

# **Ambitious education: the role of family, school and friends in the development of successful Romany life courses**

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Drawing upon questionnaire data this paper analyses ethno-national identity transformations among a sample of 470 socio-economically mobile Roma in Hungary. The paper concerns a group of Roma who have been successful in escaping the grip of ethnicity-specific poverty. The authors inquire about the extent to which these persons view themselves as Roma and the extent to which they were relatively privileged or disprivileged by their parents' levels of educational attainment. Some variations in the Romany identities assumed or accepted by the mobile respondents are also investigated and these are related to objective and subjective aspects of the respondents' current and especially childhood background. Predictions for respondents' children's identification are also analysed. The article asks what the circumstances are under which intergenerational socio-economic mobility among the Roma is, or is not, associated with identity switch or, alternatively, with the possible variations in patterns of identity retention?

*Keywords:* successful Romany, life courses, Romany identity, Romany mobility, Hungarian Gypsies, negative ethnic discrimination, childhood network, assimilation, segregation, integration

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## Introduction

The essential conclusion of the literature on minority perception is that information concerned with a minority has a special significance and salience for the majority (Hamilton and Gifford 1976). For reasons that lie perhaps in the nature of the construction of cultural difference, everything in a minority group's behaviour which relates to deviance, the violation of majority norms, and the world beyond self-evident assumptions is also a special focus of attention for the majority. The image that the majority constructs of the minority often derives from intensified attention to these aspects: deviance and violation of norms. These become the core of the image which, for the majority, represents the minority.

When developing minority-related mass media, in truly functioning civil societies, editors should strive to ensure that for negatively marked stories, which inevitably occur frequently in newscasts due to the nature of news, there will be no minority connotations. Similarly, editors of fiction programs in mass media ought to ensure that there are minority-member characters who occupy positions and perform acts which are positively evaluated by the majority.

Such practices are not applicable to minority-related social science texts; if such a principle were rigidly applied this would mean the restriction of researchers' academic freedom. However, it should be also noted that scientific communications do not appear in an empty space but constitute a part of social discourse on the given topic. Therefore social science communications on minorities inevitably become a part of the struggle in the arena of identity politics (Stewart 2001).

A considerable proportion of social science papers on the Romany minority in Hungary depict the Roma as a group stricken by social disadvantages and whose disadvantaged position is a source of serious hardship, both for members of the minority and for the majority society (Havas and Kemény 1995; Horváth, Landau and Szalai 2000). Without questioning the appropriateness of this approach, we believe that another direction should also gain ground in this research, a direction which would aim to explore the value correspondence, if any, between the Romany minority and majority society. Amongst other things, this would allow scientific discourse to contribute, according to its own means, to the deconstruction of illusory correlations which tend to be made to the detriment of the Romany minority. In this way, this paper provides a counterpoint to one of our previous studies where we

examined attributive judgments of the majority with respect to prospects for the Roma (Székelyi, Csepele and Örkény 2001).

The aim of challenging unquestioned and damaging assumptions guided us when, in spring 2001, we carried out a survey among Roma who had succeeded in escaping from the grip of ethnic-specific poverty. We wanted to examine the escape routes from the well trodden tunnel that is presumed to exist between the fact of being categorized as a Roma and subsequent poverty. Given that such escape routes exist, to what extent do they involve waiving minority identity, either under some form of constraint or voluntarily? Simultaneously, we made an attempt to find out whether Romany identity can be retained and transferred after implementing an intergenerational 'mobility project' along the lines just mentioned.

### **The socio-demographic features of the sample**

During this study interviewers visited 470 respondents, who were selected on the basis that they identified one or more of their ancestors as Romany. A second criterion of selection was that all respondents should have qualifications from a secondary technical school or higher level of education and/or have a permanent job and/or be apparently well-off. To find eligible survey subjects, names of people who met the specified criteria were provided by local organizations, which were selected on a regional basis from the list of local self-governing Romany organizations throughout Hungary, then, using the snowball method, each respondent led us to additional respondents. Our sample is not representative, and it would be hard to build such a sample, since neither Romany identity, nor the criteria of success are clear cut or explicitly defined in practice.

Our survey aimed to examine correlations between Romany identity as it is operationalised and a specifically defined 'success.' The sample covered four counties of Hungary and the capital, Budapest. The selection of counties more or less followed the modernization slope which spans the country: Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Heves in the North around the cities of Miskolc and Eger, respectively, represented the most backward regions, Baranya in the South around the town of Pécs was considered to be middling-developed, while Győr-Sopron county on the Austrian border and Budapest represented advanced regions.

