Chapter 11
Researching the Roma in Criminology and Legal Studies: Experiences from Urban and Rural Participant Observation, Interviews, and Surveys

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1 The Roma: Definitions and Delimitations

The Roma are an ethnic group from India who arrived on the European continent in approximately the thirteenth century (Grellmann & Vali, cited in Fonseca, 1995/2018; Martínez-Cruz et al., 2016). It is notable that they are far from being homogenous; on the contrary, they constitute multiple subgroups and are classified in many ways: *Roma*, *Sinti*, *Kale*, *Manus*, *Travellers*, *Dom*, *Lom*, *Kelderash*, *Lovari*, *Gurbeti*, *Churari*, *Ursari*, etc. (for more details, see Council of Europe: Descriptive Glossary of terms relating to Roma issues, 2012; Hancock, 1997). "Roma" is the umbrella term the Council of Europe uses to encompass this minority, which is estimated to be the largest in Europe. Today, the Roma are European nationals who possess the citizenship of a European country.

The Roma have been an overstudied, but also understudied group (Fraser, 1995; Lipphardt et al., 2021; Powell & Lever, 2017). In the nineteenth century, criminologists played a role in promoting Roma's stigmatization, including such scholars as the Italian phrenologist Lombroso (1887/2006) and the Spanish scholars Rafael Salillas y Panzano, Jerónimo Montes, and Bernaldo de Quiros, all of whom claimed that the Roma were a criminal race (Rothea, 2007). The so-called social hygienists also studied them during the National–Socialist German regime in World War II. These studies addressed, in a pseudo-scientific (and highly unethical) way, the inherent *deviant* characteristics that this group supposedly possess. It was not until the second half of the twentieth century that scholars began to focus on their disadvantages and the violation of their rights (see Villareal & Wagman, 2001; European

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Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). Ethical concerns about studying the Roma have naturally been raised, notably with respect to this group's discrimination and stigmatization (Lipphardt et al., 2021).

Based on Molnar's (2021) narrative review of studies published from 1997 to 2020, criminological research focused largely on Roma's victimization. The most relevant topics were intimate partner violence (Dan & Banu, 2018; Hasdeu, 2007; Kozubik et al., 2020; Tokuç et al., 2010; Vrăbiescu, 2019), domestic violence (Oliván Gonzalvo, 2004; Velentza, 2020), hate crimes (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017; Greenfields & Rogers, 2020; James, 2014; Wallengren, 2020; Wallengren et al., 2019; Wallengren & Mellgren, 2018), or organized criminal networks (Campistol et al., 2014; Gavra & Tudor, 2015; Vidra et al., 2018). These studies adopted primarily qualitative methods: (i) analyses of archives; (ii) studies of judicial sentencing; (iii) press analyses; (iv) interviews, and (v) participant observations. This over-representation of qualitative studies is certainly related to the methodological challenges that quantitative studies face, i.e., the lack of a public register of Roma individuals and the strong stigma that the Roma suffer, such that some avoid disclosing their ethnicity because of fear of prejudice and discrimination. The exception to this is the EU-MIDIS project, which applied alternative sampling methods, such as *random route sampling* (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017). We discuss these studies in more detail in the following sections.

In this chapter, we address the methodological and ethical aspects of two field studies in criminology and socio-legal studies with and among the Romanian Roma, in both Switzerland and Romania, that we conducted for 1 year and 4 years, respectively (for more details, see Molnar & Aebi, 2021a, b; Vallés, 2019; Vallés & Nafstad, 2020). In our research, we studied these Roma groups' discrimination, power relationships, victimization, and offending. At the time of the studies, we were both beginning our research career, and therefore, we hope that this chapter will help other early career researchers address the methodological and ethical issues that may emerge in the course of their studies.

