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*THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND
EVERYDAY RACISM ON THE PSYCHOSOCIAL
WELL-BEING OF ROMA FAMILIES*

DOCTORAL THESIS

- ABSTRACT -

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
COMMUNITY A / COMMUNITY B	Marginalised urban areas within a major urban centre in Transylvania (coded names)
AFI	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
APA	American Psychiatric Association
CNSM	National Centre for Mental Health
C-PTSD	Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
DSM-5	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
EEB	European Environmental Bureau
ENAR	European Network Against Racism
ERGO Network	European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HITT	Historical Intergenerational Trauma Transmission
HITT-Q	Historical Intergenerational Trauma Transmission Questionnaire
NASEM	National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (U.S.)
OB1, OB2, OB3	Specific research objectives

Abbreviation	Meaning
WHO	World Health Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UN	United Nations
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSF	Open Society Foundation
PL-x	Draft law
PND	National Development Plan
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
RBTS	Race-Based Traumatic Stress
SAMHSA	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
SSPTS	Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome
EU	European Union
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

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TERMINOLOGICAL CLARIFICATION – EPISTEMOLOGICAL POSITIONING

The use of the term “*Gypsy*” in this thesis does not reflect a terminological choice made by the researcher, nor does it validate the historical or social connotations associated with it. The term is used exclusively in clearly defined analytical contexts – either in the faithful citation of historical sources, official documents, or academic works, or in the reproduction of the discourses of the interviewed social actors – in order to preserve the scientific accuracy and authenticity of the empirical material.

INTRODUCTION

The personal and professional motivation behind this research endeavour is rooted in the experience gained over more than twenty years of work in the field of child protection and social inclusion. I have observed a major discrepancy between the realities experienced by Roma communities and the way in which public institutions and policies respond to these realities, a discrepancy generated in part by the lack of in-depth knowledge of Roma history and culture among professionals in the social, educational, medical, and legal fields.

The current circumstances of Roma communities are inseparable from a continuum of collective traumatic events: slavery (1385–1856), the interwar period (1920–1940) with its biopolitics and eugenics, the Holocaust (1942–1944), and persistent anti-Gypsyism. Together, these events continue to shape family dynamics, collective identity, and the relationship between Roma communities and state institutions.

Specialised studies show that Roma people exhibit a higher prevalence of depression, anxiety, and other post-traumatic symptoms compared to the majority population, a difference explained by socio-structural factors and cumulative experiences of trauma (Guerrero et al., 2024; Dagli et al., 2025).

According to data from the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2014, 2019, 2022), over 70% of Roma live in substandard housing, and the employment rate is below 50%, creating a context of chronic precariousness. The literature introduces the concept of *structural trauma* (Orton et al., 2019; Guerrero et al., 2024), defining the psychological suffering generated by unjust institutional systems – educational, medical, administrative – that perpetuate exclusion and racism. In this context, trauma among Roma is multidimensional: it combines historical violence (slavery, eugenics, the Holocaust, communism), systemic discrimination, poverty, and cultural marginalisation (CNSM, 2025; ERGO Network, 2022). The focus of the research is to analyse the impact of historical trauma and everyday racism on the psychosocial well-being of Roma, with an emphasis on intergenerational transmission, parenting practices, coping mechanisms, and community resilience.

