2012**

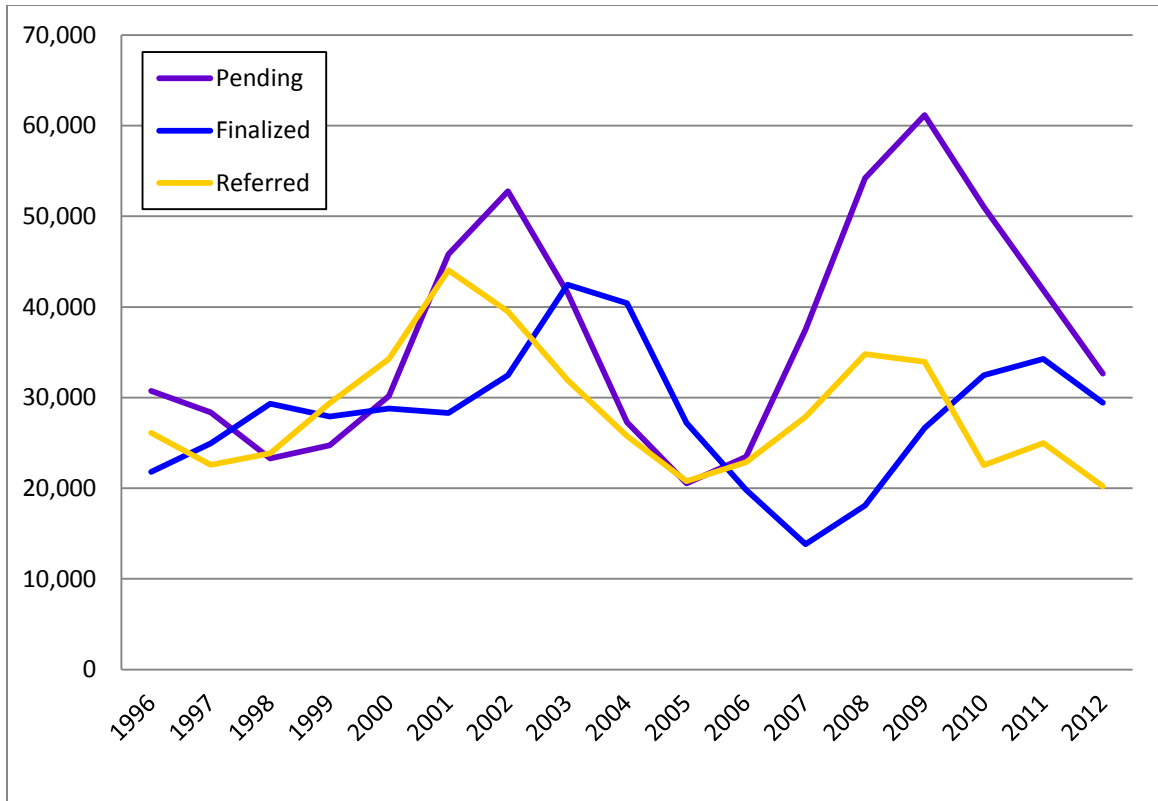


**Figure 5 - National Acceptance Rates, by Quarter, 2006-2012**



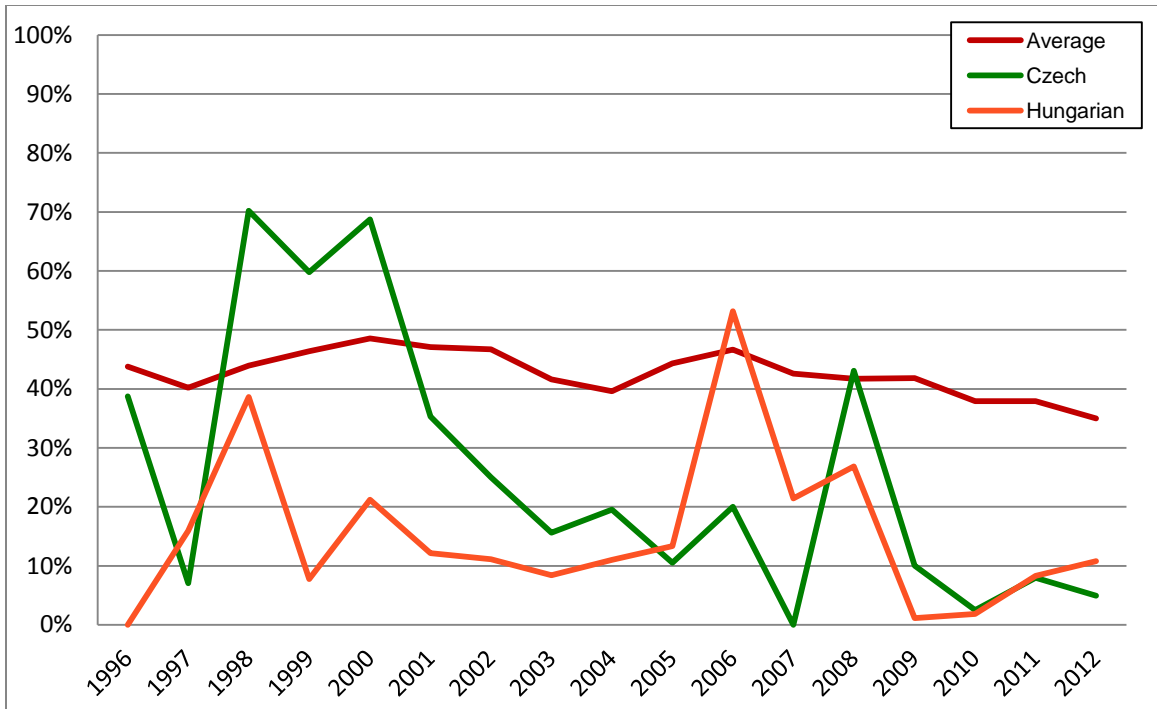
Figure 6 demonstrates the number of new claims (referred), finalized claims, and pending claims. In an ideal scenario, there would be a high number of finalized claims and a low number of pending claims, all relative to the number of incoming claims. Alternatively, all three lines relatively close together would similarly suggest a well-functioning system. However, we actually see in 2007-2010 a divergence of these lines; pending numbers reached record highs, and finalized numbers reached record lows. This is not because of any record breaking referred numbers—the system reached its highest levels of new referred claims in 2000-2003 and quickly restored balance (seen by the dropping pending line and rising finalized in 2003). Although levels are currently beginning to again converge, the extreme disparity that has persisted over the last five years can and should be understood to have severely and negatively impacted refugee acceptance rates. High pending rates and low finalized rates mean that many Romani claimants were stuck in refugee limbo. After being here for perhaps as many as four or five years, when their cases were finally heard, Board Members were already perhaps biased against their case, being under the direct influence of governmental negative discourse surrounding the veracity of their claims. This interpretation was independently raised to me by many different lawyers who were familiar with Romani refugee cases.

Returning to Figures 4 and 5, we can similarly see how quarterly figures can show a more detailed summary of what was going on during these times. For example, the Czech average acceptance rate in 2009 looks relatively successful, at 54%. Yet its last quarter of 2009 actually had a 0% acceptance rate. Although the specific causes of such fluctuations are important (examined in Levine-Rasky, Beaudoin, and St. Clair 2014 as likely due to the imposition of a visa and subsequent official discourse surrounding Romani refugees), it is also critical to point out through this more detailed quarterly break-down we can see such a stark difference in rates. Averages, by their nature, hide the specific numbers they derive from; this can be useful, and it can also be misleading. Providing day-to-day accounts of numbers would be extremely accurate, but still not get you closer to the reality of each person's experience (and why they are claiming status). Reducing people to numbers obscures a great many things. The main point I wish to emphasize here is that the story and its context matters when examining which numbers are chosen for interpretation.

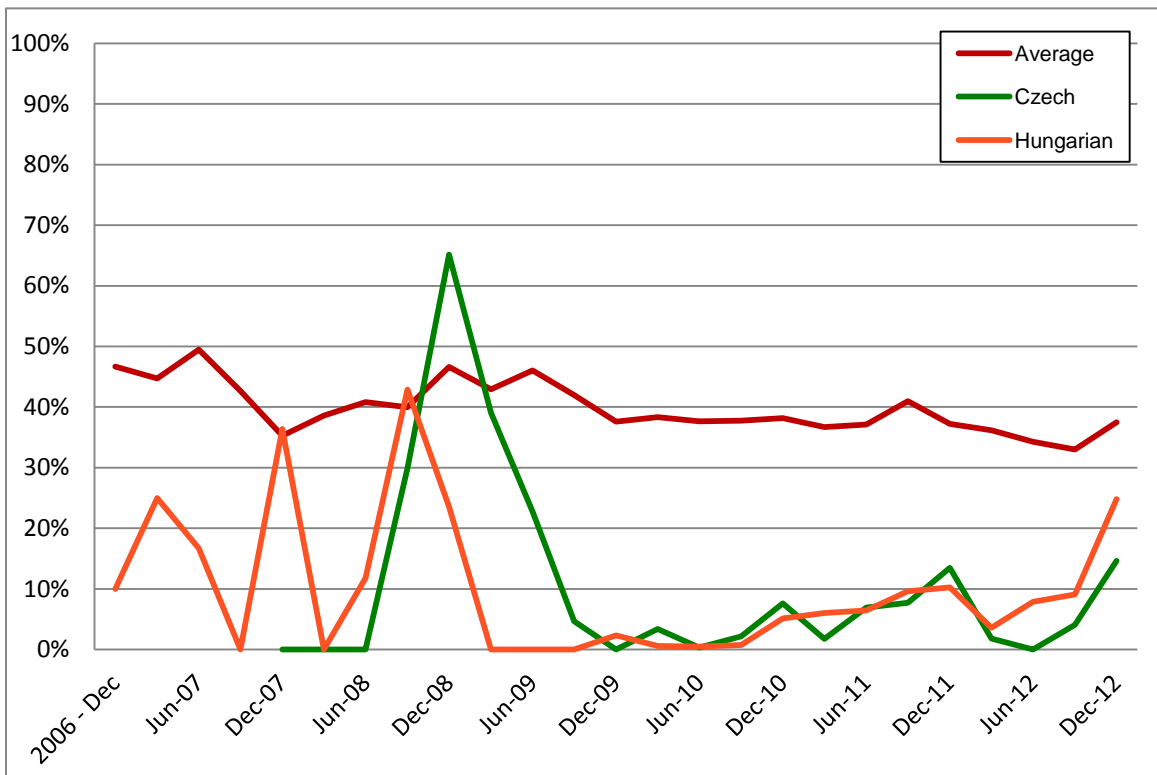


**Figure 6 - National Pending, Finalized, and Referred Claims, 1996-2012**

A further example of this unfolds when we analyze not acceptance rates, but success rates. Figure 7 can be used to complicate the earlier Figure 4: here, the success rates include all cases that were finalized, not just those that had a hearing. Each kind of number represents a different way to understand how the refugee system works, each with its own merits and pitfalls. Accepted rates demonstrate a better reflection of the results when a claimant actually has their case heard by a Board Member, while success rates offer a better reflection of the rate at which a refugee claimant successfully navigates the entire refugee process. Success rates thus include the possibilities outside of a hearing decision, understanding that a case may also be rendered withdrawn or abandoned.



**Figure 7 - National Success Rates, 1996-2012**



**Figure 8 - National Success Rates, by Quarter, 2006-2012**

There are many questions that can be raised when comparing these two different graphs. For example, why is Figure 7's acceptance rate so much lower than Figure 4? Kenney has argued that it is because of bogus claims and people who actively withdraw their claims attempting to game the system; however, many Romani advocates counter this argument and insist these numbers are not reflective of the kinds of challenges and obstacles that Romani claimants face in the refugee process. For example, only examining these statistics does not provide context regarding how such claims are processed. A major obstacle that Romani clients face is legal funding. Without funding, Romani claimants often do not have funds to pay for lawyers and thus are not adequately represented at their hearings or throughout the process. Without adequate representation, claimants may miss important deadlines and have their cases considered abandoned. The program that funds refugee claims, Legal Aid, has made many changes to its overall system. Lawyers repeatedly told me that the funding is insufficient even when granted, and moreover, the process has become more difficult for Romani claimants to receive funding. Even if they do receive funding, Ethan, a lawyer, describes below what happens next:

The problem with the system is, number one, it's rigged, it's fixed. The Board Members are not really executing their duties, and then if you lose, you have to bring a leave of application to the federal court and you have a 5% chance. And that's also rigged, that the breach of their constitutional right to judicial review...it's a joke, it really is a joke. Even if they wanted to hear all cases that are bad, they couldn't. It's just the numbers—the court feels overwhelmed. And so then to appeal from a federal court judicial review, the judge dismissing you has to give you *permission* for the judicial appeal, which is another joke. So really, it's true to Canadian form. It all looks good in form, but the substance is just rotten. And they still claim that this is the best system in the world. It's a lot of bullshit, you know, Canada always says "this is the best country in the world". And people believe it, why? Because we say it. I've seen judicial systems in countries that *they* consider 'Third World' that are better, in terms of judicial systems. And here there's a pretense that there's no government corruption. Why? Again, corruption in other countries is personalized; here, it's institutionalized. (Interview 2012)

Ethan emphasizes how numbers tell different stories based on a number of factors. Thus, it is evident that two very different kinds of statistics—yet from the same data set—illustrate different aspects of the refugee process. This pattern is further emphasized when

examined with reference to concurrent influences, such as pending and finalized rates (in Figure 6), factors like interdiction and immigration reduction policies, governmental discourse and/or motivations. For the purpose of comparison, Figure 8 (paralleling Figure 5, a quarterly break down of statistics) illustrates just how drastically the rates by quarter fluctuate, which is not as easily evidenced in the averages shown in Figure 7.

The second part of this section—although still related to statistics—regards the representation of Roma in the refugee determination process itself. Already broached by Ethan above, the Canadian government purports that its officials—when acting in an official capacity—do not influence the system with any individual biases. Researchers such as Rehaag challenge this notion, demonstrating how specific Board Members and judges affect hearing decisions and adjudication processes in numerous works (2007; 2009; 2011; 2012). Another example is the frequent assumption (which is explicitly stated by governmental documents as well) that translators are essentially interchangeable and have negligible impact on refugees' claims. That presumption is strongly contested by researchers studying the IRB system (CCR 2012; Kirmayer 2003; Rousseau et al. 2002; Showler 2006) and would presumably offend many linguists (who would likely be baffled by the assertion that a person's language choices, vocabulary, and/or dialect are all negligible factors in their communication). Not coincidentally, this is a significant issue for Romani refugees, as the interpreters translating their words may be the same people that grew up in Central and Eastern Europe where anti-Roma sentiments were commonplace (this concern is negated when there are Romani speaking claimants with a Romani interpreter). Laura, a colleague who attended a Romani refugee hearing, related how the claimants—even with their limited English—soon realized their interpreter was not adequately translating and had to request a new one. As she described how the interpreter was only translating selectively (and often erroneously), another colleague joined in, describing her own experiences. She described how interpreters often carry with them prejudices against Roma that they may not even be aware of but certainly and significantly affects the quality of their interpretations—and thus, impairs the Romani claimant's ability to have a fair hearing. This story was not a unique occurrence—I have repeatedly heard variations by Romani community members, lawyers, and colleagues.