Of the respondents, 60 per cent were men and 40 per cent were women. Irrespective of how 'Romany identity' and 'success' are operationalised, it is

very unlikely that the proportion of women would be so high in the equivalent segment of the Hungarian population defined on the basis of these two criteria. Therefore, it seems obvious that women are overrepresented in our sample.<sup>1</sup> The average age of respondents was 36, and the female respondents were 4 years younger than the male on average.

Our first task is to show that obtaining a secondary, technical school qualification, which was selected as a criterion of success, did indeed mean a great leap forward, in social terms, for our respondents. The reader should be aware however that the category of 'Roma' is operationalised, the average education of the population then classified under the 'Roma' category is lower than the average education of the 'non-Roma' population simultaneously constructed. Consequently, for people of Romany descent, the facts of obtaining a qualification which exceeds the average education of the Hungarian population (as our criterion of success does) and then taking on the associated social status, lead to a life course where great ambitions are mobilized but at the cost of serious psychic stress.

This suggestion is given greater weight by the following considerations. During a nationally representative survey of social mobility, carried out ten years ago, the percentage of people with a secondary, technical (or higher) qualification, whose father did not complete primary school, was examined. Twenty-nine per cent of the fathers of respondents had not completed primary school, while 42 per cent of the mothers were in the same boat. Twenty-three per cent of the fathers and 13 per cent of the mothers had taken the secondary final or a higher examination themselves. When turning to our Romany respondents with secondary technical (or higher) qualifications, we found that 40 per cent of fathers and 58 per cent of mothers did not complete primary school, while only 8 per cent of fathers and 5 per cent of mothers had secondary-level qualifications. Our Romany success stories collectively have made an even greater leap than their Hungarian counterparts.

We also looked at gender differences in intergenerational mobility. In general, in Hungary, girls with high qualifications typically come from families of higher social status and education than those of boys with similar qualifications. This tendency also manifests itself among the successful Romany population: the families of successful women have much higher status than those of similar men, as Table 1 indicates.

1. This overrepresentation was probably an effect of the snowball method in sample selection.

TABLE 1. Education of parents of 'successful' children (%)

| Education level of fathers           | Fathers of all (N = 453) | Mothers of all (N = 463) | Fathers of men (N = 270) | Fathers of women (N = 183) |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Incomplete primary                   | 41                       | 58                       | 50                       | 25                         |
| Eight primary grades                 | 28                       | 30                       | 28                       | 29                         |
| Secondary technical qualification    | 23                       | 7                        | 16                       | 34                         |
| At least secondary final examination | 8                        | 5                        | 6                        | 12                         |

Other details enrich the background of social mobility. Fifty-seven per cent of all successful Roma were raised as children in dwellings officially classed as 'comfortless.' Currently, 3 per cent of all successful Roma in Hungary live in such dwellings. Two-thirds live in dwellings with all basic domestic comforts and central heating, while 93 per cent have all the basic creature comforts, including a bathroom, toilet, and hot water.

Geographical mobility is also significant when compared with the parental generation. Fifty-eight per cent of parents of successful Roma lived in villages, 13 per cent of them in Gypsy colonies. In contrast, only 31 per cent of respondents dwell in rural areas, and slightly less than 5 per cent of them live in a segregated environment that is predominantly populated by Roma.

### The construction of Romany identity

Recent work on the concept of social identity analyses the interface between self-definition, social appraisal, values and perceived intergroup relations. Turner's social identity theory stresses the fact that human beings tend to evaluate their collective selves positively in terms of their own values, in terms of their 'implicit and explicit ideologies' (Turner 1987). According to social identity theory positive self-categorization of group members is dependent on situational variables. The resulting social identity is psychologically active, determining self-awareness at a given moment. It is created out of the interaction of the perceiver's beliefs, motives, expectations and the social relationships being represented. Instead of seeing the self as a relatively

fixed, separate mental structure that is activated according to the situation, this conception of the self fluctuates between personal and collective identities and it is the salient social identity which both reflects and brings about the actual emergence of intergroup phenomena such as group cohesiveness, polarization of group norms and self-stereotyping. Consequently, the self is a varying concept of the group member and is inherently fluid and flexible due to its comparative, relational origins. The self places the individual in relational terms. In minority groups, such as the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, members find it more difficult to arrive at a secure self-categorization because the group is perceived by others mostly in negative terms.