The research questions focus on how historical trauma and racial discrimination are perceived and experienced, how they are transmitted within Romani families, what coping and resilience strategies are developed, and the perspectives of Romani specialists on solutions for social justice and inclusion. This study adopts a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive approach, centred on a deep understanding of the subjective experiences resulting from intergenerationally transmitted trauma or those experienced by research participants under the influence of sociocultural processes throughout their lifetimes (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The structure of the thesis reflects an integrated vision: Chapter I unifies definitions of trauma with major historical events; Chapter II constructs the analytical framework of the research by integrating multiple theories; Chapter III analyses the contemporary context of marginalization; Chapter IV explores the traditional structure of the Romani family and the impact of trauma on family dynamics; Chapter V is dedicated to the research methodology; Chapter VI highlights the research findings; Chapter VII integrates and synthesises the research findings; and Chapter VIII offers conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter I - **conceptualization of trauma in the context of the roma** - analyses the major traumatic events that have marked the history of the Roma, demonstrating their continuous and multidimensional nature. Slavery (1385–1856) instituted the first system of state-sanctioned violence, reducing Roma to the status of property and systematically dehumanising them. The interwar period brought the “scientific” legitimisation of racism through the discourse of eugenics and biopolitics, with figures such as Iordache Făcăoaru and Sabin Manuilă proposing mass sterilisation and deportation. The Roma Holocaust resulted in the extermination of between 200,000 and 500,000 people, and the lack of official recognition for decades perpetuated the trauma of silence. The communist period brought about a *cultural trauma of invisibility* through forced assimilation and the erasure of ethnic identity from the public sphere. The chapter concludes that the trauma of the Roma cannot be understood as a succession of disconnected episodes, but rather as a continuum of oppression, from slavery to the present.

Chapter II - **theoretical models for understanding the transmission and manifestation of trauma among roma** - constructs the integrated theoretical framework of the research. The theory of historical trauma (Brave Heart, 1998; Sotero, 2006) conceptualises trauma as an accumulation of suffering that is transmitted across generations. Complementing this, the intergenerational transmission model (Danieli, 1998; Kellermann, 2001) highlights the role of traumatic silence and parenting styles in perpetuating trauma. The HITT-Q model (Starrs & Békés, 2024) introduces the notion of *insidious trauma* – subtle, everyday forms of discrimination. Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (SSPTS) (DeGruy, 2005) identifies three behavioural dimensions: low self-esteem, ever-present anger, and the internalisation of the dominant racial ideology. The theory of everyday racism (Essed, 1991) and race-based traumatic stress (Carter & Pieterse, 2020) show that daily microaggressions produce effects similar to PTSD. Completing the framework, critical race theory (Crenshaw, 1991; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), cultural trauma theory (Alexander, 2004), resilience theory (Ungar, 2012; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004), and the ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) allow for a multidimensional analysis of the phenomenon.

Chapter III - **structural exclusion of the roma: from stereotypes to poverty and spatial injustice** - analyses contemporary mechanisms of structural exclusion. The genesis of stereotypes is illustrated through the concept of *pariah* (Weber, 1917–1919; Arendt, 1944), and the term “*Gypsy*” is presented as an external construct with deeply degrading connotations, in contrast to the self-identification “*Rom.*” Persistent stereotypes – laziness, filth, criminality – are also fuelled by racist statements from high-ranking officials. Roma poverty is multidimensional, defined by six critical dimensions (fundamental rights, health, education, housing, standard of living, employment), and approximately 80% of Roma live below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold. Poverty and historical trauma are deeply interconnected, functioning as a “*self-perpetuating cycle*” (Sotero, 2006). Spatial injustice and ecological racism manifest through forced evictions and the relocation of Roma communities to polluted areas, such as landfills or contaminated industrial sites.

Chapter IV - **the roma family and parenting** - explores the traditional structure of the Romani family and how historical trauma has affected family dynamics. The family is presented as a fundamental value of Romani culture, with an extended structure (three to four generations under one roof), well-established gender roles, and the concept of *Romanipen* as an expression of identity and moral code. The impact of trauma on family dynamics manifests itself through defensive parenting and overprotection, traumatic silence (Danieli, 1998), the emotional transmission of fear, and the internalisation of stigma. Roma parents develop overcompensation strategies, teaching their children to be “*ten times better*” and to become invisible in order to avoid discrimination. The identity crisis arises from the tension between the pressures of assimilation and the desire to preserve cultural identity, leading to acculturation and the loss of the Romani language among younger generations. The chapter’s conclusion emphasises that defensive parenting and traumatic silence, though initially survival strategies, have become factors perpetuating vulnerability and blocking social mobility.