Similarly, lawyers have a great responsibility in many ways when it comes to representing—literally—their clients. Lawyers are thus in a unique and important position when it comes to understanding the inner workings of the refugee system with specific regard to Romani claimants and cases. For example, various informants explained to me their belief that the new refugee system was purposefully redesigned to minimize their access to their clients, the claimants, before the IRB can interview them<sup>107</sup>. When discussing the upcoming changes to the refugee system, Chris, a former IRB Member had the following to say:

I think the system is as good as the people who are running it and working there...I think the RAD [Refugee Appeal Division<sup>108</sup>] won't prove to be any kind of solution to the problems that we have. I was disappointed when people came out in favor of Bill C-11 because the carrot was the RAD, and people ended up agreeing with the whole system. Even this whole thing about Designated Country of Origin, without a human rights panel, is just wrong in my opinion. Why should certain countries be designated? Very few countries could be [considered] safe for *all* the people *all* the time. So, that whole concept—the European Union is doing that, and maybe some other countries as well. That doesn't mean that it's right. So I never agreed with that to start with. Now, the best you can do is say, well, let's bring back the human rights panel, which is *so* problematic. It would still be stacked with people who are favorable to the government's position. (Interview 2012)

Justin, a lawyer who is not any more favourable to the new system than Chris, described what he has found to be the biggest differences when comparing the refugee system in Canada in the 1990s to today, especially with regard to Romani representations:

It's more political. It was always political to begin with, but I find that it's a lot more superficial now than it was back then. The fact that back in '97, '98, we'd spend a *day* trying to figure out if somebody was Roma, whereas now, somebody'll come in and say "ok you're Roma, you're discriminated, all I wanna know about is, did you go to the police?" That's

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<sup>107</sup> This opinion was repeated at various CCR meetings, as well as by many lawyers trying to predict how the new system will operate (as they were interviewed before the changes were implemented).

<sup>108</sup> As explained in Chapter 2, this department was created in 2001/2002, but never implemented, meaning claimants essentially had no appeal process. It was finally implemented as part of Bill C-31, the refugee system reform.

very superficial, as far as I'm concerned...The cynic in me would say that they are looking for some credibility; they are looking for something to hang a credibility assessment on [in order to deny the claim]...[Which] most do. Yeah, there's very few that ignore credibility entirely. Most make some—either a passing reference, or actually make it a determinant of issue, unfortunately. And with all due respect to them, they are in no better position to judge someone's credibility or not than you or I. They have no special training, as social workers, or as government lawyers, or teachers, or whatever they did in their previous lives to make that determination, and sadly, the federal court is very deferential to them. So it's hard to go to the federal court and say that the decision is wrong because they made bad credibility findings—it has to be glaring. Honestly, if the Member does a good enough job, even if it's terrible, the court will ignore it. And so, you need a *very* bad decision. (Interview 2011)

Roma hoping to successfully navigate through the refugee system now face persistent “credibility” issues that take time away from describing their experiences and overall case. I witnessed this myself; once, for example, a Board Member spent over 30 minutes repeating a variant of the question “what was your address and how long did you live there” to a Romani claimant. The claimant was confused by the attention to this specific issue, and believing it sufficiently answered, would try to redirect the discussion to his/her experiences of race-based attacks and other instances of discrimination. However, the Board Member was visibly frustrated by this, and kept returning to the question. At the time, I felt this was an attempt to find inconsistency in the claimants' story. Talking afterwards, the lawyer for the hearing concurred with my interpretation; the eventual rejection by the Board Member for this case cited credibility issues. I believe that the claimant in question was not intentionally lying about his/her residence. Rather, what occurred was more likely a miscommunication: the Romani claimant did not adequately understand the significance of the question concerning credibility issues, and this exchange was compounded by a lack of cultural awareness by the Board Member. Many Roma do not have official tenant contracts and move frequently (including reasons such as of targeted violence, lack of resources, evictions, etc.) Chris echoes Justin's assessment that IRB officials lack specialized training:

Chris: Now there's an interview process, there's an exam, there's a process—but it doesn't prevent patronage appointments. So out of those, the people who have the ties, the connections—they end up getting the

appointments. It doesn't mean that they're necessarily not good Members, I think it's more about the culture that they're brought into, and I think it's very personal thing. You know, how do you see people, what's your vision of human nature, what is your world vision? And if you see everything only from your perspective.

Julianna: I would think that would be part of the training, though?

Chris: I don't think you can train somebody like that, I don't think you can. It's almost like anti-racism training. You know, people learn what not to say to somebody different. But the point of someone completely removing their own biases and experience and putting themselves in a refugee shoes? [Understanding the refugee's perspective] has nothing to do with their good lawyer, or whether they had refugee training, or even who appointed them or how they were appointed. I think that's the main reason, the main factor that contributes to somebody making a good Member. (Interview 2012)

Whether through statistics, lawyers, IRB Members, translators, or other factors, we can understand the refugee system does not truly represent Romani voices or experiences. The eventual decision is dependent on the specific Member, the interpreter, the lawyer, while the Romani narrative—already deemed suspicious because of governmental and public discourse—is often lost in the process or actively brushed aside. This underscores my reason for including discussion on numbers/data and the role of lawyers both as critical factors affecting the representation of Roma in refugee hearings, and thus the representation of Roma overall. The refugee processes not only influences Romani identities and communities, but is a system that is being actively engaged with by Romani advocates who seek positive change. Roma in Canada understand that to effectively change the discourse surrounding the issues that affect them, they must be able to engage with this discourse. This is not a simple matter, because “oppressed groups are frequently placed in the situation of being listened to only if we frame our ideas in the language that is familiar to and comfortable for a dominant group. This requirement often changes the meaning of our ideas and works to elevate the ideas of the dominant groups” (Collins 1990:xiii). It thus takes time for non-Roma to fully acknowledge (and shift their discourses away from) frameworks that disadvantage Roma. In the meantime, Roma are beginning to contest these aspects by learning these skill sets themselves and utilizing



their allies. Henry explained to me, “until the Roma people can get on their own feet and take care of their own selves, they cannot solve this problem, and this tendency will keep them how they are.” Lily (a Romani activist) and Mike (a journalist) separately discussed how they understand the disadvantages Roma face, as well as how Roma engage with much larger issues when attempting to change this situation.

They have been very marginalized—the problem now is that a lot of people who are coming over are not particularly well educated. I mean, they’re working people, and they don’t have a high education, they don’t have the luxury of looking around the city and thinking, “this ethnic group is also experiencing what I am experiencing, we should get together, and share our experiences and stick together”. This is something that I think the Hamilton Roma group is very good with, they’re working with [redacted], partnering with these organizations that *have* a voice, and with other immigrant and refugee groups that are also involved. In Toronto, we’ve been very slow to do that...[The government helps] keep them down—it’s like low intensity warfare. It’s not full out bombing, but it’s keeping you just anxious enough that you are just treading water all the time and it’s a luxury to even go to a meeting with other groups who are experiencing [these things]. (Interview with Lily, 2012)

Julianna: So how can the average person engage with policy?

Mike: I think wage protection is a good place to start, because I think if you have someone who can barely make ends meet, who can’t afford the luxury of participating in politics—I think it starts with a lot of social changes. And it’s probably a good change that now in Ontario, we have full-day kindergarten, right? So that could be a relief for some parents, some free time for social activism, for example, and, you know, the protection of union rights is also important because it helps to maintain a wage standard, so people can have more stability in their life to find the time to engage. (Interview with Mike, 2012)

Both Lily and Mike note that it is hard for groups to create their own agendas when struggling with issues like survival and/or deeply ingrained discriminatory processes. With this in mind, it is therefore also important to examine factors that influence and affect the directions of Romani advocacy efforts and dialogues, such as allies and partnerships.

## 5.4 Perspectives on ally relationships

The act of advocating for a certain group relies heavily on the processes of representation, as well as boundary making, since definitions and lines are continually drawn with reference to the particular focus of the advocacy being done. As already noted, Romani communities often struggle with how to best represent themselves and their diverse members; these issues often become even further complicated when Romani individuals and communities coordinate with a range of external or non-Romani agents. McGarry examines this in his work (2008; 2010), and Vermeersch (2005) has similarly examined the growing range of agents—and their successes and failures—that have tried to take up Romani rights advocacy projects. Significantly, Vermeersch notes that “activists who take up the cause of marginalized and discriminated cultural groups often find themselves in an ambiguous position in relation to the very people whose interests they seek to represent” (2005:451). McGarry echoes the important point that ethnic group identity processes are deeply intertwined with interest groups and advocacy projects, (while similarly cautioning against the assumption that Roma share a definitive or cohesive identity) (2008:450). Milosh, a Romani-Canadian, describes how Romani ethnicity is (mis)understood in these terms, especially when homogenizing such a diverse community:

I think another reason for general apathy among non-Roma is that too many of them don't see us as a genuine ethnic group and see us more as “hippies” or a collection dropouts or misfits. The latest slew of *Big Fat Gypsy Time* [sic] idiot-box shows and other misinformation documentaries are not helping since it is obvious this variegated collection of people shows from Irish Travellers to Vlach Roma can't be one ethnic group. These shows are deliberately aimed to proving that whatever happens to us is our own fault, thus blaming the victims. (Interview 2011)

Milosh zeros immediately in on the consequences of homogenizing labels and racist discourse, such as the perpetuation of misinformation among non-Roma that leads to apathy towards human rights and justice for Roma (a “victim blaming” cycle). Thus, we can see how and why the impacts of non-recognition—combined with erroneous propaganda or misinformation—towards Romani ethnicity are critical processes that can ultimately damage individuals and communities. He also raises an important point,

exploring possible reasons why non-Roma are apathetic towards Romani advocacy messages. Therefore, it is evident that such relationships are complex and complicated. Just as there is no single Romani experience or opinion, there is no single advocacy experience—or relationship with allies—either.

The following sections represent two critical ways in which I witnessed non-Romani allies enacting and participating within activist relationships with Roma in Canada. This is not a comprehensive list (for example, it does not include the lengthy and complicated ally relationships with some Jewish communities), merely some of the significant projects or exchanges that evoked passionate responses from Romani community members when discussing identity and representation issues. Through these examples, I illustrate some of the ways in which Roma actively work with others as they maintain their own priorities (e.g., education) and engage with external pressures (e.g., negative policy changes).

#### 5.4.1 “In the eye of the storm”: Lawyers as allies

I don't even know what is the best approach—should I focus on the legal and illegal challenges? Focusing on the advocacy is hard, because for me, it's a new venture. To have to oppose the government to such an extent—it was never like this before. And you know, we're up against the Minister with, well I don't know how big his staff is, but it includes professional strategists and professional PR people sitting there, waiting to pounce. And here we are, lawyers or community activists, not really with the same equipment. (Interview with Alison, 2012)

The role of lawyers as allies or catalysts for Romani advocacy is significant because they already play an important part in Romani experiences in Canada (as described in Section 5.3.1). Their experience in legal settings makes them valuable and powerful contributors to advocacy projects, and the RCC has mostly welcomed their increased presence as advocates and/or allies. However, it is interesting to consider lawyers' own contexts and obstacles: Why did they go beyond legal representation to advocate on behalf of the Romani community? How they are affected by, and in turn affect, Romani communities, involvement, and sense of identity? What insights might lawyers have when it comes to reflecting how Roma are framed in Canadian policy? I found that listening to lawyers

was helpful for understanding how policies work in practice, since they engage with this process on a daily basis, and with a range of clients.

I think what I connected through the first set of clients, and then more clients, and more clients, from what I saw after practicing for so many years, is that Roma clients have as much or more merit than many of the other communities. In terms of what's going on in the country, in terms of what people have personally faced themselves or for generations, and in terms of what they're being met with in Canada. So I was interested and motivated to get involved with them. Also being a new community, where they don't have the services that other communities have had... They just don't have the same services. I kind of came in, in the eye of the storm [*laughs*] you know, all this influx, in the middle of all this, all swirling around them, not understanding anything about what to do. And the government, as I've said, I'd never seen something so problematic. So for me personally, the combination of all these factors really motivated me to get involved. (Interview with Alison, 2012)

Alison frames her own involvement as stemming from one of sympathy for those who are unfamiliar with (and possibly facing bias within) the refugee system, as well as in terms of her own sense of justice and how she sees the Canadian government as unfairly positioned against Roma. Another lawyer described how he got involved by focusing on his historical understanding of Romani experiences in Europe:

I'm from Europe, I know my history. And I know [Roma] suffered in the Holocaust, and I know their history, and I know they came from India, and I know all of that—I already knew about what the Roma were experiencing. But I didn't know it was so bad that they felt they had to leave now... Yeah, so, it wasn't total news to me. I didn't know the extent of the persecution—that was a bit surprising, when I did the research. I knew they were very heavily discriminated, and that they were victims of the Holocaust, but I had no clue that it hadn't changed or improved since then ... When they started coming over, nobody wanted to touch their cases 'cause they laughed at the idea that there were refugees from Europe in the 90s. So I started doing them, and we were getting very high success rates, in the 90<sup>th</sup> percent, which comes from when you look at the facts about what was going on. And then in 1998, the board got the bright idea that this was a no-go, despite the high acceptance rates, and they contrived the so-called Hungarian lead case. That was in '98, that was a response to the Hungarian complaints to Canada about the acceptance of Hungarian Roma as they were trying to enter the EU this time. (Interview with Ethan, 2012)

Many lawyers shared similar stories, explaining how they had been vaguely aware of injustices against Roma, but were only spurred to action after they began receiving more and more Romani clients who described terrible stories of persecution and violence.

I had the pleasure of knowing many dedicated lawyers who worked hard to represent their Romani clients and often became part of a larger ally network. However, it is important to note that the kind of lawyers that became involved with Romani advocacy work does not represent all lawyers who worked with Romani clients. Many Roma expressed concern and frustration about their lawyers, who they felt were not doing an adequate job. One informant called them “predatory shysters”, and I soon learned to ask newcomer Romani refugee claimants what their lawyers had told them about the hearing process. I was initially shocked when they would explain how their lawyer had not explained anything of the process to them—all they knew was to show up at the IRB office at a certain time, and that was it. I often found myself requested to call or otherwise get in contact with certain lawyers by Romani claimants, who said they could not reach them. It was frustrating and added further fear and worry in what is already a harrowing experience for refugee claimants. There are thus many ways that lawyers may impact Romani representations and identities (whether literally in the courtrooms, or more indirectly by influencing their success rates and experience of the refugee process).

#### 5.4.2 “We don’t live in a perfect world”: Working with the police

Perhaps the first ever mutually-participatory partnership between a Romani-run organization and police forces in the world was created in Toronto in 2011-2012. The RCC Director could not recall anything like this existing before in Canada. It is important to remember the unfortunate role that police have played in Europe, inadequately protecting Roma from racist attacks and injustice, and/or even targeting Roma themselves. Yet the RCC soon found itself in a project with police that highlighted many of the varying influences and motivations that affect community identities and relations. This connection grew organically out of the continued contact between a few dedicated police officers already sympathetic to Romani community issues. At a summer picnic in 2010, it was interesting to see how Romani children clamored for the chance to wear the attending police officer’s hat, or get a look inside his flashing cop car parked nearby.

Meanwhile, their parents stood tentatively off to the side, enjoying the spectacle but clearly having mixed emotions about interacting with the police.

A police officer who already knew the RCC Director contacted Gina when a grant application arose and discussed the possibility of a partnership. I was soon enlisted as a volunteer to assist in writing and implementing the grant<sup>109</sup>. It was the first major grant the RCC was to receive in the recent past, and its very first grant as a newly independent office. By itself, this was significant because many other major granting agencies have made it clear that they do not award large (if any) sums of money to organizations that are “untested” as large grant recipients. Already looking to the future, we figured that this police partnership grant involving the Toronto and York region police would enable better chances for RCC grants from potential sources, not to mention the immediate benefits of having project money in the community and the education-gearred events that the RCC wanted to implement.

However, the idea of a project with police (and its implementation) brought varied responses and caused some dissention among the Romani community and RCC Board. Although I had a semi-official position with this grant as an assistant, and I often accompanied Gina to meetings with various police officers and locations, I understood the reasons why some community members did not like this project. The following is an excerpt from an interview with Alex, a Romani community member, that I have reproduced at length to illustrate some of the ways identity processes become entangled with on-the-ground projects organized by community organizations (in this case, by the RCC and the police).

Alex: The hardest thing for me? The whole relationship with the police, actually, has been the hardest. Well, I just—politically and ethically—would never partner with the police. And I feel like [other] community and organizations [dealing with similar issues] with would never do that, and it really delegitimizes us, all of them.

Julianna: In what sense?

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<sup>109</sup> At that time, the RCC had not yet formed its grant writing committee, and I had volunteered from time to time to help the RCC revise their grant proposals.