To define the self as Romany is to represent it in terms of similarities with other constructs categorized as Romany as well as differences from non-Romany entities of social reality. This categorization process is an active process of judgment in which the category of 'Romany' applied to the self is given a specific meaning and form as a function of the particular array of relations being represented. The salient identity of being Romany is not just the activation of a stored, invariant generic concept of 'Romany identity.'

Whatever the interest of these ways of approaching identity, this paper does not aim to expand their theoretical scope. The authors are aware of the vast literature on 'social identity,' 'identity change in minorities' and the issue of 'narratives,' all of which may contribute to the theory of minority identity. Instead of expanding the sphere of scholarly interest in this direction, the authors want to address the narrow and specific problem of the consequences of social mobility among the Roma living in Hungary. As we have seen from previous studies (Ladányi and Szélényi 2000, Csepeli and Simon 2001) this group's salient identity tends to be short of positive affective and cognitive content. This makes the self-identification of those who continue to consider themselves as Roma, despite majority rejection and hostility, both discrepant and worthy of explanation.

For the Romany minority in Hungary, this identification discrepancy is particularly typical (Ladányi and Szélényi 2000; Csepeli and Simon 2001). If we turn to the factors which lead to self-categorization as well as categorization by others as Romany, findings from empirical surveys show that skin color, descent, language, lifestyle/culture, majority distinction and surname are the factors which count above all others (Csepeli, Örkény and Székelyi 1999). The particular features relied upon in any one case vary, however, for the in-group and the out-group.

Our survey sample focused on those people whose self-definition was

based on accepting Romany ascription. The meaning of the category ‘Roma’ seemed to be determined by descent. Most interviewees said that their parents and grandparents, were Romany.

A minority of respondents reported non-Romany ancestors in their families. These families fell into three types. First, a group we label as ‘identity-strengthening’ which is composed of families where the parents consider themselves Roma, although sometimes their parents (i.e., the respondent’s grandparents) might not be considered (or consider themselves) Roma. Second, a group we have called the ‘identity-losing’ type, composed of families where some of the ancestors are not thought to have been Roma and where the parents did not consider themselves Roma either. This type is particularly interesting, because, in contrast to the image given by our respondents of their forebears, when it came to themselves our respondents were not reluctant to identify themselves as Roma. Families in the third type claimed both Hungarian and Romany identities acknowledging both the Hungarian and Romany ancestors.<sup>2</sup>

During the questionnaire, various statements were offered for respondents, with the help of which they could specify their self-identification. Table 3 shows the proportions of statements accepted according to ethnic background. Remember that most respondents had asserted that all four ancestors were Roma. This ‘clean’ ethnic descent background is manifested in the figure of only 5 per cent using the ‘I am a Hungarian’ category. The ‘Roma’ category has either an exclusive or partial role in the self-definition given by the rest (95%). The role of ethnic background for the identity-strengthen-

TABLE 2. The ethnic background of those personally asserting Romany identity (%; N = 468)

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| Romany ancestors only  | 86 |
| Identity-strengthening | 4  |
| Identity-losing        | 3  |
| Dual descent           | 7  |

2. At the outset of the interviews, interviewees were told that *successful Roma* were sought. Only people who acknowledged their Romany descent to some extent undertook to participate in the interviews. In relation to the category of Roma, which carries a negative value for the majority, prospective interviewees often asked us not to let neighbors know that they are subjects of a survey on Roma.

TABLE 3. Relationship between the construction of Romany identity and ethnic background (%)

|  | Romany ancestors only (N = 402) | Identity-strengthening (N = 19) | Identity-losing (N = 14) | Dual identity (NN = 33) | Total (N = 468) |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| I'm a Roma   | 24                              | 19                              |                          | 17                      | 24              |
| I'm a Hungarian Roma                                   | 30                              | 12                              |                          | 12                      | 27              |
| I'm a Hungarian of Roma descent                        | 38                              | 50                              | 33                       | 29                      | 38              |
| I'm a Hungarian  | 5                               | 6                               | 50                       | 29                      | 7               |
| I'm a Hungarian for the Roma and a Roma for Hungarians | 3                               | 13                              | 17                       | 13                      | 4               |

ers is manifested in the high proportion (50%) that accepted the statement 'I'm a Hungarian of Romany descent,' while the rate of exclusive assertions of 'Romany' identity was also relatively high. When we turn to those with an identity-losing background, Romany self-definition diminishes and 'Hungarian' self-identification increases. Among those who assert a dual identity in their background we find all the types of identity construction on offer.