Chapter V, dedicated to **research methodology**, presents the conceptual and procedural framework of the study, which falls within the qualitative paradigm, aiming to explore in depth the experiences of historical trauma and everyday racism experienced by Romani families. We opted for a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019), informed by an interpretative phenomenological lens (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). This approach combines the advantages of both frameworks: sensitivity to subjective experience and context (the phenomenological lens) with the ability to identify common patterns across a larger sample (N=48) through systematic coding and theme generation procedures (reflexive thematic analysis). By “*interpretative phenomenological lens*,” we mean the attention paid to how participants attribute meaning to their own experiences, without strictly following the AFI’s idiographic protocol.

The **overall objective** of the research is to explore and analyse the impact of historical trauma and everyday racism on the psychosocial well-being of Roma in two marginalised urban areas within a major urban centre in Transylvania.

The **research questions** are as follows:

1. How is historical trauma perceived and experienced, and how does it influence Roma ethnic identity, daily life, and roles?
2. How are experiences of racial discrimination perceived and experienced, and how do they influence Roma ethnic identity, daily life, and roles?
3. How is the intergenerational transmission of trauma and discrimination carried out within Romani families?
4. What individual coping strategies and community resilience mechanisms are developed to address everyday racism and historical traumas, and how do these function in practice?
5. To what extent have the specialists' Roma identity and their experiences influenced their professional trajectory and their perspective on their work?
6. How do Romani specialists and experts interpret the impact of historical trauma and everyday racism on Romani communities, and what solutions do they identify for resilience, social justice, and inclusion?

The research consists of **three qualitative studies**, as follows.

Study 1 examines the link between experiences of historical trauma and current collective traumas through individual interviews. The specific objectives aim to analyse the structural context, document institutional racism, and identify public policy solutions.

- **OB1:** Analyse how collective historical events (slavery, the Holocaust, deportations, communism) are preserved and transmitted through oral tradition in personal narratives.
- **OB2:** Identify experiences of everyday racism and “*insidious trauma*” in interactions with state institutions (schools, police, healthcare system). Analyse how trauma shapes parenting styles, silences, and communication norms within the family.
- **OB3:** Assess contemporary manifestations of systemic discrimination, such as forced evictions, police abuse, and judicial bureaucracy.

The study involved **22 Roma participants** from two marginalised urban areas (COMMUNITY A and COMMUNITY B) in a major urban centre in

Transylvania, aged between 18 and 75, who were administered the Interview Guide (Appendix 2).

Study 2 used focus groups as its research method, comprising three groups of community members, which pursued the following specific objectives: analysing the collective construction of meaning, observing identity dynamics, identifying taboos and collective emotions, and validating lived experiences.

- **OB1:** Explore how the group collectively defines and negotiates the concepts of identity, trauma, and resilience.
- **OB2:** Capture shared emotional reactions (shame, pride, hope) and sensitive topics that cause tension or consensus within the group.
- **OB3:** Facilitate a space for mutual recognition where individual suffering is transformed into community solidarity.

For Study 2, **21 Roma individuals** participated, also from the two marginalised urban areas (COM. A and COM. B) in a major urban centre in Transylvania, who took part in three focus groups (10 people in focus group no. 1; 6 people in focus group no. 2; 5 people in the third focus group), to whom the Interview Guide (Appendix 4) was administered.

To ensure the relevance and methodological consistency of the study, participants in individual interviews and focus groups were selected based on the following eligibility criteria (detailed in the full thesis).

Study 3 specifically sought to document institutional racism and identify public policy solutions; to this end, we conducted interviews with Romani specialists/experts who analyse the structural context in detail.