2 Fieldwork Among and with the Roma

We conducted several years of research and interventions with and among groups of Roma in both urban and rural settings. Marc spent 3 years traveling from Spain to rural Romania for a total of 9 months over the course of 3 years, while Lorena traveled between two Swiss cities, each with approximately 200,000 inhabitants, on a weekly basis for approximately 1 year. She conducted her fieldwork in these cities, where the migrant Roma constitutes a small fraction, the number of which the public authorities do not know. Marc's ethnography was conducted in a small Romanian village of 2280 inhabitants composed of 82% non-Roma and 18% Roma *Spoitor*. There, the locals knew each other and maintained relationships in everyday life. We used participant observations and ethnography, surveys, and interviews in our studies, the details of which are related below.

2.1 Participant Observations and Ethnography

We both depended upon gatekeepers of Roma and non-Roma—a *Gadje* in Romani language—origins who introduced us to the groups and assured them that we were trustworthy. Lorena's fieldwork was also facilitated by the fact that, 1 year before her study began, she was a social worker who supported sex workers and was coordinating a project about male sex work. In this context, she intervened with these sex workers among the Roma by being "in the field" and offering prophylactic material (condoms, gel, flyers with information about the way to prevent sexually transmitted infections, etc.), health prevention workshops with both men and women, and counseling. Thanks to a Romanian local *Gadje* whom he knew personally beforehand through his network of acquaintances, Marc was able to access Roma informants from the rural commune of Gradistea who belong to the *Spoitor* subgroup.

Both the social workers and the Roma population accepted our projects well. In both studies, the snowball sampling technique (Patton, 2002) was essential; i.e., the gatekeeper gave access to the first informants, who then provided access to other participants who did the same by mobilizing their network of acquaintances.

Nevertheless, it is notable that despite our experience, accessing the field is one of the most difficult tasks when conducting criminological and socio-legal research among the Roma. The population can be accessed directly through personal contacts with members of the community or through the proxy of an NGO or other type of institution, but many obstacles arise during the journey. Participants may simply reject the researcher's presence among their group, or NGOs can refuse to help the scholars access the field. In this case, NGOs may fear that the study will stigmatize their population if a scientist discovers (and publishes a study about) such phenomena as domestic violence, forced marriages, or trafficking in human beings. Another reason for being denied access to the field is related and other events that may converge in time, such as political developments, poor practices of other actors, such as the police, or NGOs' lack of resources (see the example in Wallengren, 2020). In addition, it is not rare for the researcher, particularly if not Roma, to receive criticism from the non-Roma population as well for even "daring" to study the Roma. See the interesting example in the ethnography of Iulia Hasdeu, a Romanian Swiss researcher who conducted an ethnography with the Roma in Romanian villages.

> On the other side of the interethnic border, namely the *Gadje* side, the terrain was not easier. My relationship with the authorities in Cordeni, the municipality that runs Căleni, has been very tense. Their attitude towards me, as a person interested in the life of the Roma, was contempt and almost open cynical rejection: "But what do you want? To educate them? But they are savages, they will never civilise." (Hasdeu, 2007, p. 45)

In Marc's case, despite his acceptance on the part of the Roma group, the reaction from non-Roma was like Hasdeu's experience. The non-Roma in the locality where he did the fieldwork did not understand how a foreigner could be interested in the local Roma and not in them.

> Last night I went out for refreshments at the village bar where youngsters and the elderly gather to drink and talk about day-to-day affairs. Laughing, the non-Roma reproached me for being interested in the *Spoitori* with phrases like: "Why do you study them and not us? We are more interesting, we have history and culture, they have nothing interesting to tell" or "Is this what you do at the University of Spain? Do you study the Roma? If you want them so much, you can take them all there." (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2016)

In general, the Roma have high intra-group cohesion but reject *Gadje's* world (Fraser, 1995). From our experiences, there is some truth in these affirmations, but they do not mean that being a non-Roma researcher is an insurmountable challenge. As is the case with other "insider" researchers (Wallengren, 2020), Lorena's ethnic background is Romanian Roma, and she is a native Romanian (but not a native Romani speaker—the Roma's language). This fact naturally facilitated her interactions with the participants who are also native Romanian and, in general, did not mind using the Romanian language rather than Romani. Nevertheless, one can have a Roma background, but perhaps not come from the same subgroup and therefore not share the same experiences and cosmovision (Wallengren, 2020).