The last row of the table, which comprises those with a discrepant ethnic identity status, is particularly interesting. In this case, respondents hold that their non-Romany neighbours consider them to be Roma, while their Romany neighbours think that they do not now belong to the Romany population. It seems that an ethnic background with mixed (Romany and non-Romany) ancestors favours this kind of discrepancy.

### Scenarios of Romany mobility

Focus group interview surveys were carried out prior to the creation of the questionnaire. These focus groups included people who met our criteria, that is, considered themselves to be of Romany descent and had at least secondary technical or higher qualifications. Based on the analysis of texts

gained from this survey, we selected sentences which condensed the essential ‘truths’ acquired by our respondents during the course of their lives. No one wrote a ‘Lost Illusions’ for the Gypsies, but these sentences highlight the tragic aspects which, according to our respondents, accompany the conflict between being identified as a Gypsy and movement up the social ladder.<sup>3</sup> The statements listed below were offered to respondents who were asked to select those statements which *their parents* thought to be true. We hoped in this way to find a vein of reasoning back into our respondents’ childhoods and discover what their parents thought and what kind of social scenarios had been transmitted to our respondents and their siblings by their parents.

- Roma resent someone who wants to learn.
- Only people who deny their Romany descent can manage.
- For Roma, a rise up the social scale will only bring unhappiness.
- There’s no hope of breaking out without a favorable family background.
- Prejudice prevents Roma from rising.
- Roma who want to rise are able to rise.
- The success of one Rom helps the entire Romany community.
- Society gives the opportunity for social improvement to Roma who make the effort to be successful.

Based on the pattern that emerged from the answers collected, these eight statements were grouped along three typical ‘scenarios’ (see Table 4). The first is identical with the classic scenario written by Balzac (for his leading character, Lucien Rubempré). Respondents who agreed with these statements believe, like Lucien Rubempré, that social elevation can be achieved given strong will. These people look upon the success of individual Roma as a means of creating a more positive judgment about the entire Romany community and they attribute great importance in this whole process to the possibility of integration provided by Hungarian society. The second cluster of answers provided us with a scenario we named after Oliver Twist, Charles Dickens’s wretched protagonist. This is a ‘no chance’ scenario. Those who hold to this scenario believe that the disadvantages deriving from bad family background are devastating. These disadvantages persist due to the prejudices of the majority society. The third scenario was named after Julien Sorel, the protagonist created by Stendhal. In this, the serious psychic

3. *Lost Illusions*, by Honoré Balzac, tells the story of a young man’s moral journey as he moves from the provinces to Paris in post-Napoleonic France.

TABLE 4. Scenarios of mobility, principal component factor score matrix

|   | Lucien<br>Rubempré | Oliver<br>Twist | Julien<br>Sorel |
|---|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Roma resent someone who wants to learn                                    |                    |                 | .718            |
| Only people who deny their Romany descent can manage                      |                    |                 | .694            |
| For Roma, social elevation will only bring about unhappiness              |                    |                 | .681            |
| There's no hope of breaking out without a favorable family background     |                    | .841            |                 |
| Prejudice prevents Roma from rising socially                              |                    | .841            |                 |
| Roma who want to raise themselves can do so                               | .724               |                 |                 |
| The success of one Rom helps the entire Romany community                  | .787               |                 |                 |
| Society provides the opportunity for mobility to Roma who make the effort | .773               |                 |                 |

*Note:* Principal component analysis is a method of aggregation which aims at preserving as much information from the original variables as possible. The factor matrix shows how far the respondents' answers determine the new, aggregated variable, namely, the factor score. One should see the Principal component of Lucien Rubempré as a scale ranging roughly from  $-3$  to  $+3$ , in which the high, positive value represents a position in which the respondent agrees fully with the three statements used in the construction of the principal component. In order to make the table more readable, we left out scores which fell around 0, since these are not constitutive of the principal component. This explains the blank cells on the table.

price of success and social elevation is emphasized, just as in the original novel. For those who interpret social elevation with this scenario, social mobility is accompanied by a necessary denial of identity as well as personal unhappiness. Table 5 shows that the scenario of conflict-free mobility (Rubempré) was emphasized in families where the father had completed secondary technical school. The model of conflict-filled mobility (Sorel) had a greater role in families where the father's education was a whole level lower (primary school only). Despair (Twist) can be found in the case of the most

unfavourable family background (the father had not completed the eight primary grades).