- **OB1:** Understand the global systems of oppression and racialisation that underpin the current vulnerability of communities.
- **OB2:** Assess how historical trauma translates into everyday vulnerability at the level of public policy.
- **OB3:** Identify public policy solutions and proposals for intervention strategies based on an anti-racist approach and professional expertise gained through activism and mediation.

In this research, it was considered important to also include the perspective of five Romani specialists/experts working in the fields of social inclusion,

academic research, and the civic movement, to add depth to the analysis, as these professionals have dual experience: they know the realities of the community from the inside and, at the same time, understand how the institutions and public policies that influence the lives of Roma people function. The Interview Guide (Appendix 3) was administered to them.

For Roma specialists, the eligibility criteria were as follows: self-identification as a person of Roma ethnicity; pre-existing collaborative relationships with the researcher, developed in the context of joint Roma activism and moral obligations toward the community from which we come; proven expertise in the field of social inclusion and the promotion of Roma rights; at least five years of professional experience in the field of social inclusion, human rights, academic research, or civic activism with or about Roma communities; willingness to reflect on the impact of historical trauma and racism on Roma communities and to propose institutional solutions.

Table

2

Distribution of participants by data collection method

Criterion	Individual interviews	Focus groups	Expert interviews
No. of interviews	22	21	5
Participants , background	Residents of marginalised communities and neighbourhoods in a major urban centre in Transylvania	Residents of marginalised communities and neighbourhoods in a major urban centre in Transylvania	Specialists active in social interventions in Roma communities from various Roma institutions and organisations
Level of education	Between 0 and 12 grades	0 to 10th grade	Higher education
Age range	18–75 years	18–60 years	44–57 years
Interview	Semi-structure	Semi-structure	Semi-structured-reflectiv

Criterion	Individual interviews	Focus groups	Expert interviews
type	d	d	e

In the three studies, we used three distinct methodological tools to capture the multidimensional impact of trauma and racism: an individual interview guide for community members (Appendix 2), an interview guide for specialists (Appendix 3), and a focus group interview guide (Appendix 4).

The development of the interview guides was based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that brings together the concepts of historical trauma, intergenerational transmission, everyday racism, and race-based traumatic stress. First, to explain the cumulative effects of collective traumatic events (such as slavery, genocide, and the communist era) on subsequent generations, the concept of historical trauma (HT) was introduced (Brave Heart, 1998). In a recent analysis, Starrs and Békés (2024) developed the HITT (Historical Intergenerational Trauma Transmission) model, which identifies five major dimensions of transmission: family vulnerability, descendant vulnerability, family resilience, descendant resilience, and historical moral trauma.

Data analysis followed the six-phase model of reflexive thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2019), adapted to the specific nature of qualitative research and the interpretative-phenomenological approach. Coding was performed manually, using a system of colours and annotations on the printed versions of the transcripts, to maintain direct contact with the data.

Data collection took place in three distinct phases over several years (2018–2025), given the complexity of the topic and the need to adapt to the socio-historical context (including the COVID-19 pandemic period). All interactions with participants took place in their natural environment – in the homes of representative individuals from marginalised urban communities (COM. A and COM. B), as well as at social service offices.

The quality of the research was ensured through the triangulation of methods (individual interviews, focus groups, interviews with specialists), the

researcher's prolonged involvement in the community, continuous reflexivity documented in the research journal, as well as through the ethical commitment to return knowledge to the participating community (*giving back*), constituting a form of indirect validation.

Chapter VI - **research findings** - presents, from the perspective of reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2019) informed by an interpretative phenomenological lens (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), the results obtained in the qualitative research on the impact of historical trauma and everyday racism on the psychosocial well-being of Roma families, for the three types of methods used.