Alex: In that, 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? What role are we playing in promoting police to young Roma so that they'll want to become cops? So, all of those kinds of things. And yeah, I'm not cautious about how I feel about it politically, I mean, I'm cautious about my own personal experiences. I mean, I was talking with a friend of mine who is a criminal lawyer, and she was like '[Redacted], it's okay, the police already know who you are, you don't have to be worried about it'. But I'm very close with the folks who were up on conspiracy charges during the G20, they had their houses bugged, they get infiltrators in their organizations, they served long prison sentences for just things that they said and the ideals that they promote, not even an action or anything or violence, just words that they said. We know that multiple immigrant and refugee organizations and activist groups are actually under surveillance now, that's all been coming out, so. [*Pause*] Yeah, I think it's really dangerous for our legitimacy, but it's hard, because I understand the individual officers have had really good intentions and we were able to do some really positive work with them and the grant. And you know, I believe the argument that those are really good cops, and for me, I believe it, they're probably good guys. But I think they're misguided to think that they can make and create positive change from within policing. I generally believe that they are trying, that's not the issue for me... For me, it's ethical, it's just the tarnishing of the name through the partnership that is not worth it to me... I just think that being human rights activists, you're defending migrant rights or being a progressive organization, and shouldn't have formal relationships with police, and fascists, and Nazis [*laughs, trails off*]

Julianna: That idea of authority is linked? I mean police, and fascists, and these kinds of things?

Alex: Yeah, they're linked in concept, and they're linked in that the police kill people in Toronto every week. They kill people from racialized communities every week—they kicked [Redacted] 85 times before he died in Parkdale. He was a Hungarian guy who had mental health problems, who was murdered. He freaked out and had a mental health crisis at a 7-11 in Parkdale. I suspect he was Roma, but they said in the media he was Hungarian, and he was kicked in the body 85 times by police officers until he died. And all of those officers were acquitted. And you see, you know, like, I bet when we're at CSIS, demonstrating on the 18th, they'll have

their badge numbers covered up, like they all did during the G20. I had friends who were threatened with gang rape during the G20.

Julianna: I've read some of those stories...so you know a lot of those people?

Alex: Yeah, I know a lot of them, so it's been a really emotional time, for everything that they've gone through. And yeah, I have two close friends who are serving time right now for the G20 because they...did a workshop where they talked about arresting people, and they're serving time for promoting that unlawful idea. So, it's really emotional for me, that I don't want police at RCC board meetings or at an event...Given that it's come out that other groups have been under surveillance, like phone tap, wiretaps, in the past few years, and I'm scared to say this, but, do I 100% believe that they are *not* surveying us through the printer they gave us? No, I'm not. And I don't think that's actually a leap, given some of the tactics that we have seen in the last few years. [Redacted: reference to a fellow Romani community member's family history regarding known surveillance in the past and how this RCC member also feels nervous about police partnerships.] Also, every single time there's a deportation order, and they don't show up, a warrant is issued for their arrest and the Toronto police can pick them up on that warrant, right? So, for us to be defending community members, and then have a partnership with the exact same—perhaps even same officers—but definitely same organization, that is like kicking their doors in and deporting them. It's pretty problematic. And despite those few officers' good intentions, you cannot guarantee us that their relationship with the organization is not going to lead into information that is going to get us a family deported, right?

Julianna: And what would you say, when they say that it is separate? That they don't do that?

Alex: Well, they won't say that. I asked, explicitly, and they said, "That's not why we're here, we really want to have good connections". But they won't say, if you say, "Can you guarantee that this partnership will never lead to an arrest in our community?", they can't, because largely, it would be out of their hands.

Julianna: So in the future, no kind of police partnership would be ideal?

Alex: Yeah, that's what I would want. I would feel most part of an organization that felt strongly about that...The thing is, we don't live in a perfect world where we don't need police yet. We haven't built our own



alternatives, so that you would never have to rely on them. So, I think there are probably some scenarios where us having a few contacts with some police officers helps our community members who are the victims of an assault or who have been robbed or whose children are beat up at school. But I also think [*pause*] because we, the community, have been so excluded from any decision-making, so excluded from any formal institutions, that the power of having a connection is so seductive that, like, you know, that having a Roma member on the community policing accountability—do I think that that person is going to rat out other members of the community? Yes I do, because that’s why those committees exist, right, so neighbors can come and snitch on their neighbors. So I do think that it just feels *so* good to have someone listen to you, someone with *power* to listen to you, another *man* listen to you, that I get it, why it’s hard to turn down when this powerful institution wants to have a relationship and listen to you. But, we’re not living in a political context right now with the powers that be are trying to make things better for people, so even if there’s some good cops who would like to, they are on the police force that is going to enforce Bill C-31. (Interview 2012, emphasis based on tone)

Alex elaborated on the reasons why a partnership with police is dangerous and perhaps not beneficial to the Romani community. Alex also echoes Henry’s earlier call for independent leadership and Romani-run alternatives. However, I find the final point most telling: because of traditional power imbalances—especially concerning long-vulnerable and excluded Romani individuals—a police partnership is “seductive” precisely because it “feels so good to have someone listen to you”. The potential dangers from this, as described above, include arrests (with possible violence), surveillance, giving information on fellow community members, and deportations. In other words, putting the community at risk for these things is not worth the money or contacts from the project.

Such sentiments have been echoed by other community members, including the individual referenced above (redacted in Alex’s excerpt; this person has a troubled family past with state surveillance measures). Although the extreme suspicion felt by these individuals may seem unwarranted to the general Canadian population (such as the fear of printer surveillance), it may be helpful here to recall the examples from the beginning of this chapter describing the infiltration by police of advocacy groups. With specific reference to the Toronto police, some recent and concerning incidents raised by Romani

and refugee advocate contacts include: the arrest of a police officer for second-hand murder involving the shooting of a man in a Toronto streetcar in 2013 (D'Souza 2013); disciplinary action against a Toronto police sergeant for allegation of homophobic and sexist remarks during the G20 summit (Poisson 2012); a report by the Office of the Independent Police Review Director detailing many further officers involved in breaching constitutional rights, unlawful arrests and unnecessary force when dealing with G20 protesters (Perkel 2012); and the delay of the trials of two Toronto police officers accused of unlawful force because the province's Special Investigations Unit was not notified by the police (Kari 2013). The recent proof of the United States National Security Agency's controversial surveillance measures<sup>110</sup> fit the pattern of the kind of authoritative actions that community members fear. Thus, it is understandable to view such opinions not as extremist paranoia, but rather, a well-founded suspicion of authority that has repeatedly breached various communities' trust.

Perhaps no group in Europe has felt the effects of negligent and even targeted action by police forces more than the Roma. Such experiences are well documented by reports from the UN Torture Committee (Anon. 2006), International Federation for Human Rights (Anon. 2012), Amnesty International (2013), and the World Organization Against Torture (Anon. 2008). Below, Elena describes her father's experience trying access police protection in the Czech Republic:

But the attacks, they were verbally and physically almost every day. Really. if I were to count, or have to tell you our lives and how many attacks we had, we'd be here very long time. For example, [after an attack on her father in public] he went to the doctor, our doctor, the one who knows us, and he called the police. He waited there for many hours, he was very nervous, you know, look at what happened, and now he has to wait so long for help. So he decided to go on his own to the police station, and he asked, "Why didn't you help me, I asked for help?" They sent him home... The second day, he decided to go to the police station again, and

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<sup>110</sup> It was recently shown that the NSA has been collecting a vast amount of information from phone calls and internet use from the public since shortly after the 9/11 attacks. The U.S. Government still has this program designated as "classified" but various whistleblowers, admissions by government officials, and investigative efforts continue to release information on this program. For more resources, see CBS (2014) EFF (2014).

to make the reports about this attack. And they said, “Nothing happened, nobody was here” [meaning he had not tried to file a report the day before]. And they accused him of lying. So that’s why he says, “I don’t care, even if something happens, I don’t go to the police, because they don’t help”...It’s like a circle. They attack you, you look for help, but you can’t find it. And again, and again, and again. (Interview 2011)

In another part of the interview, Elena explained further what police do when Roma try to report crimes: “After the attacks, when we came to the police, the police said, ‘What do you want? You are alive. What more do you want?’”

There are many historical and contemporary reasons for Roma to distrust the police. This tension actually forms part of the catalyst for the partnership with the police in Canada: one of the explicit goals was to encourage communication between the community and officers, as well as educate Roma on their rights. The RCC wanted a way to demonstrate to its community that police in Canada will not treat Roma as they have been treated in Europe (instead, when Roma experience discrimination or are the victims of a crime, they have rights here that will be upheld). The RCC reinforced this message in various ways, including police officer liaisons in attendance at general community meetings who would introduce themselves (for example, one officer spoke Hungarian and could address many community members in their own language). Furthermore, such liaisons encouraged Romani community members to come to them with any issues they were having. The RCC also held the final project event at the downtown Toronto police headquarters so as to facilitate Romani familiarity with police services. At the event, Romani community members performed activities with officers, learned about the overall jobs of the police, and spent many hours interacting with officers and volunteers who specifically explained how Roma would be treated in Canada (i.e., with constitutional rights).

Gina, as the RCC Executive Director who spearheaded the police project, has overall had positive feelings and reactions regarding the police involvement and project. However, in the beginning she was hesitant, which demonstrates how even strong opinions may change in different circumstances, and with them, people’s own senses of identity.

A space became available on the police community liaison committee for [redacted] and he asked whether or not the Roma community wants to take a seat on this committee. So [s/he] attended the first meeting, being a

voice for the community...Such a landmark, right? That's huge. That's huge to put in the report, that that's one of the things that came out of this partnership, that we now have somebody [as a community liaison]...We have so many good things that came out of this. We haven't gotten into the schools like we wanted to yet, and we're still producing materials, but a lot of good things happened. Like relationship-building, and getting to know each other. Before this project, I didn't even want to work with the police [*laughs*]. You know what I mean? We got really lucky with our police officers though. Oh my God, amazing. I didn't even *like* police officers before this project. And I absolutely *love* [redacted]. Talk about having...awesome guys to work with. (Interview with Gina, 2012)

Through her work with the community here in Canada, as well as her previous NGO experience in Hungary, Gina was very aware of the potential problems entangled with working with police. However, she came to believe that possible risks did not outweigh the benefits, in contrast to the opinion expressed earlier by Alex. Yet this does not mean the two are at odds with one another in the RCC regarding community advocacy efforts. In fact, Alex highly praised Gina's performance as a Romani community leader, such as describing how "I love how she used [winning the Diamond Jubilee Award] to make her case for Roma rights, she spun it really well. Yeah, I think she did a great job with that". That example references Gina receiving an award from the Queen in 2012 in recognition of her community involvement; she used the opportunity as a platform to passionately call out the Canadian government and officials who continue to disparage Romani refugee claimants.

The police partnership with the RCC therefore spurred a range of reactions by community members. On the one hand, I met with some who ended up greatly respecting and admiring the individual officers with whom the RCC worked. On the other hand, others believe their fellow Romani community members may be negatively impacted by such a connection with the authoritative arm of the same Canadian institutions that perpetuate discrimination against Roma. Perhaps, as many Roma have told me and I have focused on in this chapter, education is the key. Education not only of Roma, on their own histories, culture, language, and more, but education of non-Roma, who need to learn how and why Gypsy stereotypes do not reflect Romani realities. To this end, I was happy to take part as a guest speaker at the Toronto Police headquarters alongside Gina in

an opportunity to brief the officers on who the Roma are, why there has been such an increase in Romani refugees in Toronto, what their history is, and how Roma are continuing to experience discrimination. However, the day started off on a sour note, when I happened to be in the elevator with a Romani community member (invited to attend the talk) along with several officers. The officers clearly did not realize we were guest speaker and invited Romani guest, respectively, and they made racist jokes and/or comments about “Gypsy criminals”, wondering out loud what good this talk would do to help them “catch” people. To my chagrin, I was not as forceful as I wish I had been, when I cleared my throat and stated, “That is actually the kind of thing we’ll be discussing today, and I hope you’ll learn why it is wrong to assume ‘Gypsies’ are criminals”. Even this mild correction caught in my throat a little, despite the fact I am a native English speaker, Caucasian-looking, and a landed immigrant with limited fear of deportation/retribution. The Romani contact in the elevator with me, however, was currently waiting on his refugee decision, and though he could speak English fairly well, it was not his first language, nor was he completely fluent. It was also his first time in police headquarters, surrounded by officers who, not long ago in his home country, actively contributed to the violence that made him flee. If I had not gone down to meet him, he would have been alone in the elevator with those same officers, making these comments. I felt ashamed for their words, though they were no fault of my own. This incident invoked many of the issues I have struggled to reconcile through my various roles in the community as researcher, volunteer, coordinator, and ally. I bring up this experience to highlight the complicated ways that relationships and community involvement with other actors can emerge. I ended up at the presentation as an authority on Romani issues, conducting a Question-and-Answer period by myself despite not being Romani. Despite my normally fierce and unapologetic stance regarding stereotypes and fair treatment, I was caught off guard in the elevator and found it hard to raise my voice against people perpetuating the very stereotypes I was there to help dispel. The ways in which a community seeks assistance from allies and partners is a significant part of advocacy and activism, and does not necessarily detract from a sense of Romani identity and community. However, there are many obstacles, challenges, and unexpected

consequences whenever a group begins and engages with the long and arduous path of self-representation and action.

This point leads into the consideration that a partnership with police seemingly legitimized their advocacy efforts to people unfamiliar or unsympathetic to Romani rights. This project thus also provides a window into the kinds of negotiations that happen when the Romani community is involved with representing themselves to authorities and the general public. The very existence of the partnership between Roma and the police required justification by Gina and others to non-Roma who were not familiar with Romani representations of themselves or working with perceived powerful partners like the police. For example, Gina describes the reaction of a secondary school principal she dealt with who she felt often dismissed her because she is Romani. Gina recalled trying to coordinate another school outreach for Romani students; instead of wanting to know about the police project, the principal implied that Gina and the RCC did not have an actual partnership with the police:

The principal [asked the police officer], “How did [the RCC] get the logos?”, and “Where did [the RCC] get the approval from the Toronto police to be participating in the project?”. Like, the way that she was asking was not supportive in any way. So I couldn’t believe it, the way she was acting! And instead of asking about information more about the project, and what we were going to be doing, she was hung up on the point—“How did [the police] even get this participation with these Roma?” (Interview with Gina, 2012)

Justifying the fact that Roma do have connections beyond their own community, and that people outside the Romani community are willing and eager to work with Roma, has sometimes proved to be a difficult situation for Gina and others to explain. It certainly influences the experience for many Roma involved, as they are required to defend their community relationships.

In closing, it is clear that Roma face myriad challenges and obstacles in their goals of establishing positive-Romani spaces and messages in Canada. Who they associate and/or form relationships with as allies further complicates these dynamics. However, this also stands as further demonstration of the need for nuanced and contextual understandings

for how Roma engage, interact, negotiate, and challenge aspects of their representations and identity processes at various individual and collective levels. This similarly relates back to our understandings of boundaries and the varying intentions and consequences when people “speak for” Roma. Lynn Hutchinson Lee, a Romanichal<sup>111</sup> artist, responded to a related question on these topics. I asked Lynn about her feelings about non-Roma representing Roma, such as advocacy partners and writers. I asked in general, but I was also concerned about my own role, and I wondered how she felt about this dissertation:

Well, I think it depends so much on people’s intent—what people are bringing to this kind of experience. For instance, there was [redacted], who taught at [redacted] University, who did huge amounts of research on Roma, and was very, very highly respected by Roma...I think that there absolutely is a valuable role for non-Roma in these kinds of things. Because, the research that you do may very well prove to be of vital importance to a young Romani university graduate later on down the road. Like when we had a piece in the Roma Pavilion, [redacted] and I last year in Venice, there were two original curators. One was Romani, one was not Romani. The Romani curator left the project suddenly, and the non-Roma curator continued to work with us. My colleague and I had a great deal of respect for her, because we knew that she would fight, she *had* fought for us. It got handed to somebody else, but [redacted] fought for us, so we had a great deal of respect for her. So I think, you know, writers and reporters like [redacted]—We need that, we absolutely need that.

You see, is it representation or is it solidarity? Solidarity is really something to be respected and sought after I think, because we need people—we need people who will get facts and analyze them, get an understanding of it—sociologically, historically, more. And we need that information. (Interview with Lynn, 2012, with permission to use her name; emphasis based on tone.)