None of the scenarios were confirmed in families where the father had secondary school education. This group strongly rejected the scenarios named after Oliver Twist and Julien Sorel, but they did not accept the Lucien Rubempré scenario either. One possible explanation for this is that these respondents, who derive from families with a high level of cultural capital, feel obliged to provide properly complex answers and so don't feel that any one of the profiles genuinely marks their own, individual, personal and un-repeatable experience.

**Subjective/objective status and mobility scenarios**

We assumed that behind the various mobility scenarios, the degree to which someone identifies him/herself with the different narratives is influenced greatly by that person's perception of success, the ethnic identity assumed during social mobility and the perception of potential social conflicts that might arise as a result of social elevation. To test this assumed relationship, we aggregated latent variables in each dimension using principal component analysis. The latent independent variables were the following:

- The status index derived from the respondent's educational level, eco-

TABLE 5. Mobility Scenarios by the Father's Education, mean scores of the principal component

|                                      | Lucien<br>Rubempré | Oliver<br>Twist | Julien<br>Sorel |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Incomplete primary level             | -.02               | .09             | -.02            |
| Eight primary grades                 | -.05               | .01             | .11             |
| Skilled worker                       | .10                | -.04            | -.09            |
| At least secondary final examination | -.10               | -.28            | -.28            |

*Note:* Scores in the principal component fall in general between -3 and +3. In the table we have averaged the scores on the axis of the father's educational level. Positive scores represent degrees of agreement with the the scenarios, negatives scores the inverse.

conomic status and the family's income per capita, what one might call 'objective success';<sup>4</sup>

- The variable of subjective success aggregated from perceived satisfaction with financial, professional and private life;<sup>5</sup>
- the dichotomous variable of acknowledgement of Romany identity—expressing acknowledgement or denial of this identity.<sup>6</sup>
- the perception of negative discrimination which measured negative ethnic discrimination in fifteen possible dimensions of life.<sup>7</sup>

Later these principal components were used in models devised to explain the mobility scenarios.

Julien Sorel's conflict-filled mobility model was especially frequent among respondents who felt that they suffered many disadvantages throughout their lives, merely because they were born Roma.

In contrast, respondents who thought, irrespective of their objective status,<sup>8</sup> that they had achieved much in terms of both social status and personal

4. Factor loadings of the variables composing the principal component measuring status. Measurement of status was most importantly determined by the income per capital in the household and the level of educational attainment of the respondent, as well as, though to a lesser extent, the material circumstances of the family. High status thus corresponds to a good material and financial situation as well as high educational achievement, and low status the inverse of these.

|  | Component |
|--|-----------|
| Level of education   | .762      |
| Economic status (housing conditions, valuable personal properties) | .495      |
| Income per capita  | .790      |

Note: Extraction method: principal component analysis

5. The factor loadings of the variables composing the principal component measuring subjective success:

|                                   | Component |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| Professional satisfaction         | .797      |
| Satisfaction with living standard | .452      |
| Satisfaction with private life    | .705      |

Note: Extraction method: principal component analysis

6. The score of 1 corresponds to the assumption of Romany identity and 0 to its rejection.

7. Respondents mentioned three areas on average in which they suffered discrimination, but the heterogeneity of the answers is quite great. The standard deviation is 3.55.

8. Partial regression coefficients were used.

TABLE 6. The explanatory (regression) model for Lucien Rubempré’s mobility scenario

| Model                                 | Standardized coefficients Beta | t      | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|------|
| Objective Status index                | -.195                          | -2.909 | .004 |
| Perception of negative discrimination | -.239                          | -3.631 | .000 |
| Subjective success                    | .191                           | 2.795  | .006 |

existence, that is, who had a high evaluation of their own status, tended to interpret their rise according to the Lucien Rubempré scenario.