Study 1 – Individual interviews (22 participants)

Roma ethnic identity – between belonging and stigma - Roma ethnic identity is experienced as a dual existential condition, oscillating between pride in belonging and internalised stigma. Participants embrace their identity with resigned dignity (*“this is my people, I must die with them”*), while others assert it as a form of resistance against social exclusion (Brave Heart, 1998). This ambivalence confirms the theory of double consciousness, in which minorities perceive their identity through the filter of the majority's stigmatising gaze (Du Bois, 1903).

Historical trauma and everyday racism - Everyday racism is perceived by participants not as an isolated event, but as a painful state of normality, a *“habit of marginalisation”* internalised over generations. Experiences of humiliation in public spaces and territorial segregation reactivate the collective memory of slavery and deportations, confirming the ongoing nature of historical trauma (Essed, 1991). This continuity between the traumatic past and the discriminatory present validates Sotero's (2006) theoretical model, which posits four essential characteristics of historical trauma.

Intergenerational transmission - The transmission of trauma across generations occurs predominantly through silence and emotional inheritance, not through explicit narratives. Participants report the absence of stories about slavery or deportations within the family, but the presence of a fear transmitted unconsciously through implicit messages of caution and distrust (Danieli, 1998).

This “*traumatic silence*” functions as a pedagogy of survival, in which children inherit not stories, but defensive attitudes toward the world.

Relationship with institutions - The Roma’s relationship with state institutions is marked by deep mistrust and resigned acceptance, as an adaptive response to repeated experiences of discrimination and institutional humiliation. Participants describe interactions in which their dignity is called into question, ranging from being refused service in stores to differential treatment in hospitals and city halls (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). This distrust represents a manifestation of internalised cultural trauma, confirming that the relationship with institutions cannot be understood without integrating the historical dimension of oppression.

Resilience - Despite marginalisation, Roma communities develop remarkable resources of resilience, rooted in traditional values such as cleanliness, work, solidarity, religious faith, and extended family cohesion. Participants do not define themselves through victimhood but through a form of moral resistance that transforms suffering into a source of dignity and cultural continuity (Ungar, 2012). Roma women, in particular, emerge as the primary agents of this resilience.

Analysis of the individual interviews reveals that Romani identity is experienced as a dual reality, caught between the pride of belonging and internalised stigma, and that historical trauma is not perceived as an isolated event, but as a continuum of oppression manifested through everyday racism, territorial segregation, and repeated microaggressions. Intergenerational transmission occurs predominantly through silence and emotional inheritance, not through explicit narratives, and the relationship with institutions is marked by deep mistrust as an adaptive response to repetitive experiences of discrimination (Danieli, 1998; Sotero, 2006). Despite marginalisation, participants develop remarkable resources of resilience rooted in traditional values – cleanliness, work, solidarity, faith – and Romani women emerge as the primary agents of this resilience, transforming suffering into a source of dignity and cultural continuity (Ungar, 2012).

Study 2 – Focus groups (22 participants, 3 focus groups)

Identity and family - In the focus groups, Romani identity emerges simultaneously as a legacy, a burden, and a source of dignity, constantly negotiated between self-perception and the image imposed from the outside. Participants state that difference is not self-attributed but experienced through the eyes of others (*"I don't see myself as different, but others see me as different"*), and the family becomes the primary space for transmitting ethnic dignity (Goffman, 1963). This pride in identity is passed on to younger generations as a fundamental value, with parents teaching their children never to deny their origins.

Everyday racism - The everyday racism experienced by the participants manifests itself not only through extreme acts, but above all through a series of repeated humiliations, ranging from forced evictions to the segregation of children in schools and refusal of service in stores. These experiences rekindle the collective memory of slavery and deportations, transforming the present into a continuation of an unresolved history (Essed, 1991). Participants describe a state of constant vigilance, a *"habit of marginalisation"* that profoundly shapes their daily lives.

Memory and silence - The family memory of the Roma is not a linear story, but a fragmented space in which silence becomes as significant as memory. Participants recount stories passed down in fragments, often through gestures and rituals, not through explicit narratives about the sufferings of the past (Alexander, 2004). This silence does not mean forgetting, but rather a strategy of protection and a form of memory through omission, in which each generation decides what to tell and what to hide from the next.