I had not made a conscious acknowledgment of the difference between representation and solidarity before Lynn explained it this way. It draws on intentionality, but allows a nuanced understanding that does not ignore the complicated and often contentious arenas like historical knowledge, governance, stereotypes, and more.

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<sup>111</sup> A specific group of Roma who primarily live in the United Kingdom.

Romani advocacy is simultaneously about how Roma respond to others' framing of them, while fighting for the opportunity to create their *own* arguments and discourse. Indeed, Roma in Canada serve as a unique dynamic for observing how an exoticized and marginalized group is challenging the long-held notion that "Gypsies don't want 'in'" (Gmelch 1986). Roma in Canada are striving for an integrated space in the Canadian advocacy and media-scapes, albeit one on their own terms, with their own changing and flexible definitions and representations. Many Romani groups in Europe are actively fighting for similar issues; however, they face substantial resistance even for the acknowledgment that Roma deserve human rights protections and thus their foci need be more immediate concerns such as police brutality and segregated education. Roma in Canada—although disparaged with Gypsy stereotypes—occupy a unique position. From all regions, languages, ages, religious affiliations, and more, Roma are finding new ground for expressions and productions of their ethnic identities through their focus (and successes) on education and youth, as well as their work with allies. Romani advocacy in Canada remains a contested space, but one that holds potential for global Romani advocacy.

Tying together issues including education, connections across communities, and creating positive Romani identities through advocacy, I conclude this chapter with Livia's perspective below. It is an excellent summation of how where Roma have come from, what they currently face, and part of their hopes for the future all are woven together when considering their identity:

For me, I'd rather us have an identity as a community that came together to fight for human rights and to maintain that identity rather than be defined as a community that assimilates really well or maintains a distinct identity by, you know, being really sexist [*laughs*] or, you know, doing our damndest to not learn to read. Not that I'm trying to say that across the community—my grandparents don't read, they didn't ever have the opportunity [to learn], but they didn't pride themselves on it either. That was just the fact of it: that they didn't go to school. So, I do think that if you look at other communities struggling to survive in a colonial context, like if you look at what's happening in Palestine, how identity is being preserved in Gaza and in the West Bank, this is such an important point. (Interview with Livia, 2012)



Livia emphasized that her preferred form of Romani identity as a community is one that strives for human rights; she also directly contrasts her vision with that of historical perceptions of Romani identity processes such as assimilating well (as other informants similarly regarded “passing”), being sexist, or illiterate. She reinforces the significance that the lack of education has had on her family’s past, while she herself looks to the future potential for how education-focused advocacy efforts can perhaps bring together Romani community members in productive and beneficial ways.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

### 6 Introduction

We need someone to just look at it and say what's happening. (Interview with a Romani-Canadian community member, 2012)

I was trying to do something for the community. A huge injustice has taken place and I feel morally obligated, if I'm capable, to do something about it. (Interview with Gina Csanyi-Robah, RCC Director, 2012)

This dissertation has sought to examine how Romani identity processes can emerge and be instrumentalized to struggle against discrimination, essentialized stereotypes, and exclusionary policies and attitudes. I contextualized these processes with respect to the tensions and relationships that Roma experience with internal and external forces (such as community organization and government policies, respectively). Much like the sentiments expressed by the two Romani individuals in this section's epigraph, this project was borne out of a desire to both record what is happening and make a small contribution to making Romani voices and concerns more public. However, it was also (necessarily) complicated by ever-changing dynamics and understandings of boundaries, communities, ethnic identities, and more. Roma in Canada span all metrics, from age, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, linguistic group, religious affiliation, legal status, and more, yet also contribute to and identify with a sense of collective Romani-ness. This collective identity, however, is *not* homogenous and is not necessarily dependent on particular notions of sameness. In fact, as witnessed through the Romani excerpts in this work, differing experiences and perspectives can actually strengthen Romani identity processes (perhaps precisely because they persistently and critically question what it means to be Roma in different contexts).

As Roma in Canada engage with other Roma throughout the world, these engagements become further complicated, while also providing opportunities for all involved to reflect on their own senses of identities, belongings, and boundaries:

I think people who are not in Canada and want to join this Facebook page should state a reason for joining. We shouldn't just accept everyone

around the world into this closed community, otherwise we are not doing a good job of administering, in my opinion. Am I wrong? (Online 2013)

--The Roma Community Centre is a real beacon of inspiration to a huge amount of Roma that do not live in Canada; certainly to many US Roma, myself included. I'd be careful about just where those closed boundaries get drawn. Regardless of what country they live in, Roma have the responsibility to support Roma of all nations. Just my thought. (Online 2013; response to above comment)

This exchange on the RCC Facebook wall indicates that Roma in Canada are constantly navigating incredibly nuanced and complex relationships with themselves, with non-Roma, and with Roma outside of Canada. By recognizing the significance of the RCC and where boundaries lay, Roma are actively asserting their own visions of their identities. Historically, Roma have been denied the right or ability to participate in history making, media-scapes, and political processes. Through relatively recent actions spanning the past few decades, Roma have been increasingly asserting their own representations, information, and messages<sup>112</sup>. This is not an easy task, given they must challenge Gypsy stereotypes while simultaneously reaffirming and defining their own diverse priorities and community needs.

Such maneuvering entails the integration of varying perspectives on history, community involvement, and more, into identity processes. Rachael's various excerpts throughout this work serve as a good example of this kind of identity negotiation with one's self, in conjunction with other community members and non-Roma. As noted in Section 2.2.1, Rachael felt "less Roma" at times when she interacted with other Romani community members on certain projects. As she further related in Section 2.3.1, she also made it clear that she does not view identity in general as something that is easily fractured, describing that she would be saddened if her Indigenous friends felt they could not identify as such (despite, perhaps, being considered by some as "half Indigenous"). At

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<sup>112</sup> The first World Romani Congress was held in 1971 in London, England, and "is charged with lobbying and negotiating with and within the international political community on Romani issues" (McGarry 2008:454). See also: Klímová-Alexander (2004); Puxon (2000); Silverman (1995); Vermeersch (2001)

times, Rachael referred to herself as “partial” Roma, and at times, she omitted modifiers before simply describing herself as “Roma”. I asked her:

Julianna: Do you have any feelings associated with being Roma? Is it neutral, positive, negative?

Rachael: I think it changes. Particularly in this context, there’s a uniqueness about it. And particularly for myself, because I’ve gone to university, I’m very Canadian-ized, you know, born here, have had opportunities here. I get to be in a lot of spaces where there isn’t anyone who identifies as Roma, you know? So I do feel there is something special or unique about it a lot of the time. It’s really neat to find similar traditions, or customs, or stories from very similar cultures. I’m trying to think of an example—it’s like having a secret name, neat stuff like that. (Interview 2012)

She concludes that being Romani, and thinking of oneself as Romani in Canada, changes depending on context. It is a unique, special, and valuable experience, yet one with its own specific challenges. How people feel, experience, and define their own Romani identity (as well as a larger and more general collective identity) is taking on new meanings as activists, community members, and allies help positively redefine what it means to be Roma, alongside awareness of negative representations and continued and persistent discrimination against Roma.

There are consequences for all kinds of representations, but this process especially intensifies when dealing with depictions of marginalized ethnic identities, such as for the Roma. In this dissertation, I have examined how the making and re-making of Romani identities is influenced by the discrimination that Roma continue to face in Canada. However, I have purposefully emphasized Romani voices, agency, and their diversity as a means of challenging these ingrained stereotypes. Although people (including academics, journalists, politicians, media consumers, activists, and more) may generally recognize potential implications when people are represented homogeneously in various mediums, we often contribute to processes wherein Roma are vilified, essentialized, and/or spoken for. Part of this comes from a desire or need to define categories of people; when such categorization processes do not include the ability to include diversity or historical and other contexts, such labels can be unintentionally detrimental.

In order to frame these issues, we need to purposefully embrace how people define their own identities, as complex and contradictory as they may seem. In fact, there is potential for even more thorough understandings when such dissonances are explored. Roma are at once collective and diverse, stereotyped and disparate. This requires bringing together the three key themes of this work (history, media, and advocacy) into conversation with one another when discussing identity processes. Involving these multiple lens has implications for all seemingly-paradoxical groups, wherein collective identity is formed in spite of—and even because of—perceived differences. One could examine historical context, media discourse, or advocacy projects separately, but it is together that they demonstrate the complexity and wide implications for people overall as they consider their individual and collective identities.

As Chapter 3 explored, mainstream historical accounts have not only been written without Romani perspectives or voices, but Roma were often left out entirely (or grossly simplified and/or stereotyped as ‘Gypsies’). Now, with newfound access to media-scapes and institutional support driven by advocacy projects, Roma are fighting to re-learn and re-tell their histories within the larger master narratives. As Chapter 4 explored, media has played an important role in exploiting stereotypical Gypsy representations and/or while profiting from vilification of criminalized Gypsy/bogus refugee depictions. Now, through newfound historical research and information, and with the power of numerous and transnational community members, Roma are re-claiming aspects of their own representations in the media. As Chapter 5 explored, newfound advocacy organizations and projects can play a significant part in lessening misinformation and providing beneficial change for Romani community members, but only when Roma themselves are involved in orchestrating these actions. For example, such efforts are far less effective when non-Roma are the only ones advocating. Although non-Romani allies provide valuable skill sets and resources, ultimately, this can easily lead back into processes wherein non-Roma again perpetuate a kind of ownership over Romani identities that can de-legitimize and/or essentialize Romani experiences.

All three of the main chapters have shown how Romani identities are defined in different ways for different purposes, which subsequently demonstrates why it is necessary to

examine all in conjunction with one another and not only separately. Various agents (such as governmental/refugee policies) within these areas have utilized concepts such as authenticity in problematic ways that do not reflect the realities of lived life for Roma. This is true for many groups besides Roma, but it is especially important in their context as they have been denied the right to speak for themselves.

Even when Roma have retained connections to their collective identities, and are in positions of relative power where they can speak out on behalf of themselves, their families, and their communities, their perceptions of self are constantly interacting with these various areas. Earlier in this work, May expressed the difficulty in asserting her own sense of identity as she is inundated with Gypsy stereotypes (whether through images of campfire sex, judgments on how she should dress, and/or references to thieving criminals). She described how having to repeatedly justify herself to Roma and non-Roma alike is continuing to change her perspective on what her Romani identity means in practice. Similarly, Gina, and many other RCC members, must readjust their perspectives as refugee policies continue to shift alongside socio-political-economic influences. Roma are vilified and criminalized as “bogus refugees”, *and* Roma are accepted as refugees in Canada: both of these situations have significant effects on the Romani community and how they then mobilize, perceive themselves, and work together. Therefore, it is important to consider all of the issues this dissertation has raised thus far in coordination with the concept of “nothing about us, without us”.

## 6.1 “Nothing about us, without us”

Two experiences may help demonstrate some of the tensions (and consequences) involved when varying representations by Roma and non-Roma complicate Romani identity processes. The phrase “nothing about us, without us” is now a popular refrain among the Romani community, which succinctly describes the priority that is placed on their involvement in areas such as research, journalism, and humanitarian work. Although I rarely heard it when I first began fieldwork in 2007-2008, “nothing about us, without us” has gained momentum since then and is now omnipresent at rallies, vigils, policy discussions, education initiatives, and more. It is not surprising that this saying has increased since the RCC began its discussions on how to operate as an independent

office. Thus, in the midst of “unprecedented” (as described by a former IRB Member) targeting by the Canadian government against Romani refugees, the Canadian Romani community has rallied their voices and (rightfully) demand recognition of its members. Through the following two examples (a “Roma project” and a Roma-themed conference in Toronto), I demonstrate how the inclusion of Romani representations of Romani identity processes is still a contentious area.

In October of 2012, the Canadian government approached me with a project examining Romani refugee claims. Specifically, the Monitoring and Analysis Unit (MAU) of the Refugee Affairs Branch (RAB) within Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) proposed a “Roma project” as part of a means to understand why Romani claimants had relatively high abandonment claims:

We are interested in contracting out this research to candidates that have close ties to the Roma community and have experience conducted [sic] research on similar topics. You have been chosen among a list of academics as a potential candidate. Since the lifting of the visa on Hungarian nationals, the number of asylum claims against Hungary has been increasing steadily, until recently as Hungarian intake has decreased substantially since June 2012. However, a significant percentage of these claimants withdrew their claim prior to receiving a final decision by the IRB. Unlike several other Eastern European countries with a similar basis of claim (often based on ethnicity), this phenomenon is unusual. We seek to understand, through a qualitative study, the motivating factors for why these claimants withdrew. Our goal is to enhance our understanding of this type of behaviour in order to assist in the development of effective policies related to the in-Canada refugee status determination system. Should you be interested in conducting this qualitative study on Roma motivations for withdrawals, we ask that you answer the following list of questions. It is worth noting that there are tight time and budget constraints to this project. The budget is limited to approximately \$15,000 and a final research product (paper/report) must be handed in to MAU at the beginning of March 2013. (Correspondence 2012)

In the end, I did not participate in this project, though it was at first an interesting proposition and I did submit an official application as requested. Both my initial intrigue and eventual non-participation are directly related to my own views on the applications of anthropology as well as related to similar motivations as voiced by Gina at the beginning

of this chapter (to serve to the best of my ability to correct perceived injustices). This scenario exemplified the ethical, moral, and political questions that anthropologists (and all other academics, researchers, or activists) face when making conscious decisions regarding their own advocacy efforts.

The possibility of having a seemingly direct line of correspondence to policy makers, as was explained to me by the officials involved, was very appealing and served as justification for why I was tempted to participate in this study<sup>113</sup>. I believed that while it may be relatively easy for governmental officials to ignore academic research from the ivory tower, it would be less easy for them to ignore their own funded research projects and reports. Second, I was excited by the possibility of contributing worthwhile and meaningful research to the Romani community directly. Here was not only an opportunity to get their experiences on record to the government, but also a means to monetarily compensate them for their time (something my own research did not). Third, even a small probability that this research could positively change refugee policy to prevent any Roma from being deported back to Hungary would be worthwhile. These were the main reasons the proposed research project intrigued me.

However, it was clear from the outset that there were many problematic areas that would need to be dealt with; I immediately contacted and conferred with RCC members and fellow colleagues. We agreed to submit a joint proposal, and from there, things became complicated. I made the mistake of telling a MAU representative on the phone that I saw this research as presenting an opportunity to counter the unprofessional and unsupported claims by Minister Kenney<sup>114</sup>. Later, I learned that was cause enough for the MAU to deem me unacceptable as a sole candidate. I could still be a part of the project, but not as the principal investigator. As recounted by a colleague who also spoke with this

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<sup>113</sup> Recall the similar explanation of this effect by Alex in Section 5.4.2, when discussing why Roma would feel eager to be on a police committee: “It just feels so good to have someone listen to you, someone with power to listen to you...I get it, why it’s hard to turn down when this powerful institution wants to have a relationship and listen to you.”

<sup>114</sup> For example, a recent news article has demonstrated Kenney’s preference for relying on anecdotes when creating policy instead of evidence-based analyses (Brender 2013).



representative, my views were apparently “inappropriate” and this was *not* to be an advocacy project, “only an academic study and nothing else”.

Following our joint application, the MAU then imposed restrictions and research parameters that they had not made explicit at the beginning. For example, RCC members were barred from working on the study, community members could not officially receive any money (such as providing interviewees with compensation for their time), and the final report would be “peer reviewed” and altered before given to any officials. The peer review aspect was disturbing to us, as it was implied that the reviewers would be selected conservative-leaning individuals with little/no experience working with Roma to “balance” our own perspectives. Furthermore, we would have no opportunity to respond to any of their comments or alterations before the report would be given (perhaps in piecemeal and out of context) to Minister Kenney. Needless to say, these revised research parameters gave us significant pause. Reactions from the Romani community and the RCC, also initially hopeful, quickly deteriorated following these new guidelines:

I was suspect of their intentions, and now I am highly suspect of the intended purposes for this research paper that CIC has proposed funding ... I question the timing of this—as we all wait in anticipation for the Minister to publish a list of Designated Safe Countries. The information in the report can be skewed, decontextualized, or misquoted to actually be a further detriment to the Roma community...CIC declaring that this paper will be “peer-reviewed” clearly indicates that opposition is already being prepared to criticize the findings. In the end, this CIC Research paper will be ammunition for the Minister for him to claim that he has conducted research, conducted by pro-Roma academics to make it all the more conducive to his fictional objectivity. Ask yourself, “Will it make a positive difference”? (Correspondence with Gina, RCC Director, 2012)

All of Gina’s points were judicious, and this experience overall can serve as a real-life example for how advocacy, government, and anthropology can end up intertwined, even with the best of intentions<sup>115</sup>. From the very first moment I was approached by the CIC, my position was altered within various communities, regardless of any eventual decision.