Table 6 shows that the Lucien Rubempré scenario was successfully explained with the elements of objective and subjective status ( $R^2 = 12\%$ ), the first two variables listed above.<sup>9</sup> This correlation is made all the more plausible by the fact that those who hold themselves to be successful, despite a low objective status, and who simultaneously feel that they have suffered little discrimination due to their Romany ancestry, are especially prone to identify with Lucien Rubempré. The lack of experienced disadvantage plays a role in the explanation, indicating that a strong affective charge underlies this mobility script. The explanatory power of objective and subjective status is almost identical, although they have opposite signs. This sign-switch indicates that large-scale intergenerational mobility brings forth disharmonic sentiments, while subjective satisfaction with status brightens the way to success.

Respondents following Julian Sorel’s mobility path cannot be characterized by their social status or subjective appraisal of success. To the contrary,

TABLE 7. The explanatory (regression) model for Julien Sorel’s mobility scenario

| Model                                 | Standardized coefficients Beta | t      | Sig. |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|------|
| Perception of negative discrimination | .130                           | 2.669  | .008 |
| Acknowledgement of Romany identity    | -.100                          | -2.063 | .040 |

9.  $R^2 = 12\%$  is considered a high explanatory level as we have measured attitudes.

this scenario shows respondents living in a frustrated position and with an identity crisis. Table 7 includes the result of regression analysis (here the explanatory power of the model is quite low:  $R^2 = 3\%$ ), which shows that the more disadvantages respondents experienced due to being a Gypsy, the more they feel that the way to success is paved with unhappiness just as Julian Sorel did. It is the same, or even worse, if they deny their Roma descent.

### Childhood network and identity narratives

The mobility scenarios which were at work within particular families of origin, whether conflictual or harmonic, could never have become effective if the environment outside the family did not facilitate mobility. In our research we assumed that residential setting and school had a key role in this process, that is, mobility was successful if the residential district and the school were not segregated.

In the questionnaire we therefore asked what kind of residential environment respondents lived in, whether in a segregated Romany setting within a larger settlement, or whether they had formed a little ‘wedge’ nested among the non-Romany majority. Respondents were also asked what percentage of their classmates they could remember from the eighth grade who were also Roma. In addition, the composition of our respondents’ network of friends within and outside school was examined.

Thirty-seven per cent of our interviewees lived in their childhood in locations populated mainly by Hungarians. Almost two-thirds finished their studies at a primary school where the proportion of Romany children was

TABLE 8. Mobility strategies in childhood (%)

|                            |     |
|----------------------------|-----|
| Assimilation               | 26  |
| Integration                | 21  |
| Segregation                | 4   |
| Assimilation + segregation | 1   |
| Integration + segregation  | 4   |
| Assimilation + Integration | 24  |
| All three                  | 20  |
| N = 373                    | 100 |

TABLE 9. The structure of the discriminant function for Romany identity structure matrix

|                              | Function |
|------------------------------|----------|
| Childhood status             | -.737    |
| Childhood assimilation       | -.639    |
| Childhood mixed setting      | .673     |
| Childhood segregated setting | .278     |

less than 20 per cent. Seventeen per cent of interviewees made friends with Hungarian children only at school. Thirty-two per cent of all friendships outside school were made with non-Romany children.

A typology was created on the basis of the four indicators—ethnic structure of the settlement of the respondents in early childhood; ethnic structure of the class in primary school; personal position in the class; cultural quality of social network in childhood. This shows that 26 per cent of interviewees lived in circumstances which favored assimilation from early childhood, while 21 per cent were fully integrated and 4 per cent segregated. The results for 49 per cent of interviewees are indeterminate using this broad brush scale.

If we seek the answer to the question of how mobility influences Romany identity, it will be expedient to build models using discriminant analysis.<sup>10</sup> Table 9 shows the structure of the discriminant function which helps explain whether respondents lost or retained their identification with the category ‘Roma’ during social mobility. This function reveals that ‘status’ and the ‘assimilation strategy of the family’ are associated, and both variables are inversely related to the presence of Roma in earlier childhood settings. Therefore a high status family of origin and low proportion of Roma in the childhood friendship network do not facilitate retaining and maintaining

10. Discriminant analysis is a method of characterizing different subgroups within a population. The procedure is to take the variables which characterise the subgroups and combine them into one variable. This new variable is the discriminant function. The significance of the discriminant function can be read from the structure matrix. The elements of the structure matrix show the correlation between the variable and the discriminant function. The combination of particular explanatory variables generates the greatest possible difference among the different groups.

Romany identity in adulthood.<sup>11</sup> In contrast, adult Romany identity becomes stronger if the status of the originating family was lower and the childhood friendship network included both Roma and non-Romany children.