In addition, Marc's experience showed that being a foreign non-Roma researcher can have certain disadvantages, for example, the need to learn a new language, but even more important, the distrust generated by the presence of a stranger with whom one does not share ethnic, national, and local identity. This situation can be aggravated when the informant belongs to an ethnic or social minority whose history and present are marked by discrimination in all its possible ways (see Vallés, 2019). However, that same disadvantage, as in this case, can serve in favor of the foreign researcher. Following Simmel (1950, p. 403), the foreigner who is not associated radically with the group s/he approaches, "… often receives the most surprising openness—confidences which sometimes have the character of a confessional and which would be carefully withheld from a more closely related person." In this case, the socio-cultural and geographic distance between the researcher and the local informants allowed the participants to feel more comfortable and confident in explaining certain private matters that they would not explain in front of other local Roma because of fear or embarrassment.

> I remember when in 2016 I went to interview Triana and she gave me her national ID card thinking that I was a Romanian government agent coming to collect her data because she had heard on the radio that they wanted to deport Roma back to Transnistria. Now every time we meet, she wants to talk to me about her issues because she says that unlike the rest of the neighbours (Roma and non-Roma), I don't judge her. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2018)

During the participant observations, we "accompanied" the Roma in their daily life. For instance, we went to the places where they gathered, offered assistance when possible, interacted, and asked questions, but also just remained in the background and waited to avoid being perceived as too "pushy." The assistance that we offered was filling out administrative forms written in French for them, helping their children with their homework, and helping with some household chores. A sign of the group's acceptance of us is that we were invited to celebrate Easter together, when we ate, drank, and danced with our study population.

We avoided taking notes during the observations, as our main objective was to bond with our interviewees, rather than gather information per se. Nevertheless, once the observation was over, we wrote detailed notes in our fieldwork journal. We note that this activity should not be underestimated, as creating a research journal of thorough notes of the events and interactions we had during the observations is a time-consuming and mentally taxing activity.

2.2 Surveys

In addition to the participant observations, Lorena administered an adapted version of the third *International Self-Reported Delinquency Study* (ISRD-3) survey and gathered the responses of 27 young Roma from 12 to 25 years old. Nevertheless, these types of questionnaires, which target an international sample, are not adapted to ethnic minorities (Rodríguez et al., 2015). Thus, the position of "insider" helped in revising it. Lorena adapted the questionnaire herself, following the advice of two supervisors with a strong background in research methods. It was pretested as well with several members of the Roma community and the social workers from the NGOs. We designed the questionnaire after 5 months of participant observation. The adapted questionnaire may be found online (Molnar and Aebi, 2021a, b). Still, it should be pointed out that researchers may need to adapt the questionnaire to each Roma population, as they are locally dependent. For instance, Wallengren (2020) did not include topics such as education, family, or children in his questionnaire because his participants feared further stigmatization. However, this was neither our case nor what the social workers advised.

Once the questionnaire was approved, it was transferred to the online survey platform LimeSurvey and accessed via smartphone. Therefore, the surveys were *Computer-Assisted-Personal Interviews* (CAPI) that the interviewer planned to administer and conduct face-to-face. The CAPI technique has been recommended for populations who have low levels of literacy (Killias et al., 2019). During the interviews, the participants could elaborate as much as they wished when they answered the questions. The duration of the interviews varied from 20 minutes to 2 hours. Most participants elaborated on their answers, and they were detailed in the fieldwork journal.

The target population was Roma between 12 and 25 years of age, six of whom were minors. In all instances, Lorena asked for their consent verbally and then their parents. It took approximately 6 months to recruit just 27 participants. The population of youngsters was, perhaps, less interested in participating than the elderly, and they were also much more "nomadic," in the sense that most of them spent some time in Switzerland and returned to Romania thereafter.

> For five years they had been coming to Switzerland illegally and when they earned enough money, they left for Romania. She used to say: "If in one or two weeks I have my wallet full of money, I'll go home." (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2018)

Long periods of waiting were required to find the right moment to introduce the questionnaire. Although Lorena has no statistics on this, note that, even though the participation rate was rather high, she failed to recruit participants several times.