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<sup>115</sup> I am currently waiting on an Access to Information Request through the CIC that will provide further information on this proposed “Roma project”.

Contrary to Hastrup and Elsass' earlier assertion in Chapter 2 regarding the boundaries between identities, I could not alternate between voices—rather, in a moment, all of my positions had changed. My voice, whether as anthropologist, colleague, ally, advocate, or other, would now reflect the choices available to me. It would have been disingenuous to ignore this reality, being as I already approached my research with the understanding that one cannot do work with a marginalized ethnic community that is currently facing such immense political opposition without somehow being altered by the circumstances. Whom I spoke with, what they wanted to talk about, what they experienced, how they articulated their thoughts—all of these things were already firmly bound up in and influenced by politics and issues of representation. It is an admirable goal in research such as this project initially proposed, to seek understanding directly from the people affected by policies. It is dangerous, however, when such research or projects eschews all responsibility or accountability to those people and does not recognize contextual influences regarding representation processes.

Although academia and research often rely on the premise that unbiased data exists, I hope that my examination of statistics in Chapter 5, as well as my discussion on engaged anthropology in Chapter 2, has helped dispel that notion. The project organizers, no doubt, had a vision of research where Romani informants would present data that seasoned researchers would then objectively analyze, yielding clear-cut directions for future policies. They no doubt also believed that direct participation by the RCC and its members would skew these results. By drawing lines between community members and activists, the data is thus already skewed. Certain voices are again privileged, and others are again silenced. Academics—so long as they are not overtly activists themselves—are once again the privileged voices that government officials have actively decided they want to hear. This system persistently denies at multiple levels the rights of Roma to be involved and speak for themselves. I believe this incident was therefore somewhat remarkable, considering how the potential researchers united in their position with the Romani community members with whom they worked: without their permission and participation, we would not do the project. “Nothing about us, without us.” Similarly, the potential for harm to the Romani community outweighed the potential positives, much as the Hippocratic Oath prevents unnecessary medical risks. Although the MAU and CIC

may well have spun this story to their own managers as a case of “the researchers were biased”, it was not the data itself that we found potentially harmful; rather, the manner in which it was collected and disseminated. This may have surprised the MAU representatives, who clearly had different ideas regarding what “academic studies” actually entail (certainly, they are not reliant on the community’s permission).

This example can thus be compared with another experience, that of a Roma-themed conference held in Toronto in 2012<sup>116</sup>. The focus of the conference was on Romani histories and persecution, which are obviously important and valuable topics. However, from the outset, it was clear this conference might be problematic. The RCC and other Romani community members only found out about the conference second-hand; despite its geographical proximity (one of the conference organizers was even already acquainted with Gina and the RCC), no correspondence was made throughout its creation, nor when the eventual announcement and call for papers was made. In response, the RCC sent a letter to its organizers and funding body:

We are writing to you as supporters, members and members of the Board of Directors of Roma Community Centre, Toronto. As an active and highly-regarded organization at the forefront of the Romani human rights struggle in Canada, RCC is usually contacted or consulted when organizations and institutions plan to hold events about our people. We were therefore surprised to discover – not from conference planners, but from a third party – that a conference on Roma was being organized... Even though [an] RCC volunteer...contacted you, offering assistance and a list of prominent Romani academics/activists as speakers, we had no response to our suggestions. It is not unusual – but highly egregious – that Roma have been, and continue to be, interpreted and studied by outsiders without our active participation. Although [your institution] may have had

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<sup>116</sup> This conference was called “Europe’s Outsiders: The Persecution, Isolation, and Integration of the Roma (1945-the present)”, held March 7-8, 2013, and was sponsored by the Munk School of Global Affairs. I am appreciative that I was selected and for the conference funding I received. However, this conference was repeatedly raised as a major topic of concern by many Roma and I relate the following summary in order to emphasize the changes taking place in a Canadian context with regards to Romani participation of their own identities and representations. One aspect of contention that I do not cover here is the role that Haifa University played in supporting this conference; many Roma were angry and/or frustrated with this partnership (for example, because of political views regarding Palestine, but also because Haifa University was in the process of presenting an award to Jason Kenney).

the best of intentions, it is unfortunate that they did not understand the seriousness of excluding the very people about whom they were planning to present (and represent). (Beginning of a letter of protest from the RCC, 2013)

This letter, and other complaints, went largely unanswered. I specifically received a request<sup>117</sup> to submit a paper to counter what was already being perceived as an opportunity for non-Romani to present inaccurate versions of Romani histories and experiences to justify Canadian policy<sup>118</sup>. After conferring with several Romani individuals, I created an abstract for submission and sought community input. I was accepted by the conference to present, one of a total of eleven chosen presenters (ten actually presented). While writing my paper, which eventually became part of the basis for Chapter 4, I sought further feedback from the Romani community<sup>119</sup>. After some heated discussion following later conference interactions with the RCC, I offered to withdraw from the conference altogether. Instead, people told me to present and raise awareness of these issues<sup>120</sup>, reflecting the re-definition of the community towards a greater inclusiveness with those who pay attention to the needs and expressions of the community themselves. I was gratified to know that I had the support from many

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<sup>117</sup> “Julianna, Could you possibly submit a paper for this seminar?” (Correspondence 2013)

<sup>118</sup> “We suspect their non-Romani experts will be carefully chosen to present the picture Canadian Immigration...currently wants to promote.” (Correspondence 2013)

<sup>119</sup> “I hope you and other participants will say something about the lack of Roma representation.” (Correspondence 2013)

<sup>120</sup> For example, I received the following messages from four individuals:

“You are our only hope. This disappointment is in no way directed at you. This is an institutional issue - and part of much larger picture (Correspondence 2013);

“Your paper is great. It will be the only positive input re: the refugees and the problems they are facing in Canada. You need to attend present your paper. You have my support in this” (Correspondence 2013);

“Tricky question! If it was me, I’d be tempted to pull out. However, I think you stand a good chance of making an important point in your presentation by including a statement about the exclusion of Roma from the conference” (Correspondence 2013);

“I cannot emphasize how much I admire your position in all of this. And the fact that you are presenting first may very well throw a strong light on the disconnect of the organisers, and possibly the other participants, in relation to the urgent issue of voice and representation. You have my full support” (Correspondence 2013);

“I think that you will do more to raise awareness of Roma inclusion - and how this conference is exclusionary and patronizing - than you will if you boycott. And I think that’s the unique role that allies can often play – [being] in fucked up scenarios and explaining to your peers why they fucked up” (Correspondence 2013).

individuals, yet the entire situation was unfortunate and left me feeling uneasy that I had been selected when I knew that Romani voices had been excluded.

Leading up to the conference, a number of things happened that further emphasized the lack of Romani participation and deepened the sentiment already voiced by some Roma (“we find their approach very offensive”). First, the RCC was finally invited to be a part of the conference; however, not being approached far in advance of the conference, Gina related that this felt like the RCC was nothing more than an afterthought (to which I concur). The day of the conference, one presenter then repeatedly referred to such studies as “Gypsyology”, and one of the conference-selected discussants went on a very passionate (and largely unintelligible) rant that did not actually discuss the papers presented but instead proposed that the Holocaust should *not* be examined or re-evaluated in light of increasing awareness of Romani victims. Romani community individuals expressed their distaste for the Gypsyologist and the way in which they felt she subjectified Roma as mere objects of study. Similarly, they were disheartened by the discussant’s position, although it did not overly surprise them. They had unfortunately already expected resistance to the inclusion and focus of Romani victims in the Holocaust<sup>121</sup>. There was a final way that Roma felt excluded in this conference: through the manner in which questions were asked at the end of each panel. Audience members could write down their questions on distributed index cards, which were then gathered and selectively re-worded to the presenters. Although I was frustrated when my question was censored and only partially asked, I was not even aware of the further degree to which Romani audience members felt, again, unwelcome. Some of the Romani audience members were newcomers and/or individuals that did not have the benefit of knowing how to write out their questions; they could express themselves verbally, but writing was not yet a skill they had mastered. Thus, they could not ask any questions of the

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<sup>121</sup> For example, the upcoming 2014 UN Holocaust Remembrance Programme does not include any Romani speakers. In 2013, Romani scholar Ethel Brooks was invited to the Remembrance events; this inclusion was a precedent that was welcomed by the community. They expressed hopes that future events would continue to include Romani voices carried with it the underlying experience that such inclusion was an anomaly; Roma are generally excluded from such events. This cynicism has thus far turned out to be justified and correct.

presenters. Until they explained this to me afterward, I had not even realized this particular privilege. Nor, apparently, had the conference organizers; yet even after the issue that newcomers may not be able to write their questions was raised during a break, the process continued as already set out.

The day of the conference, many presenters had very interesting topics that clearly had involved significant input from Romani community members from their own specific contexts (researchers came from many different European countries). It was thus gratifying to hear from some of them that they, too, were shocked that the RCC or no other form of local Romani participation had been encouraged. Considering the degree to which we actively worked with Romani communities in our research, the conference felt backwards and disingenuous. In many ways, the conference ended up being exactly what we were presenting on our respective topics, examining historical, media, and policy-driven exclusions of Romani participation and representations. Somehow, Romani participation—as with the government-proposed “Roma project”—is viewed as inherently biased and/or insignificant. One of the counter arguments made by the conference organizers, when they finally responded to RCC criticisms, was that as an academic conference, only academics were prioritized. This ignores completely the many different ways in which Roma could have participated<sup>122</sup>, even being non-academics, for example, as guest speakers, leading a discussion, having their questions prioritized, or even hosting a coordinated event the local community could design.

Such exclusions had already been concerns for many informants I had interviewed prior to this conference, and I often specifically asked their opinions on non-Romani representations.

Julianna: What do you think about non-Roma, like myself and others, discussing [Romani issues], doing work on it, things like that?

Livia: Good question. I don't think that I feel just one thing about it. I think it's important to be really critical about the work—for you and other

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<sup>122</sup> Furthermore, this argument does not explain why Romani communities were not involved in the planning of the conference for input, nor why the call for papers was not specifically distributed to Romani community leaders requesting submission by Romani scholars.

academics to be really reflective on the work, like why are you doing it, what drew you into it? We all have these crazy curvy worlds for how we got involved in activism, right?...I think there's a lot of great ally activists out there, and some of them have really managed [to do great stuff]... You know, I'm very critical in general of academia that doesn't support social movements. So, if you were completely disengaged from the RCC, and just did your research, and went [away] on the weekends, and never helped out with anything, I would just be like "You're just making a career off of this", and that'd be weird. (Interview 2012)

Lynn had similarly questioned me in return when I raised these issues (Section 5.4.2): "Is it representation or is it solidarity? Solidarity is really something to be respected and sought after, I think, because we need people who will get facts and analyze them, get an understanding of it, sociologically, historically, and we need that information."

Justifiably, however, she remained very critical regarding Romani issues discussed and analyzed only by non-Roma, especially in light of the recent spate of television shows marketed as selling Gypsy culture. Elena had even agreed with this when I had asked her why she would invite me into her home and share her story with me: "I'm glad somebody is starting to listen, [in order] to stop the situation. Because if we are always quiet, then nothing changes. People will be sent home, and nothing happens. And the Gypsies will keep this bad reputation." Roma understand that non-Roma play important roles in disseminating information and awareness about their situations that can help prevent further violence, yet they also insist that such representations should include their own perspectives. This was echoed by informants in earlier sections who voiced frustrations at "wooden Roma" who claim representation, as well as non-Roma who profit from these processes.

It is somewhat ironic that we are technically within the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" (2005-2015). This designation was meant to spur programming in Europe that would foster positive change for Roma. Most informants expressed disappointment and anger towards this Decade, noting how such programs have only funneled money into non-Romani hands and left Roma even further disadvantaged, in large part because Roma themselves are not designing, implementing, and orchestrating Decade-related programs and policies. This relates back to our understandings of humanitarian aid, and research

that has shown that when communities are not involved, the majority of aid does not actually benefit its recipients (Harrell-Bond 1999, 2002, 2007; Timmer 2010). This is only one further example demonstrating how representations of Romani identities have myriad consequences.

In concluding this section, I am reproducing below an excerpt from a televised interview with Gina, the RCC Director. She was responding to the Levant segment and the subsequent investigation.

When I told [the Attorney General] about what kind of impact [Levant's segment] has had the on the community already—his terrible, hateful things he had said—that we have been receiving hate email, we've been receiving hate phone calls at the Roma Community Centre, more of our youth apparently have been verbally and physically assaulted in school, their parents have called the Roma Community Centre complaining about these things, so it's had a real impact already. It's not like these words were way out there and they don't manifest themselves in the day to day lives of people. They impacted our entire Canadian Roma community, and these comments he was directing at the newcomer portion of our community, but you know, there's many thousands of Roma throughout Canada. (Public Statement by Gina Csanyi-Robah, 2013. Excerpt from her interview on CBC *As It Happens*, 21 March 2013)

She describes how words have had “a real impact” on the community, and that we should not delude ourselves into believing that such statements are only abstract concepts. When the Romani community reacted to Levant's broadcast and spoke up, they then began receiving even further negative attention and harassment. Clearly, how we define who gets to participate in these conversations then affects how identities are altered and represented. How Romani identities are understood then influence everyday attitudes, experiences, and actions by and towards Roma.

## 6.2 Looking to the future

What one remembers of the past and how one remembers it determines how one sees the future. (Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, 2000:xxxv)

As a prisoner has no present, but only hopes for the future, one lives in the past. (William Little Calder Jones, written on 6 April 1942, published in *Immigrants of War*, 2013: 117)



Although this work has focused on some of the negative ways in which Roma experience and integrate representations of themselves, there are many positive factors to examine as well. For example, although Gypsy stereotypes (a “negative”) continue to dominate newspaper discourse (as shown in Chapter 4), Roma are engaging in active processes of self-representation that challenge these essentialized understandings. Signs of this include Romani sources, as examined in Section 4.4.2, and Chapter 5’s summary of education initiatives and mobilization/activism by the community. Romani experiences in Canada represent a unique opportunity to examine a diverse and historically persecuted ethnic group as they engage with newer forms of awareness building (such as the internet and related media forms) in a country that—although containing its own history of exclusions and racialized policies, even against Gypsies—in part defines itself through liberal and human rights oriented policies. Both sets of identity processes in place here (by Roma and Canadians) are deeply interwoven with varying conceptualizations regarding their respective and combined past(s), present(s), and future(s).

Roma in Europe often have much in common with prisoners of war, as quoted in this section’s second epigraph. The quote’s author was my grandfather, who wrote these words while held in a concentration camp in Germany. This quote summarizes how historical context is critical when considering contemporary circumstances: Roma were often allowed no “present”, forced to flee for their lives and actively targeted for cultural and physical extermination. As such, their hopes for the future were tempered by the realities around them, persistently allowing no upward mobility or security. As newcomers Roma to Canada gain understandings of what it means to live in Canada (as Elena noted in Section 1.2, being seen as a “visible minority” but not automatically targeted on the streets for being Gypsy, as she experienced in the Czech Republic), they gain perspective on their present(s) that were not previously open to them. One of the examples of this is education, as described in Chapter 5, wherein Romani families and youth begin to “buy into” the system when they can see the advantages that were previously denied to them. This, as well as the simple fact that Roma do flee to Canada, demonstrates how future hopes are key factors in Romani experiences.