In the light of Table 9, findings included in Table 10 will not come as a surprise. This table shows that for respondents who identified themselves with the Romany minority (that is, they said that they are Roma, Hungarian Roma or Hungarian of Romany descent), the mean values of the discriminant function above are much higher than those for respondents who identified themselves as Hungarians. For the latter group, the non-Romany setting obviously contributed to the disappearance of Romany identity and the emergence of Hungarian identity.

Irrespective of the predominant scenario, Romany mobility is associated with the likelihood of losing or at least lessening Romany identity. Consequently, another point to be explored was how the successful Roma, included in the survey, imagined the prospective identity of their children. The tendency towards loss of Romany identity seems to manifest itself in the prospects that respondents expect for their children, as well as their recollection of the attitudes found in their own family background. An index was created from answers given to two questions. One of these questions focused on the perceived likelihood of descendants' assimilation, and the other question aimed to reveal the desirability of assimilation. When handling the answers given to these two questions together, three groups of respondents were distinguished. The *consciously assimilative* are respondents who thought that it was both likely and desirable that their children would not identify themselves with the Romany minority. The *passively assimila-*

TABLE 10. Means of the discriminant function for keepers and losers of Romany identity

|                  | Function |
|------------------|----------|
| Identity-losers  | -.492    |
| Identity-keepers | .102     |

11. The effect of childhood status and childhood friendship network on the strength of adulthood Romany identity was examined through a simple discriminant analysis.

TABLE 11. Respondents' predictions on the identity of their children (%; N = 470)

|                          |    |
|--------------------------|----|
| Consciously assimilative | 25 |
| Passively assimilative   | 47 |
| Dissimilative            | 29 |

*tive* refers to respondents who thought that it was likely that their children would not identify themselves with the Romany group, but were not glad about this prospect. Respondents who thought that their children would remain conscious members of the Romany community were considered *dissimilative*.<sup>12</sup>

The predicted identification path of the next generation was explained through discriminant analysis. Explanatory variables included the present social status of respondents, the index of acknowledging/denying their own minority identity and the index of knowledge about Romany culture, language and public life.<sup>13</sup>

Table 12 shows the structure of the discriminant function. This function spans a scale, on the positive half of which acknowledging Romany minority identity and possessing the actual knowledge or 'basic elements' of Romany identity are associated with a higher-than-average status.

TABLE 12. The structure of the discriminant function for children's predicted Romany identity

|   | Function |
|---|----------|
| Acknowledgement of Romany identity          | .856     |
| Awareness of Romany culture and public life | .569     |
| Current status                              | .184     |

*Note:* The elements of the structure matrix are correlations between the original variables and the discriminant function.

12. It would have been useful to separate out the group of respondents who were unhappy about their children remaining Roma, but the small sample size hindered this breakdown.

13. This index shows if respondents know any of the languages used by Roma apart from the State language and are aware of named Romany organizations, politicians or art groups.

TABLE 13. Discriminant function means and predictions on children's identity, mean scores

|                          |       |
|--------------------------|-------|
| Consciously assimilative | -.700 |
| Passively assimilative   | .177  |
| Dissimilative            | .297  |

Table 13 brings no surprises. Apparently, respondents who have strong assimilative expectations with respect to their children's identity are themselves at a distance from Romany identity and do not know much about Romany culture. (Moreover, in this case we know that their parents did not maintain their identity either.) However, among respondents who predict that their children may keep their Romany identity, that is among the passively assimilative, elements of the knowledge base required to maintain Romany identity are markedly manifest.

### Assimilation and Mobility

Assimilation is an intergenerational process spanning at least three generations. Romany identity may be replaced by purely Hungarian identity in the third generation of the mobility project. For our respondents this is a project launched by their own parents, who saw that their children might be able to break out from the grip of poverty and then taught these children that they should be prepared to live among non-Roma if they want to succeed. Our respondents are now or have been transferring this pattern to their children.

This tendency towards assimilation prevails especially when weakening Romany identity is associated with a relatively high status and a neglect of Romany culture. Among the consciously assimilative the price to be paid for achievement and success is children's identity loss, which means that no trace of the 'Gypsy' category—negatively evaluated by the majority—is left in their identity.