> I went to this young person with the intention of recruiting him for conducting the questionnaire, but I could see that he was not too eager to discuss. I asked him: "Have you seen [the Roma social worker]?" He looked at me without moving, took off one of the headphones and said "No." I stayed next to him for five minutes smoking a cigarette, but he didn't say anything to me, didn't move, it was like I wasn't there. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2018)

Most of the questionnaires were administered in cafés, where participants were recompensed with a beverage. Lorena's research protocol stipulated that the interview should begin by discussing the "Information and Consent Form," which was recommended highly during her university lectures, and that she prepared with much care and translated into Romanian. While this document is intended to increase participants' trust, she had the impression that it had the opposite effect on the interviewees. The latter were not familiar with such documents and perceived that they were "bizarre" in the best case, but also suspicious. Moreover, some of the participants were illiterate and ergo unable to read, and in these cases, they needed to trust that what was read to them was accurate. She read the document loudly in Romanian and told them that they could sign it and keep their copy with my contact data, but that they did not need to provide their name. Nonetheless, it was very difficult to obtain consent from hard-to-reach non-Western populations.

> I explained the information and consent form to him, but I found it very difficult to do so. He didn't understand the purpose of it and the most adequate technique I found to explain it to him was that the university obliged me to do it to respect the person and so that he had a guarantee that I would ensure his confidentiality. I tried to talk about ethics, but he looked at me as if I were a stranger, so I couldn't find a better solution. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2018)

2.3 Interviews

In Marc's case, participant observations were combined with interviews, as the latter allow for an in-depth study of what was witnessed during the fieldwork (Roca i Girona, 2010). In the interviews, he sought the maximum variation in narrative content, experiences, perspectives, and plurality of roles within the same group to reflect the greatest diversity in the reference population in relation to the topic of study and, at the same time, to find commonalities within the same group studied (Sanmartín, 2003; Olabuénaga, 2012; Flick, 2015). Therefore, the interviews ended when further observations no longer provided new information because of saturation and redundancy (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Marc conducted a total of 28 with Roma *Spoitor* (15 women and 13 men) and 19 interviews with non-Roma (6 women and 13 men), between 17 and 73 years of age. The interviewees were informed that pseudonyms would be used to ensure their anonymity and were asked for their consent to record the interviews. Although they

were offered a written document in Romanian to give their consent, in the case of the Roma this was recorded verbally, because similar to in Lorena's case, they preferred not to sign any kind of document, claiming that they could not read or write.

The interviews were semi-structured, in that they contained a pre-established script with open questions and a list of content to be addressed that offered the interviewees' freedom to express themselves on other issues without being interrupted (Roca i Girona, 2010). This type of interview was very useful, as it allowed us to learn about crucial aspects of the interviewees' culture that the researcher himself had not foreseen in his script of questions.

> Most interviewees usually answer the same about their situation during Ceausescu's communist government. However, Tica has told me about how her family used to meet with other *Spoitori* families from other localities to trade oxen competitively, where the honour of the male traders also came into play. This opens up a possible avenue for research on the circulation of goods and services based on negative reciprocity between families from different territorial bands. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2017)

Just as researchers expect participants to provide them with certain types of data, interviewees may expect to be rewarded (Ferrándiz, 2011). Therefore, Marc's interviewees were compensated with goods of their choice, such as tobacco, soft drinks, or snacks. Although the interviewees did not request this compensation expressly most of the time, on one occasion an interviewee requested it repeatedly—an elderly and respected member of his community who was aware that his word was precious, and considered that he was a "bearer of the absolute truth of his culture."

> The interview with Roger, one of the most respected elders, did not go as smoothly as with the other interviewees. Every two or three questions he would look at his cell phone checking the time and, on some occasions, he would say that maybe he had to leave because his time was precious. Despite offering a soft drink and snacks from the beginning, after a while he asked me: "Aren't you going to give me more cigarettes? Every so often he would ask me for more cigarettes, which he would keep in the front pocket of his shirt." (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2018)

The interviews were individual and generally took place in the garden of the house where Marc was staying, except for two occasions in which they were conducted in two Roma women's houses. On both occasions, the men in the family joined the interview and took control of the answers, relegating the women to the background. This phenomenon had both a negative and positive effect on the research. On the one hand, the purpose of the interview was lost, but, on the other, this situation allowed the power relationships based on gender to be observed, a crucial discovery in the research. These relationships were corroborated not only by the women's limited ability to participate in the interviews, but also because of the contrast between the answers that women provided when men were present and their responses when they were alone, e.g., views on arranged marriage.