However, as Said noted in the first epigraph quote, how we see the future is directly influenced by our perceptions of the past and how we remember it. Romani identities in Canada are all the more complicated, being forged and reinterpreted in the midst of intense and historical anti-Gypsy/Roma sentiments, as well as positive and contemporary pro-Roma projects that seek to build better futures for Roma. Roma have acknowledged that they themselves have sometimes internalized these external and negative representations (one of the justifications for the focus on education within their community). Roma may reproduce such representations through their own discourse, for example, as described when informants recalled feelings of inauthenticity when they did not properly align with the supposed Gypsy characteristics (e.g., Beth's confusion at enjoying education; Livia feeling less Roma when she was quiet at meetings). Tensions may also arise when specific historical accounts diverge or conflict with one another, and specific Romani groups or individuals believe themselves to be owners of Romani identity processes and/or information.

The above factors and more are sometimes exacerbated by further challenges. The RCC continues to struggle for stable sources of funding: without which, it cannot plan very far into the future, sometimes even fearing for its viability month to month. Here, past prejudices lead into contemporary disadvantages (such as lack of education or resources) that affect the possible futures of organizations and their projects. A lack of ability to plan for the future then creates a further cycle where community members are stuck simply trying to survive (issues raised repeatedly by Henry and others) and thus unable to respond adequately to the ingrained processes that lead to further discrimination. Additionally, the RCC and other Romani organizations must simultaneously address a wide range of topics, from historical misinformation, media headlines and news cycles emphasizing criminality, to fashioning its own programs that assist an extremely diverse group of members. They must do all of this and more, even as Neo-Nazi and racist attitudes continue to grow in Europe, and Canada tightens its restrictions of belonging through so-called 'deserving' paradigms.

In these conflicts, we can witness the struggle of a marginalized minority as they negotiate to have their own histories and memories acknowledged and included in present

and future programs. This historical context in turn informs societal understandings; largely uncontested reproductions of Gypsy stereotypes have been perpetuated by the media. However, just as media can reinforce negative representations of Roma, it also provides opportunities for Romani advocacy and self-representations. Advocacy projects born from these needs are in turn largely reliant on the participation of community members (local and global), as well as changing relationships with non-Romani allies, all of which draw on varying senses and beliefs regarding boundaries. Exclusionary, “bogus refugee”, and criminal forms of discourse all rely on homogeneity and essentialized representations, which further dismiss the diversity of Romani experiences in Canada. It also works to obscure the need for a larger awareness of Romani experiences and perspective when considering Canadian policies and attitudes. Despite a perceived paradox or disjuncture, when Roma collectively identify as such, they are not erasing their diversity. Individual notions of collective Romani identity may vary, but this is often a source of positive community affiliation rather than essentialization.

In closing, Livia provides a useful summary of how she understands being Romani in Canada.

Julianna: What does it ultimately mean then, to be Roma in Canada?

Livia: [*whispering*] I have no idea. [*normal tone*] I don't think that there is only one answer. Sometimes I think it's largely similar to how Jewish and Palestinian identities are constructed—that shared experience of displacement, diaspora, or of oppression, or of Othering...I think that for some people it can be a connection to culture, or language, or practice, or celebration, or how we mourn, or how we do birthday parties, or, things like that. So, I don't have a good answer, I'm sure you've heard [*answers*] way better than that.

Julianna: No, it's totally personal. So, if/when you have a kid, how will you talk about this with them?

Livia: That's a good question, because I've thought about that. Like, if [*my non-Romani partner*] and I have a kid, they'll be [*part*] Romani. So how will we talk about it, or what will the connection be? I guess the stories that I would want to tell my kid are the stories about how I tried to make the world better. And that I hope my involvement in the RCC or in my human rights work will be part of that story. I think the other part will

be in talking about my family stories. You know, who those people were, and what the sayings were that they used. (Interview 2012)

As Livia notes, and others before her, it is impossible to definitely provide an all-encompassing definition of what being Romani means for all Roma in Canada. However, that does not detract from the underlying point that Roma are currently engaged in complicated circumstances where they are simultaneously reaffirming their distinction as they create new boundaries for themselves. Romani advocacy work in Canada, which ultimately combines historical reflections and media responses, provides illuminating foci from which we can understand how to critically challenge previously ingrained notions of Romani *and* Canadian identities.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A - Correspondence from Hancock

Ian Hancock's account describing his experience with Canadian immigration officials in the 1960s. Personal email correspondence to author, 2013. Noted as an excerpt from an autobiographical work of Hancock's.

London, mid-60s

By now, I had become thoroughly involved in the African community in west London, and decided that I wanted to see Sierra Leone for myself. At Easygrip I earned very little, less than ten pounds a week, most of which went on rent and food. I knew I could never save up enough in England to afford the fare to Freetown, and so I decided to go back to Canada for a year to earn the money. I wrote to my parents about this, asking them to lend me the fare to Canada and promising to repay them, which I did. But when it came time to obtain the proper documents to go, I ran straight into a horrible situation. I was refused permission to re-join my family.

I went, first of all, to Cook's Travel Agency in Chiswick High Road, and was told that since I was not going simply for a short holiday I'd have to get permission from the Canadian immigration office if I wanted to return to live and work. I didn't think this would be a problem, since I'd already emigrated to Canada, and had gone to school there, and my parents and brother were permanently resident there. But instead of my application being routinely processed, I received a letter instead asking me to come for an interview at the Canadian High Commission in Trafalgar Square. I was shown into a small office, like the kind of booth at the unemployment exchange, where a man I remember as being somewhat cocky, and who was smirking, sat behind a desk. He reminded me of Judy Bryer's father. There were a number of documents in front of him, and I could read my name on the top one, upside down. He told me right away that my application to return had been denied. When I pointed out that I had already gone to live in Canada seven years earlier as an emigrant, I was told that I'd been away too long, and that I would have to re-apply to emigrate. When I said okay, let me do that, he then said that any application made by me would be rejected. I was beginning to feel uneasy, and demanded to know why.

"We don't feel you'd make a good Canadian," was his reply; "the fact that you didn't stay in Canada the first time is an indication of that. You don't seem to be a very stable person." I argued again that my parents lived there, and that I'd worked and gone to school there, that we'd already emigrated. It was then that I saw the word "Gypsy" in one of the boxes on the page; how they knew I don't know, but I realized right at that moment what was acting against me. I stood up quickly and

snatched the paper from his desk, and waved it in his face, and said “it’s this, isn’t it; it’s the Gypsy thing!,” but he continued to smirk, neither confirming nor denying it, and asked me if I wanted a second opinion. I was very upset, shaking by this time, and told him there was no point, because I knew I’d be told the same thing again. I hardly remember leaving Canada House, or getting back to Chiswick, I was so upset; I wrote to my father to tell him about this incredible and repressive situation, and also to the Canadian consul.

I received a letter from Canada House a few days later (dated July 17th, 1963) reiterating the reasons I’d been given at my interview but now stating that I would be allowed to return to Canada if I could provide some letters vouching for my conduct once there; in another letter from my father, I learned that he had gone to speak to the immigration people in British Columbia, and had persuaded them to reconsider my case. But they also required not only a letter from him guaranteeing that he’d be responsible for me, but also one from my principal at Nanaimo Senior High School and one from a member of the clergy attesting to my character. I don’t know how he obtained the latter, since I hadn’t attended church since the days when I was trying to impress Pat Fowler, and would take catechism and communion at St. Anne’s Convent.

I did get back to Nanaimo, eventually, in late Spring, 1964. I learned later that when we emigrated the first time, we had been processed with “special” papers submitted by my father, which concealed certain facts about the family. This subsequently became known to the immigration department, although ironically our Romani ethnicity had not been a factor the first time. That information had gone into our file, but my parents and brother Stevo had become Canadian citizens in the meantime, and were now beyond the bureaucracy’s reach. I wrote a poem about that immigration officer (whose name was Clairmont) called “You Smug Bastard,” which has since appeared in a couple of books. Recounting this episode years later, I wrote once again to Canada House demanding an explanation and a justification for their decision in 1963, also asking for a specific statement regarding the current immigration policy regarding Gypsies. The reply, dated June 15th, 1993, informed me that

*“...unfortunately we do not keep immigration records dating back thirty years...any documentation relating to your application for immigration to Canada in the early 1960’s would have been destroyed many years ago. As you require information on Canada’s current immigration policy regarding the numbers of Romani asylum seekers from Eastern Europe [not what I’d actually asked], I would suggest you contact our headquarters in Ottawa.”*

## Appendix B - Transcription of "The Jew vs. The Gypsies"

Full transcription of Ezra Levant's television segment "The Jew vs. The Gypsies", on his show *The Source*, aired by *Sun News* on 5 September 2012.

On Friday I told you about the wave of fraudulent refugee claims made by Gypsies, trying to lie their way into Canada. That's law-breaking in itself, lying about being refugees, I mean, they're coming from Hungary for crying out loud. A rich, generous, liberal democracy. No one is a refugee from Hungary, at least, not since it was liberated by the Nazis and then from the Soviets. For more than twenty years, it's been free!

And these are Gypsies! A culture synonymous with swindlers. The phrase gypsy, and cheater, have been so interchangeable, historically, that the word has entered the English language as a verb: he gyped me. Well, the gypsies have gyped us. Too many have come here as false refugees. And they come here to gyp us again, to rob us blind as they have done in Europe for centuries. Well, I warned you, on Friday I told you this. Well today, in Durham, Ontario, police revealed the depth of gypsy crime in Canada that has accompanied this wave of fake refugees.

Now, stop before you blow your hate crime whistle at me for saying gypsies, or gyped. See, political correctness and euphemisms like calling them 'Roma' instead of Gypsy or as the BBC calls them "Travelers". Well, the point of that is to obscure the truth. But these are Gypsies! And one of the central characteristics of that culture is that their chief economy is theft and begging. Sorry, it's true!

That's why so much political correctness has crept up around them because it's an awful trick and we don't want to contemplate. Now, I believe that anyone out there, regardless of their race or religion or the language or their place of birth can choose to live a real life. Well, I must believe that. Because I believe that each of us was made in the image of God, and the whole challenge of life is to take responsibility for ourselves and make the right choices every day.

But 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.

Now the scourge has come to Canada through fake refugee claims. Over 5,000 of them, in the past five years, all from Hungary. The Canadian Border Services Agency estimates that just the paperwork, the cost of processing of these fake refugees costs upwards of a quarter billion dollars a year. And today, police in Ontario are taking to the courts, more cases of crime they say they have found on the streets.

Look at this list of suspects released by Durham police. Gypsy, after gypsy, after gypsy. They gypped their way into Canada, and now they're gypping the rest of us. Look at this, Dinarca Calderas, wanted for stealing two cars, money laundering, theft, fraud. Gypsy. Look at that, not on her own, as part of a criminal organization.

We're used to biker gangs, we're used to the Hells Angels, or the Mafia. They're not races or religions, they're cultural groups, subcultures, deviant groups that choose to steal for a living. Look at this! Ovidio Calderas, criminal organization, fraud. It's not all non-violent, no way, as I told you on Friday, in Italy, Gypsies are charged with murder at least 6 times more frequently than their population would suggest.

Hey, Robert Calderas, domestic assault, fraud, criminal organization. Mm. Calderas, Calderas, Calderas. It's all as if they're a family business, their extended family, their clan. Yeah. Gypsies, [name unintelligible] possession of stolen property, credit card frauds, five times for that, identity fraud theft, three times. [name unintelligible], break-and-enter, three times. These aren't pocket change or trinkets, he's going on six counts of theft, over 5,000 bucks. Here's [name unintelligible], break-and-enter, multiple thefts.

Notice how many women there are on this list. Of course it's kind of like the Hell's Angels or the Mafia, there's no such thing as a woman as the boss of a biker gang, or a woman as a godfather, but for Gypsies, it's a family affair, in fact, women and children are the best at it, because we liberal Canadians or Europeans would never suspect a child, or a mom, or both working together.

Now don't worry, I won't show you all the suspects on this list, there are just too many, but every last one of them is a Gypsy. Just some of the 5,000 who've gamed our system and are causing a 'Made in Europe' crime wave on our streets.

Now to be clear, none these folks have been convicted, and the accusations haven't yet been proven. That said, these charges are part of an extensive police operation involving multiple police forces. It seems to me, the cops have tried to work on this one. Durham regional police say that street gypsies have four particular strategies.

Street distraction. That's where a young girl would walk up to a senior citizen, place a cheap fake necklace around her neck, and then rip off the real expensive necklace. And the store distraction is another one. Going into a convenience store, or a jewelry store, wearing long dresses, distracting the workers and then robbing the place blind. Shopper distraction. That's where they watch you enter your PIN at a store and then pickpocket your wallet in the parking lot. And family-in-need distraction. Pretending to be a poor, homeless family, begging on the side of the road, and then robbing you blind. Well, don't take it from me, this is coming from the men and women who have to fight this crime wave, look:

[Durham police clip is shown]

And just in case you're not clear about this, they're talking about Gypsies.

[Another clip from Durham regional police is played].

Roma, you know, cops can be politically correct. 'Roma' is the name of a kind of tomato, as you know, but that's what some people call Gypsies. You can call them whatever you like if you're arresting them, that's fine by me. Here's another clip:

[Another clip is played]

29 people, 263 charges, that we know about so far. There are 5,000 of these Gypsies here! And as an access-to-information document from the government shows us, they're on top for welfare fraud. You know, there are 4 excerpts from that ATI document. Here's one, look. 24 individuals, out of a sample of 90, were still trying to claim social assistance despite their scheduled removal or having already been past. They were kicked out from Canada, and still getting welfare back in Hungary!

Here's another quote. 'These individuals appear to be well-informed regards to Canada's refugee process. And the associated financial assistance provided for all claimants until final determination.' Now can we infer that these individuals are entering refugee claims for economic benefits. Duh!

Here's another one. 'Once in Canada, Hungarians are working together with other members of their community in the committing of a number of serious offenses. They are proving adept at manipulating Canadian systems for the greatest possible benefit before returning to Hungary. A number of border service officers and intelligence officers have observed many of these travelers leaving Canada with significant amounts of cash, credit cards, and oversized and additional luggage filled with items acquired in Canada, such as toys, clothing, and [unintelligible].

Look, refugee fraud, fraud fraud, you know, stealing credit cards and laptops, continuing welfare fraud even once they're kicked out? They're gypping us! Sorry, that's a word for a reason, they're thieves! And women and children, their own wives and kids, are the main tools of it. Remember what I told you on Friday, in Italy, 50 gypsy children each stole 12,000 Euros a month! And police could do nothing since they were only young kids. Stealing is part of their family-crime organization.

Being a Gypsy isn't like being black, or being gay, or being a woman, or even Romanian, where many Gypsies come from. Just like being from Sicily doesn't make you part of the Mafia. Being a Gypsy is a positive choice, like being a Blood or a Crip, like joining the Cosa Nostra. For centuries, these roving highway gangs have mocked the law and robbed their way across Europe.

And now, because of our broken refugee system, they're here in Canada by the thousands. And they've brought the 'Gypsy crime wave' with them. Yeah, no thanks, I'm not interested in calling them 'Roma' or 'Travelers' or having a Human Rights Commission investigate where we as a society have done wrong, maybe dispatching social workers [laughs], the social workers will just have their wallets stolen. I want to dispatch cops and send the bad Gypsies to Hungary on the next plane. Just warn the flight attendants [chuckles] not to wear any jewelry on the flight.

## Appendix C - Transcript of Levant's apology

Transcript of the apology aired on *The Source* by Ezra Levant, 18 March 2013. For text and further coverage, see: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/sun-news-host-ezra-levant-issues-rare-apology-for-roma-slurs/article9924574/>

I host the most controversial news show in Canada *The Source*.

If there's some politically correct sacred cow out there, it's my job to barbecue it. From exposing David Suzuki's outrageous speaking fees to taking a run at corrupt Indian chiefs, I do it with gusto every day. I try to be entertaining as well as informative, using drama and sarcasm, and the occasional dance moves. And I always make sure to poke the most fun at myself - including reading gems from my hate mail every day.

Last summer, I talked about a grave problem in Ontario - a 400-person crime ring, all recent immigrants from Romania, busted by Durham Regional Police. I let it rip against crime and immigration fraud and for the most part it was just a pretty good rant. The kind I love to do, poking fun at the gypsies who had been arrested, and even poking fun at myself as a Jew.