Well-being and the relationship with institutions - Relationships with state institutions are a constant source of stress and disappointment, with participants describing interactions in which their dignity is called into question, and mere access to public services becomes a moral test. Microaggressions in the medical, educational, and judicial systems produce accumulated emotional exhaustion, and psychosocial well-being depends on the ability to find resources to feel whole within a system that fragments you (Orton et al., 2019). Distrust

thus becomes a form of silent resistance, an adaptation to a world that continues, in other forms, the historical exclusion.

Parenting and children's education - For Romani parents, children's education is not just about schooling, but above all about protecting them from a world perceived as hostile, through a pedagogy of overcompensation that teaches children to be "*ten times better*." Defensive parenting reflects intergenerational trauma, with parents teaching their children how to become invisible and how to avoid "*looking like Gypsies*" so as not to be discriminated against (DeGruy, 2005). In the absence of institutional protection, the family becomes the primary institution of resistance and slow healing.

Resilience and coping strategies - Roma resilience emerges in group discussions as a force experienced daily, a blend of religious faith, humour, music, and community solidarity that transforms suffering into a resource for social cohesion. Participants describe how, in times of crisis, the community comes together, and spirituality provides a framework of meaning and hope where institutions have failed (Walsh, 2016). This form of collective resilience does not deny trauma, but reinterprets it and transforms it into a shared narrative and active memory.

Justice and change - For participants, justice is not limited to laws or material compensation, but has a profoundly moral dimension: justice means being seen as people, not as a problem, and receiving recognition of collective suffering. Participants do not primarily demand punishment for the past, but rather the opportunity to build a future in which their children are no longer mocked and in which Romani history is included in school textbooks (Honneth, 2001). True change begins where shame is replaced by dignity, and memory becomes an instrument of solidarity.

Collective discussions in focus groups highlight the fact that Romani identity is a dynamic process, constantly negotiated between belonging and stigmatisation, and that everyday racism is not a series of isolated incidents, but a mechanism for reactivating an unresolved history, manifested through forced evictions, school segregation, and institutional humiliations. Family memory is fragmented, and silence becomes a form of protection and transmission of trauma,

while defensive parenting reflects the internalisation of collective fear, with parents preparing their children for discrimination through a pedagogy of overcompensation (Essed, 1991; DeGruy, 2005). Community resilience manifests itself through solidarity, faith, and humour, transforming suffering into social cohesion, and justice is understood not as punishment but as symbolic recognition – “*to be seen as people, not as a problem*” (Honneth, 2001).

Study 3 – Interviews with Roma specialists/experts (5 participants)

Professional and personal identity - Roma specialists define professional identity as being deeply rooted in the personal experience of oppression, transforming their career from a mere occupation into a continuous “*mission and a pain*.” They conceive of their identity as political, not merely cultural; their commitment grounded in an understanding of the oppression that Roma have experienced for generations and in an explicitly anti-racist approach (Kóczé, 2019). Their professional journey is marked by an early awareness of injustice and an additional sense of responsibility toward the community.

Historical trauma and collective memory - Experts define historical trauma not as discrete events, but as a continuum of violence and oppression that began with slavery (500 years) and culminated in the Holocaust, continuing to this day through adapted forms of exclusion. They emphasise that slavery was embedded in the creation of the principalities and the Romanian state, shaping institutions from the outset on a slave-based model, and that the absence of official recognition in history textbooks perpetuates the denial of the past (Sotero, 2006). The trauma is described as “*a stain on the entire Roma ethnic group*,” which affects the social structure and collective identity today.