A sharply different situation arises when respondents were raised in disadvantaged families and had to fight discrimination during their primary and secondary socialization, whatever the age at which they left school or immediate surroundings. In this case, mobility is not associated with an identity switch and Romany identity, tainted by memories of discrimination,

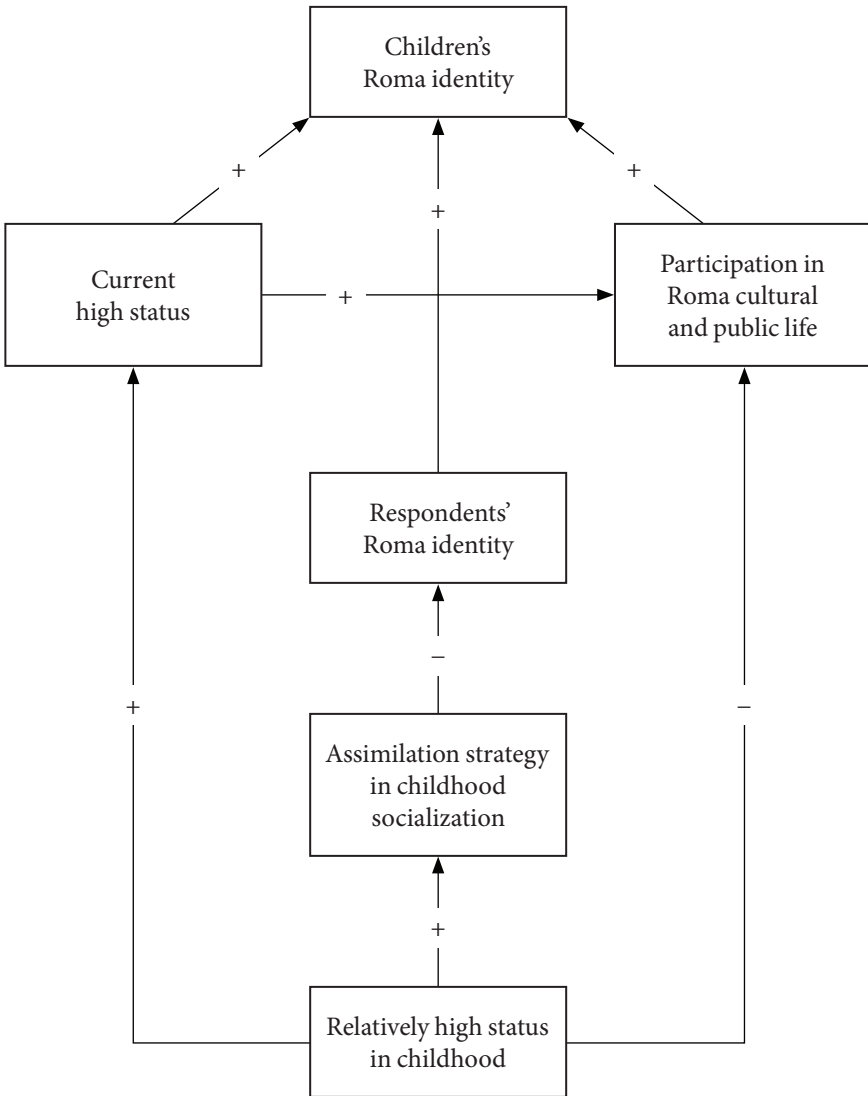


FIGURE 1. The model of factors influencing respondents' own and their children's identity. In this model the arrows represent the direction of effect, the + sign signifies that an intensification of this factor goes together with an intensification of the affected variable, and the - sign indicates that an intensification of this factor leads to a weakening of the affected variable.

is retained. However, although the Romany category remains, it is a conduit for disharmony in a person's identity. In these cases, provided that the trends identified from the sample described in this study do not change, conscious assimilation will be the fate of grandchildren.

However, there is an alternative to assimilation. Achieved high status does not automatically block the way to retention of Romany identity but allows a pattern of socialization in the family, a prominent part of which is the transfer of Romany identity—but in a way which is not dominated by the 'Gypsy' image created by the majority. In this pattern, the aspects of majority-defined success can be created, while minority descent or affiliation is retained, enhanced and treated as a positive source of identification. Mobility, which uproots members of the Romany minority from their disadvantaged social position, is only one of the conditions which determine this pattern. Another, at least equally important condition is that members of the society which defines itself as Hungarian should be ready to re-evaluate, on the basis of the values of a civil society, the minorities alongside which they live and learn to respect Romany identity.

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