There were some criticisms afterwards, but I dismissed them as coming from the usual soft-on-crime liberals and grievance groups. But when I look at some of the words I used last summer, like the gypsies have gypped us, I must admit that I did more than just attack a crime or immigration fraud problem. I attacked a particular group, and painted them all with the same brush. And to those I hurt, I'm sorry.

As a Canadian citizen and a journalist I enjoy freedom of speech. Without that right, we would not be a democracy. But as someone who seeks to influence the public debate, I have to think about the words I choose. It's just wrong to slur a group of people. I made the moral mistake of judging people collectively. I owe a duty to my employer, who has allowed me to be the freest journalist in Canada, and has defended me against every attempt to silence me. I owe a duty to my viewers to give them the most thoughtful arguments I can. And I owe it to my own philosophy of liberty to judge people as individuals.

As the philosopher Ayn Rand explained the problem with stereotyping is that it's "the lowest, most crudely primitive form of collectivism. It is the notion of ascribing moral, social or political significance to a man's genetic lineage... that a man is to be judged, not by his own character and actions, but by the characters and actions of a collective of ancestors."

There's nothing wrong with going after a criminal gang. But it's wrong to brand an entire community with a broad brush - I wouldn't like it as a Jew, and the whole point of my crusade against the Indian Act is to free ordinary Indians from the corrupt chiefs who rule them.



I am an anti-racism activist.

I remain concerned about immigration fraud and crime gangs, but I can be better in the way I express those concerns. The Source is a show about ideas. I want my words to spur debate. When my show is finished on any given day, I want viewers to discuss these matters at the dinner table and write their MP's.

I don't apologize simply for the sake of being consistent in my views. I regret having made these statements and I'm hopeful that those remarks will serve as an example of what not to do when commenting on social issues. I have the privilege of commenting regularly in this forum and I'm committed to doing so responsibly.

### Appendix D - Table of Newspaper Headlines

2012 headlines referring to Romani-related stories

Date	Column	Headline
11-Jan	A1	Human trafficker pleads guilty: Dying of cancer and 'anxious to move on'
12-Jan	A1	Case shines spotlight on refugee system Alleged criminal ring linked to visa policy
16-Jan	A13	Failed Roma refugees sue Ottawa over alleged 'bias'
23-Jan	A1	Lax laws culprit of welfare fraud, Crown says 'We don't want your criminals,' Hungary told
24-Jan	ED A14	Fuelling the fires of intolerance
4-Feb	NEWS A23	'A miserable way to get by'; Unemployed Roma in remote Hungary are forced to dig for coal with their hands to survive
9-Feb	A1	Human trafficker pleads guilty; Showed no remorse, says judge
10-Feb	OPINION A17	Labelling of Roma can hurt others
17-Feb	ED A14	Effective, but a bit more appeal, please
17-Feb	NEWS A1	Tories introduce bill to thwart 'bogus' refugees
17-Feb	A1	Third in ring pleads guilty;
18-Feb	A11	Surviving slavery; 'I own you. You're mine,' victim recalls being told
18-Feb	A7	Hatred that flies below society's radar; Racism today need not be overt to leave wounds
21-Feb	Editorial A16	Refugee bill lacks balance
21-Feb	OP-ED A18	Toward a better refugee-determination system
23-Feb	NEWS A10	UN rights panel disparages Canada; Experts harshly criticize treatment of First Nations and immigration changes affecting Roma refugees
1-Mar	A9	More charges laid in human trafficking case
2-Mar	OP-ED A14	Welcome to Canada - unless we change our mind
2-Mar	A2	An invasion of evil': Fourth human trafficker pleads guilty, part of 'despicable, unworthy group'
29-Mar	NEWS	Hungary's Roma dominate Canada's 2011 refugee claims; With no visa required, number of asylum bids soars but almost all fail
30-Mar	A1	Kingpin's brother pleads guilty in slavery ring
2-Apr	GT2	Roma seek refuge in Parkdale
3-Apr	A3	Husband and wife sentenced in human trafficking case Domotor 'mid-level' player in criminal organization: Crown
4-Apr	NEWS A6	Smuggling kingpin lived large; Landed immigrants who arrived as Roma refugees owned a home in the suburbs, ran a small business

4-Apr	GT1	Roma couple needs help ... and a bed
5-Apr	A9	Bogus Roma refugees cost \$500m Money made off fraudulent claims, theft and forced labour
6-Apr	GT2	Refugees tripped up by red tape
11-Apr	GT2	Parkdale's yin against yang over Roma
25-Apr	CULTURE L2	Budapest's Roma put acceptance on the menu; Traditionally known as Gypsies, the long-persecuted community is taking to the kitchen to take a bite out of cultural stigma
27-Apr	B1	Visa spat threatens Canada-EU trade deal; 'Irritant' for Bulgarians, Romanians and Czechs could stand in the way of ambitious agreement
28-Apr	A1	A prosecution in peril; Death threats, a lack of co-operation and a complicated web of lies and paper trails nearly jeopardized the case against a local gang of modern-day slave traders.
2-May	A6	9th guilty plea in human trafficking case
4-May	GT2	Roma kids find home in Parkdale
23-May	GT2	Tory bill puts Roma in a corner
25-May	GT2	A voice for Roma refugees
15-Jun	COMMENT T A13	No real refuge in Canada
16-Jun	Ed.Letter F8	Refugee claimants (by Millo)
16-Jun	Ed.Letter F8	Refugee claimants (by Bissett)
16-Jun	CULTURE E5	Motivation is key to GRUBB's success; Nico Archambault teaches Serbian teens that the first step to cool moves is getting in shape
16-Jun	A3	The Roma of Hamilton; Local human trafficking case fuel for propaganda against Roma, activist says
18-Jun	Letter to the Ed: A12	Roma persecution
7-Jul	NEWS A10	Nobel laureate joins Toronto rabbi group in condemning refugee health cuts
7-Jul	OP-ED B7	Bill C-31: Democracy doesn't always protect rights
12-Jul	A4	Final three nabbed in human trafficking case;
23-Jul	GT1	Family facing exile can't lay son to rest
23-Jul	A6	Roma mourn boy killed in hit-and-run on QEW
27-Jul	A2	RCMP nabs teen in Hamilton human trafficking case
31-Jul	A4	Six months for fraud, human trafficking
3-Aug	MOVIES C5	Documentary provides rare look at the hardscrabble lives of Gypsies
19-Aug	NEWS A8	Roma refugee claimants likely to be detained
23-Aug	NEWS A10	Canada isolated from human-smuggling realities
8-Sep	A7	Hungarians stole millions from mail, RCMP allege; Nine face charges after human trafficking ring linked to cheque thefts

16-Sep	OPINION A17	Stop vilifying Roma refugees
19-Sep	NEWS A12	Failed Roma refugee claimants returning home; Project offers free flights and support, but critics liken it to a 'bribe'
29-Sep	Wknd Rev: R4	Is Il Trovatore too hot to handle against backdrop of Roma persecution?
5-Oct	GT2	Help for maligned Roma
13-Oct	WD4	Hated and hunted or thieves and liars? Inside Canada's Roma problem; Roma from Hungary are arriving as refugees in soaring numbers. New rules will soon make it much harder to get asylum. Are we doing the right thing?
13-Oct	WD1	Hungary's Minority; Roma on the run
14-Oct	NEWS A1	GTA churches shelter failed claimants; Hungarian family has been in hiding since deportation order 10 months ago
19-Oct	NEWS A9	Canada to deport family of trafficking ring victim; Hungarian man helps officials dismantle a criminal organization, but his wife and stepdaughter have been denied their refugee claim
22-Oct	ED A14	It's up to the EU
24-Oct	LetterEd: A14	Roma policy-speak
26-Oct	NEWS A4	Chaos at Quebec-Vermont crossing; Border station has had 260 illegal entries to date this year by people desperate to make their refugee claims from inside Canada
29-Oct	GT2	Chilling chaos faced by Roma
6-Nov	A3	The Romas: Forgotten Nazi genocide; Nazis called them 'born criminals' and killed up to 250,000 'Gypsies'
12-Nov	GT2	Message to the Roma, pay up or stay sick
8-Dec	NEWS A7	Porous border is Roma gate; Easier asylum rules draw many to try their luck in Quebec after circuitous journeys via U.S., Mexico
12-Dec	OP-ED A22	Canada should welcome Roma refugees
15-Dec	NEWS A6	'Safe' countries for refugees; Some fear for Roma as claimants face an expedited process

## **Appendix E - Open Letter to National Geographic**

An open letter to National Geographic, concerning the show American Gypsies, by Ian Hancock and Kore Yoors. I have reproduced the text from the official letter here, and the original letter can be accessed at: [http://societymatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hancock\\_Yoors\\_Roma\\_letter\\_to\\_National\\_Geographic.pdf](http://societymatters.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hancock_Yoors_Roma_letter_to_National_Geographic.pdf)

10 April 2012

Dear Sirs:

National Geographic has been an international and socially welcoming institution for so many years, presenting the often wrongly maligned Roma, a sprawling people who's identity has and still remains shrouded in mystery, in nothing if not a positive light. It is a delicate and difficult task to educate the public on a society so hard to penetrate as the Roma, who, much like a lost civilization, supply little evidence of their true inner-workings as a society. However the program American Gypsies, slated to air later this month on the National Geographic Channel and which purportedly takes a peak inside the New York-based Johns family, is at risk of being a conflict of interest not only for the Roma but also for National Geographic because this family, as detailed further in this letter, is far from representative of the Roma community. It is without a doubt that any viewer of this show will see this family as a model for all so called "American gypsies", and this would indeed be a tragedy, damaging both the image of the Roma and that of National Geographic. The show's description already starts out on the wrong foot with a stereotype of gypsy-as-fortune-teller with the line "how to make a fortune in the fortune-telling business".

Perhaps it is not the Roma who are looking to make a fortune here, but the minds behind this program at the "Golden-rectangle". It is probable that National Geographic is aware that "Gypsy culture" has been a popular subject in the media recently, and it seems possible the Channel may want to feed off of this trend at the expense of the people involved despite its not-for-profit status. The only possible outcomes of airing the program are that it would provide a poor understanding of who and what the Roma are, and the knowledge that the Romani American population is not sufficiently equipped to combat racial stereotyping legally. Furthermore, if one were to consider the making of a series presenting a family of American Jewish crooks as Jews generally, or a black street gang were presented as representing African Americans generally, there would be a massive outcry, and such projects would die aborning. The proposed American Gypsies is no different from these hypothetical, backwards, examples. Already a proposed series on an American Muslim family has been cancelled, presumably for fear of legal backlash.

It is claimed that this is not a documentary about Romani Americans, but just about one family. Does this mean that the words "Gypsy" and "Roma" or "Romani" don't occur anywhere in the series? They will be, of course. But will there be a disclaimer? Will there be a statement to the effect that this family is criminal, this family is not

representative of the hundreds of thousands of Romani who live in our country, and in fact has been ostracized by that population? Will our history be presented factually? Reference to the 550 years of slavery in Eastern Europe, from whom the Johns family descends? Will there be reference to Himmler's genocidal Final Solution of the Gypsy Question in the Holocaust? Or will all of the real history be put aside in favor of fishing trips to Florida and visits to the mall?

Hundreds of thousands of Roma live in our country. Most stay in the background for fear of racial discrimination. State and county laws specifically aimed at Roma have existed until as recently as 1989, some of which are listed in my book *Danger! Educated Gypsy*. Although we are protected from this as a class under the terms of Title VII of the 1968 Civil Rights Act, few Roma are aware of it or use it as a means of legal redress. One organization, however, called Romani Zor, with a Romani American attorney, Joseph Nicola, has recently been incorporated to monitor the present situation, and anticipates a class action suit following this series. I am a Romani. I am a senior faculty member at a leading university. I am a former White House appointee. I am a state commissioner. And I am deeply insulted by this. If there is doubt about the extent of racial bigotry targeting Romanies in our country, visit

[www.topix.com/forum/city/texarkana-tx/T97FHETB5P7O16PBA](http://www.topix.com/forum/city/texarkana-tx/T97FHETB5P7O16PBA).

Use of the word "Gypsy" is problematic. It is a word we dislike, and which was officially dropped from all of its internal documentation at the Second World Romani Congress in 1984. The use by journalists of its equivalent in other languages (e.g. Zigeuner in German, Cigan in Serbia) has been banned. The "Gypsies" in the British and TLS series "My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding" are not in fact Romani at all, but a white population of Irish descent. The definition of "Gypsy" (or "gypsy") is already vague in people's minds, most of whom think it is a behavior rather than an ethnicity, and National Geographic's imprimatur will only serve to reinforce that misconception. If the general public's exposure to "American Gypsies" is presented under National Geographic's trusted name, then disrespectful and inaccurate perceptions of our people will have been confirmed.

The Johns family has a very bad reputation, and is shunned by the community. It is the focus of the series only because of the entertainment value their ignorance and bad behavior provides. If we as a people are not taken seriously, then the problems we face cannot possibly be taken seriously.

It astounds me that National Geographic's standards have fallen so low, have succumbed to the overall downward drift of our country's academic standards. Our real story is a fascinating one; indeed, NG produced an entire beautifully illustrated book about it edited by Bart McDowell in 1970 entitled *Gypsies, Wanderers of the World*. What has happened since?

Both the United Nations and the Council of Europe list the situation of Roma as the most serious transnationally in terms of human rights abuse. I have included a number of references to this below.

Roma remain to date the most persecuted people of Europe. Almost everywhere, their fundamental human rights are threatened. Racist violence targeting Roma is widespread in the last years. Discrimination against Roma in employment, education, healthcare, administrative and other services is observed in most societies, and hate speech deepens the anti-Romani stereotypes typical of European public opinion. (European Roma Rights Centre, 2001: 5).

Romanies in Europe were 'at the bottom of every socio-economic indicator: the poorest, the most unemployed, the least educated, the shortest-lived, the most welfare dependent, the most imprisoned and the most segregated. (The Economist, 2005). Roma are the most prominent poverty risk group in many of the countries of central and Eastern Europe. They are poorer than other groups, more likely to fall into poverty, and more likely to remain poor. In some cases poverty rates for Roma are more than ten times that of non-Roma. A recent survey found that nearly 80 per cent of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria were living on less than \$4.30 per day ... even in Hungary, one of the most prosperous accession countries, 40 per cent of Roma live below the poverty line. (World Bank Report, 2006).

In September 2001, the council of Europe 'issued a blistering condemnation of Europe's treatment of the Roma Gypsy community, saying they are subject to racism, discrimination and violence ... the United Nations says they pose Europe's most serious human rights problem. (BBC, 2001)

On 1 February 2008, the Associated Press issued a statement released by the European union beginning, 'the Roma, also known as Gypsies, remain frequent targets of racist attacks, abuse and police harassment.'

If American Gypsies is aired, even though it concerns the life of just one family, it will undoubtedly give a false impression of the Roma as a society. Considering the racial issues faced by the Roma, especially in recent years, this show, already in violation of civil rights laws, would only foster further problems for the Romani people. Furthermore, it can not be ignored that National Geographic Magazine has previously published illuminating and educational editorial content on the Roma and that the intent of American Gypsies is counter to the positive spirit of curiosity already firmly established by the magazine, thus causing this program to be in conflict with the interests of both the National Geographic Society and the Romani people. Allowing the world to see this footage can be nothing if not detrimental for both parties involved, and we hope with the utmost respect that the board might be able to see this and seriously consider the multiple negative outcomes airing of this program would create.

Sincerely,

Ian Hancock and Kore Yoors

## **Appendix F - RCC Media Release on CBSC findings**

The text from the official media release distributed by the RCC on 10 September 2013 after CBSC ruled on the Levant hate speech investigation.

### Media Release

Negative Generalizations about Ethnic Group Violate Codes, Says Canadian Broadcast Standards Council

September 10, 2013

Hate speech and human rights abuses must be challenged or they will grow. Toronto's Roma Community Centre is pleased that the Canadian Broadcast Standards Council has upheld most of our complaint against Ezra Levant's Sun News broadcast "The Jew vs the Gypsies" on Sept. 5, 2012. The ruling, under the Canadian Association of Broadcasters Code of Ethics and Equitable Portrayal Code, is an important milestone in the struggle of Roma people for fair, honest and equal portrayal in the Canadian media.