Contemporary racism is identified by experts as deeply institutionalised, manifesting itself through forced evictions, school segregation, differential treatment in the justice system, and daily microaggressions that make Roma feel like “*strangers in their own country*.” They note that racism is not tied to educational level; rather, educated individuals are simply better at concealing their discriminatory attitudes (Bonilla-Silva, 2017). The myth of Roma criminality, stemming from the era of slavery when runaways were viewed as criminals, continues to fuel contemporary stereotypes.

Psychosocial and community impact - The combined effects of historical trauma and everyday racism are felt in terms of physical and mental health, economic well-being, and trust in institutions, with Roma developing psychological self-protection mechanisms that themselves constitute a form of trauma. Experts emphasise that Roma feel and know they are unwanted, often reaching a resigned acceptance of marginalisation, and that inequalities are interconnected – poverty, segregation, and health issues feed into one another (Carter & Pieterse, 2020). The mortality gap between Roma and non-Roma is comparable to that observed in other racialised groups.

Parenting, education, and younger generations - The transmission of collective memory in Romani families occurs predominantly through silence and daily life, with parents teaching their children how to become invisible and how not to behave “*like Gypsies*” in order to avoid discrimination. This “*fear passed down from parents to children*” – “*don’t get involved, don’t meddle, don’t speak up*” – produces generations that reach adulthood with fear, not with courage and the strength to act (Menakem, 2017). Experts emphasise the central role of Romani women in transmitting values and fostering the community’s adaptability.

Resilience and institutional solutions - Roma resilience is attributed primarily to their history and culture – the fact that they have survived incredible abuses for centuries – as well as to the family, the isolated community, the Romani language, and adaptability. Experts identify strategies of “*respectability politics*” (the need to be twice as good, twice as clean) and emphasise that liberal approaches based exclusively on human rights have not sufficiently helped racialised communities (Ungar, 2012). The role of Romani leaders is essential in promoting positive role models and reporting abuses to the authorities.

Justice and change - The consensus among experts is that the Romanian state and society have not fully acknowledged the historical traumas of the Roma, and the necessary reparations must be twofold: “*backward-looking*” (public apologies, financial compensation, memorials, truth-telling) and “*forward-looking*” (collective social policies, affirmative action in education and the economy). Experts emphasise that narrative recognition of the Roma’s contribution to national history would have a profound emotional impact on

collective self-esteem, and that restorative justice is linked to dignity and trust in the state (Matache, 2022).

Roma experts define historical trauma as a continuum of oppression from slavery to the present, and contemporary racism as deeply institutionalised, manifested through forced evictions, school segregation, and microaggressions that make Roma feel “*strangers in their own country*” (Sotero, 2006; Bonilla-Silva, 2017). Intergenerational transmission occurs through silence and fear passed down unconsciously (“*don’t get involved, don’t speak up*”), and defensive parenting produces generations that reach adulthood with fear, not courage (Menakem, 2017). The consensus among experts is that the Romanian state has not acknowledged historical traumas, and the necessary solutions involve dual restorative justice – both retrospective measures (public apologies, memorials, compensation) and prospective ones (collective social policies, affirmative action in education and the economy) – the only ones capable of restoring dignity and trust in institutions (Matache, 2022).

Chapter VII - **discussions and summary of results** - integrates and synthesises the research findings on historical trauma, intergenerational transmission, and everyday racism in Roma communities in Romania, placing the empirical data in dialogue with the theoretical framework.

This chapter aims to integrate and synthesise the research findings presented in Chapter VI, placing the empirical data in dialogue with the theoretical framework developed in the first two chapters and with the relevant literature. The integrated analysis of the three studies – individual interviews with 22 community members, focus groups with 21 participants, and interviews with 5 Romani specialists – reveals both common themes and contributions specific to each method.

The common themes across the three studies include: (1) Romani identity as a dual reality, experienced between pride in belonging and internalised stigma; (2) the continuity between historical trauma and everyday racism, perceived as a painful state of normality; (3) silence as the primary mechanism for the intergenerational transmission of suffering; (4) deep distrust of state institutions, interpreted as a rational response to repeated discrimination; (5) the

existence of remarkable resources of community resilience, rooted in solidarity, faith, and traditional values.