The CBSC announced its finding yesterday (Sept. 9, 2013) that Mr. Levant had clearly violated CBSC broadcasting standards, citing the Canadian Association of Broadcasters (CAB) Code of Ethics Clause 2 (Human Rights), as well as Equitable Portrayal Code Clause 2 (Human Rights), Clause 3 (Negative Portrayal), Clause 4 (Stereotyping), Clause 5 (Stigmatization and Victimization), and Clause 7 (Degrading Material).

But the CBSC ruling also reveals how far industry standards still have to go. In concluding that Mr. Levant did not violate Clauses 9 (b) (Language and Terminology) the CBSC suggests that the term 'Gypsy' is not pejorative. We regret that the CBSC based its ruling on offensive, inaccurate and outdated references in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) and in British legislation.

The OED's full entry for the word 'Gypsy' contains anachronistic and pejorative definitions (some of which can clearly be discerned in Mr. Levant's text for "The Jew vs the Gypsies"), including:

- a member of a wandering race;
- a cunning rogue;
- a contemptuous term for a woman, as being cunning, deceitful, fickle, or the like;
- gypsy-brat ('two bundles of rags with a gypsy-brat in each of them');
- gipsyless ('free from gypsies').

The English law that the CBSC ruling draws on includes the highly discriminatory and outdated 'Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act' of 1960. This piece of legislation defines "gypsies" as "persons of nomadic habit of life," which is clearly inaccurate and inadequate to describe an ethnic group with a long history and diverse cultural and residential practices." Furthermore, it is worth noting that the law was used



to render many Roma and Travellers homeless in the UK by enabling further racial profiling of the community by local town-councils.

We find that the CBSC's resort to such egregious and discriminatory citations -while ignoring current international, scholarly, and journalistic best-practices regarding the naming of our community - particularly egregious. Along these lines, it is worth noting that official documents of the Canadian government, European Union and United Nations use the word 'Roma' rather than 'Gypsy'. More important, Roma is the term used historically and currently by the Roma community itself, particularly in Canada. The term 'Gypsy' is an exonym and historically inaccurate (based on the misunderstanding that Roma people came from Egypt); while 'Roma' is an endonym, based in Romani language and self-identity. Media should prioritize the use of endonyms (self-naming) over exonyms (what other groups call an ethnicity/race).

Roma Community Centre is happy to work with media to bring the real story about our community to Canadians, and to educate people about us, as well as work with and train media and journalists in reporting on Roma issues.

Ronald Lee, co-founder of the Roma Community Centre, said “It is a shame that Ezra Levant and his editors chose to ignore one of the basic requirements of journalism, such as research into his subject. He claimed that Roma were not an ethnicity, did not have a language, and were just a collection of criminals. That is simply ignorant and insulting. As long as people like Levant and those media outlets who support them put profit above journalistic ethics, the business of disinformation will flourish. His tongue-in-cheek “apology” was a farce and had no effect on those who listened to his rant.” In May, when the RCC posted Levant's hateful rant on its YouTube account for all to see, Sun Media threatened legal action. Also during this past May, two separate Ontario police forces had recommended that Ezra Levant be charged with hate propaganda. Apparently, the Deputy Attorney General of Ontario, Patrick Monahan, felt that the apology was enough to not proceed with prosecution.

Yesterday, after a yearlong investigation, the Canadian Broadcasting Standards Council has also found that the apologies made by Sun Media and Levant were sufficient. "When hate speech will be allowed to continue without serious consequences for the offenders as long as they make a public statement of apology, sincere or not, many Canadians will not feel that justice has taken place", said RCC executive director, Gina Csanyi's Robah.

It has been emotionally difficult to pursue a complaint, you have to revisit the behaviour in question and, like a rape trial, this is difficult and painful, but it is necessary. The Roma community wants to thank all the people who complained about the Sun News Network's Ezra Levant, the people that volunteered legal help and representation, and the media that brought awareness to Levant's harmful behaviour.

Contact Gina Csanyi-Robah, Executive Director at [redacted], for further information.



## Curriculum Vitae

**Name:** Julianna Beaudoin

**Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2009-2014 Ph.D.

The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2007-2009 M.A.

Washington College  
Chestertown, MD, USA  
2000-2004 B.A.

**Honours and Awards:** Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship, 2012-2013  
Research Western Graduate Thesis Research Award, 2012; 2008  
First place, Social Science Oral Presentations, Western Research Forum, 2010  
Washington College Senior Anthropology Award, 2004  
Washington College, Dean's Honor List, 2000-2004  
Hodson Merit Honor Society Scholarship, 2000-2004

**Related Work Experience**

*Instructor*  
Department of Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario, 2014

*Teaching Assistant*  
Department of Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario, 2007-2011; 2012

*Administrative Assistant*  
Western Centre for Research on Migration and Ethnic Relations, The University of Western Ontario, 2010

*Research Assistant*  
Department of Anthropology, The University of Western Ontario, 2008-2009

*Research Assistant*  
Department of Anthropology, Washington College, 2001

## PUBLICATIONS

### Refereed Journal Articles

- 2015 (forthcoming) Beaudoin, Julianna. The contemporary relevance of Gypsy stereotypes in the Buffyverse. *The Journal of Popular Culture*.
- 2013 Levine-Rasky, Cynthia, Julianna Beaudoin, and Paul St. Clair. The exclusion of Roma claimants in Canadian refugee policy. *Patterns of Prejudice*. (published online November 13, 2013)
- 2004 Butler, Julianna. The Changing Roma Culture in Europe and Finland. *International Studies Review*, Washington College, Vol.1, p.103-132.

### Other

- 2012 Arbel, Efrat, Julianna Beaudoin, and Stephanie Silverman (equal contribution). “Why is there no refuge for Roma refugees?”, invited article, *The Huffington Post*, December 21.
- 2012 Co-author with Gina Csanyi-Robah (RCC Executive Director) of the report, “Illegitimizing Roma Refugees in Canada”, created for the UNHCR’s Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). Available online: [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/TRCC\\_Canada80.doc](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/docs/ngos/TRCC_Canada80.doc)

### In preparation

- Rehaag, Sean, Julianna Beaudoin, and Jennifer Danch. “No Refuge: Hungarian Romani refugee claims in Canada”

## CONFERENCE PARTICIPATION

### Panels Organized

- 2012 Panel session “Policies and Power Dynamics: Deconstructing Migration Categories in Canada” for the “Migration Without Boundaries” Interdisciplinary Student Conference at Michigan State University, October 5-6
- 2011 Panel session “New Perspectives on Old Challenges: Interdisciplinary Insights on Human Rights Issues in Canada” for the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies (CARFMS) “Human Rights Challenges” conference, Montreal, May 11-13
- 2010 Roundtable session “Refugee-specific Challenges and Experiences in Understanding Canadian Immigration” for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual National Frontiers of Canadian Migration Metropolis Conference in Montreal, March 18-21

### Papers Presented

- Accepted. “‘When people feel engaged, they feel empowered’: Canadian-Romani Experiences of Advocacy”, for the panel “Ethnographic study of bureaucratic organizations – tales from sites of power” at the International Political Science Association’s 23<sup>rd</sup> World Congress, Montreal, July 19-24, 2014

- Accepted. “‘I have never felt Canadian’: Negotiating Romani identity and belonging in Canada”, for Qualitative Analysis Conference, “The Social Construction of Boundaries”, Brescia University College, June 25-27, 2014
- 2013 “Romani Activism, Advocacy, and Representation in the Canadian Context”, for the session “Framing and Interpreting Migration: Challenges and Opportunities in the Movement of People” at the American Anthropology Association (AAA) Conference, “Future Publics, Current Engagements”, Chicago, November 20-24
- 2013 “Lessons from TV: Race and Ethnicity Representations Affecting Intercultural Relations”. Migration and Ethnic Relations Graduate Student Symposium, The University of Western Ontario, April 4
- 2013 “‘Bogus’ Refugees: Deconstructing How Roma Are Represented in Canadian Media”. The Munk School of Global Affairs Conference, “Europe’s Outsiders: The Persecution, Isolation, and Integration of the Roma (1945-the Present)”, Toronto, March 7-8 [conference expenses fully funded by conference organizers]
- 2012 “When is a Refugee Not a Refugee?: Past and Present Roma Migration to Canada” for the “Migration Without Boundaries” Interdisciplinary Conference at Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI, October 5-6
- 2012 “Gypsy Myths and Romani Realities: Exploring Romani Characterizations in the Buffyverse” for the 5<sup>th</sup> annual Slayage conference, Vancouver, July 12-15
- 2012 “Roma Asylum Seekers in Canada”, as first author with Paul St. Clair and Cynthia Levine-Rasky, for the Canadian Association for Refugee and Forced Migration Studies conference, Toronto, May 16-18
- 2012 “Why Buffy Matters to Anthropology: Examining Gypsy Stereotypes in TV” for the Western Anthropology Graduate Student Inaugural Interdisciplinary Student Conference, London, ON, March 3
- 2011 “Narratives within Numbers: The Importance of Contextualizing Statistics of Governmental Policies” for the American Anthropology Association, Montreal, November 16-20
- 2011 “Categorical Consequences for Refugee Claimants in Canada”, for the “Human Rights Challenges” conference hosted by the Canadian Association for Refugees and Forced Migration Studies, Montreal, May 11-13
- 2010 “The ‘Authentic’ Refugee: The Changing Boundaries of Refugee Definitions and the Impacts on Identities” for the Centre for Refugees Studies Annual Student Conference, York University, April 8-9
- 2010 “Immigration and Refugee Board trends: A Case Study of Romani Claimant Decisions” for the 12<sup>th</sup> National Frontiers of Canadian Migration Metropolis Conference, Montreal, March 18-21
- 2010 “Examining Recent Immigration and Refugee Board Developments through Romani Case Decisions” for the Western Research Forum at Western University, February 27

### **Posters Presented**

- 2011 “Trends and Inconsistencies in Immigration and Refugee Board (IRB) Case Decisions” for the Western Centre of Research in Migration and Ethnic Relations and the Canada-U.S. Institute conference “Taking Stock of a Turbulent Decade and Looking Ahead: Immigration to North America 2000-2010”, London, ON April 28-30
- 2009 “Roma Refugees in Canada” for the 11<sup>th</sup> National Frontiers of Canadian Migration Metropolis Conference, Calgary, March 19-22

### **Discussant**

- 2013 “Anthropologizing Canada” panel for the “Working Anthropology” conference by the Collective Anthropology Project and the Western Anthropology Graduate Society, April 18

### **PUBLIC AND DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS**

- 2013 Publishing workshop speaker, for the Western Anthropology Graduate Society, Western University, December 6
- 2013 “From India to Europe: The Path of the Roma People”, invited panel speaker, along with Lynn Hutchinson Lee. Toronto Public Library speaker series, in conjunction with the Roma Arts Centre. October 29
- 2013 Publishing workshop speaker, for the Western Anthropology Graduate Society, Western University, February 28
- 2012 “Roma Education Session: Working with Roma Communities in Toronto”, with Gina Csanyi-Robah, for the Toronto Police Services, April 12
- 2011 “Getting Published: From Papers to Publications”, with Paul Szpak, for the Western Anthropology Graduate Society, Western University, November 4
- 2011 “Renegotiating Contested Memories and Identities of Romani and Adalucian Histories”, with Elaine McIlwraith for the Anthropology Department Research Seminar, Western University, April 1
- 2010 “Seeing the People in Policy: Understanding Canada’s Immigration and Refugee Board” for the Migration and Ethnic Relations Collaborative Program Colloquium Series, Western University, March 25
- 2008 “Refugee Claims, Community Centres and ‘Gypsy’ Identities: Roma in Canada” for the Seminar “Brown Bag” lecture series, Department of Anthropology, Western University, November 19

### **Invited Class Lectures**

- 2013 “Roma, Refugeeness, and Canadian Identity” for SOC 3318 (Globalization and International Migration), King’s University College at Western University, Dr. K. Lozanski, November 18
- 2013 “Being Canadian? Refugees and Roma” for SOC 3318 (Globalization and International Migration), King’s University College at Western University, Dr. K. Lozanski, May 28

- 2012 “Fieldwork in the Urban Environment: Challenges and Experiences” for ANTH 2201 (The Activist City), Dr. D. St. Christian, Western University, October 17
- 2011 “Researching Roma, Refugee and Immigration Issues in Canada” for ANTH 3301 (Concepts of Societies and Cultures), Dr. S. Larkin, Western University, March 22
- 2010 “Romani National Identities in Canada” for ANTH 3305 (History, Territory and the Politics of Identity), Dr. R. Farah, Western University, November 26
- 2010 “Working on Refugee and Romani Issues in Canada” for ANTH 3301 (Concepts of Societies and Cultures), Dr. S. Larkin, Western University, March 16
- 2009 “Fieldwork and Research on Roma in Canada” for ANTH 2283 (Refugees and the Displaced), Dr. R. Farah, Western University, March 25
- 2008 “Examining the Art of ‘Nature’ and ‘Cities’” for ANTH 2260 (Nature in the City), Dr. A. Premat, Western University, March 4

### **RESEARCH & MATERIAL GRANTS**

- 2013 Canadian Forum on Civil Justice funding through “Cost of Justice: Weighing the Cost of Fair and Effective Resolution to Legal Problems project for the “No Refuge” project with Sean Rehaag and Jennifer Danch
- 2011-2012 Collaborator of the Ontario “Safer and Vital Communities” grant award received by and for the Roma Community Centre for 2011-2012
- 2011 The Regna Darnell Anthropology Graduate Award for Fieldwork
- 2011 Principal applicant for grant approved to create a library at the Roma Community Centre in Toronto received from the RBC Community Grant initiative
- 2010 Welcoming Communities Initiative grant for research dissemination
- 2009 Graduate Collaborative Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations Entrance Scholarship, Western University
- 2008 Graduate Collaborative Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations Entrance Scholarship, Western University

### **SERVICE**

#### **Service to Profession**

- 2013 Peer Reviewer for the journal *Refuge*
- 2013 Symposium Organizer for the Graduate Collaborative Program in Migration and Ethnic Relations Program, April 4
- 2011 – 2013; 2007-2010 Peer Reviewer for TOTEM: Western University Anthropology Student Journal, volumes 16-18, 20-21
- 2012 Graduate mentor for the Western Anthropology Graduate Society
- 2010 – 2011 Conference Organizer for the Western Centre for Research on Migration and Ethnic Relations and the Canada-U.S. Institute, The University of Western Ontario. “Taking Stock of a Turbulent Decade and Looking Ahead – Immigration to North America 2000-2010”, April 28-30, 2011, London, ON

- 2010 – 2011 Co-editor of TOTEM: Western University Anthropology Student Journal, volume 19. [Spearheaded its transition to an online, open access journal]
- 2010 – 2011 Student Representative for the Migration and Ethnic Relations Graduate Program

### **Community Involvement**

- 2013 Submission of affidavit, serving as expert witness for Immigration and Refugee Board federal legal case
- 2012 – 2013 Invited member of the Advocacy Committee for the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers (CARL), Team Leader for Sub-Committee on Roma Issues
- 2012 – 2013 Co-coordinator, Grant Writing Committee for the Roma Community Centre
- 2011 – 2012 Volunteer Assistant for the “Hate Can Kill” project, Roma Community Centre
- 2011 Volunteer for the Canadian Council for Refugees (interviewing and transcribing refugee experiences). Final report: “The Experience of Refugee Claimants at Refugee Hearings at the Immigration and Refugee Board”, January 2012. Available online: [http://ccrweb.ca/files/irb\\_hearings\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://ccrweb.ca/files/irb_hearings_report_final.pdf)
- 2010 – 2012 Volunteer and Committee Member for the Roma Community Centre
- 2008 Volunteer for the Roma Community Centre, Toronto
- 2008 Arranged guest lecturer for the Migration and Ethnic Relations Colloquium Series: Ronald Lee, “Gypsy Myths and Romani Realities”, September 25