Chapter VIII summarizes the general conclusions of the research and formulates recommendations for public policy, social interventions, and future research, based on the central finding that the historical trauma of the Roma – from slavery and interwar eugenics to the Holocaust and cultural oppression during the communist era – is not a closed chapter, but a present, active, and painful reality, and its healing requires both official recognition of the suffering and symbolic and material reparations, as well as a public deconstruction of the pseudo-scientific discourse that legitimised anti-Roma racism.

An analysis of Roma experts' perceptions reveals that historical trauma is defined as a continuum of violence beginning with slavery (500 years) and continuing through the Holocaust, a perspective aligned with the theories of Brave Heart (1998) and Sotero (2006). Contemporary racism – “*everyday racism*” (Essed, 1991) or “*institutionalised racism*” (Bonilla-Silva, 2017) – is a direct reflection of these patterns, manifesting through school segregation (Vincze, 2014), forced evictions (ERRC, 2012), and profound economic inequality. The devastating effects on psychosocial well-being validate Carter and Pieterse's (2020) model of race-based traumatic stress. At the community level, this trauma manifests as deep distrust in institutions (Danieli, 1998), intergenerational transmission through “*traumatic silence*,” and defensive parenting (DeGruy, 2005; Menakem, 2017). The Romanian state has not sufficiently acknowledged these traumas, perpetuating what Alexander (2004) calls “*unresolved cultural trauma*.” The identified solutions fall under the concept of dual restorative justice: retrospective measures (public apologies, financial compensation, memorials) and prospective measures (collective social policies, affirmative action in education and employment), which would help strengthen dignity and trust in the state, reducing the “*moral injury*” described by Honneth (2001). Roma professionals assume a “*moral duty*” toward the community (Matache, 2022), and the role of leaders is that of “*counter-narrators*” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Roma resilience is attributed to their culture and history, confirming Ungar's (2012) theories of

cultural resilience, and education is unanimously recognised as the primary pathway to integration.

The research answers the six research questions, showing that: (1) historical trauma is perceived as a continuum of oppression (Sotero, 2006); (2) racial discrimination is experienced as a systemic and everyday phenomenon (Essed, 1991); (3) intergenerational transmission occurs through silence and emotional inheritance (Danieli, 1998); (4) coping strategies include faith, solidarity, and “*respectability politics*”; (5) the professional identity of Romani specialists is a political one, rooted in personally experienced oppression; (6) the proposed solutions aim for dual restorative justice and anti-racist approaches.

Recommendations for integration policies include: funding Roma-led community programmes, implementing a national programme to raise awareness of Roma history in schools, developing dual restorative justice, mandatory training for professionals in cultural competence and historical trauma, establishing mechanisms to monitor and sanction institutional racism, addressing territorial marginalisation and precarious housing, as well as the development of trauma-informed psychosocial interventions (Walsh, 2016; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004).

For future research, the following are recommended: expanding and diversifying samples, longitudinal studies, participatory methodologies, exploring gender dimensions and intergenerational differences (Kóczé, 2019), evaluating social interventions, and exploring healing mechanisms and resilience resources. Implications for social work practice focus on developing a practice informed by historical trauma, authentic cultural competence (Wade, 2017), anti-oppressive practice, and collaboration with Romani experts. The organisation of social programmes must be participatory, integrated, flexible, and centred on community resources.

The final reflections emphasise that the thesis represents an act of ethical and community responsibility, and the fundamental conclusion is that the historical trauma of the Roma is not a closed chapter, but a present reality. Collective healing requires recognition, historical accountability, and structural

public policies. As one woman from the community said, “*Justice would be for us to be seen as people, not as a problem*” – this is the research’s deepest aspiration.

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