> Today I interviewed Pitrica again. This time the interview was in the garden of my residence, as last week I was unable to interview her properly at her home because her husband and children took control of the answers. Some of her answers varied considerably. For example, the other day (being with her family) she seemed to agree that arranged marriages between minors was something that had to be done because their custom says so. Instead,

> today she was in tears explaining that she does not want her 13-year-old daughter to marry so young because she would prefer that she finish high school and then she chooses whom to marry. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2019)

In addition to the semi-structured interviews, when the occasion arose, informal interviews were conducted as well, i.e., spontaneous conversations that were held fortuitously and without a pre-established script (D'Argemir et al., 2010). Normally, these were conducted in places of leisure, such as in the main cafeteria of the village or on park benches where they usually meet and eat sunflower seeds after work.

3 Methodological Considerations

There are several methodological considerations that play a fundamental role in our studies' validity and reliability. First, an instrument is valid if it measures a phenomenon efficiently and is reliable if, when used on repeated occasions, one always obtains the same outcome, regardless of who uses it (Aebi, 2006). First, the researcher's ethnic background plays a role in the reliability of research with Roma. See, for example, Wallengren's experience with the Swedish Roma:

> There were study participants who told me that they would not have participated if a non-Roma had conducted the study. However, a couple of study participants told me that they had participated in other research projects earlier but that they, in these instances, had lied to the non-Roma researchers. The reason for this, I was told, was that the participant was not willing to participate in a study, but felt forced to do so because of the need of the communities to market themselves. Some also argued that they had chosen to participate in research as a way of tricking the non-Roma researcher and "having fun at their expense." For these study participants, the goal was to give the researcher incorrect and "absurd" information so that later they could talk to other Roma about how easily tricked and naive the researcher was. (Wallengren, 2020, p. 11)

The interviewer's gender plays a role in a study's reliability as well (Wilkins, 1999). If the researcher is a woman, it is likely that men will become flirtatious, and women, particularly spouses, jealous. If the researcher is a man, it is possible that women will feel intimidated and the Roma men suspicious if the interview took place individually (Wallengren, 2020). As Lorena is a woman in her 20 s, there were many occasions when she was complimented for her physical appearance and asked whether she wanted to marry some of the young men. The manner in which we address these interactions is highly personal, but crucial. It was vital for her to maintain a professional image to prevent losing credibility and also fusing roles. Therefore, when someone asked her to be their "girlfriend," she would respond that she was not there to flirt with anyone, but to work. The community appeared to understand this message rapidly and these flirtatious interactions stopped after several months of observation.

> In general, there was an atmosphere of respect—everyone greeted each other, and everyone shook my hand (they already knew me, but not too well either). There were some young people who tried to seduce me, but I was quickly defended by the older men. "Leave the

> lady alone, can't you see she's here for work?," the older men would say to the younger ones. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2018)

In Marc's case, despite being a man, he had no problems arranging interviews with Roma women in the private garden of his residence, a fact that did not provoke jealousy on the part of their husbands either. First, most of the Roma *Spoitori* informants appreciated the fact that a non-Roma foreigner was curious about their culture, something really surprising for a community that suffers daily discrimination and contempt from the *Gadje* population. Secondly, it could also benefit the endogamous conception and marriage practice because the informants shared a subgroup, where an interethnic love or marriage relationship is practically inconceivable because of identity, cultural, and social issues.

> We marry our own because that is how it has always been done, neither with other Gypsy nor with Romanians, only between *Spoitori* [...] Only those Roma who have been Romanianized ("converted" to Romanians) and have left the village to move to the big city and marry the *Gadjes*. What Romanian is going to look at a *Spoitori*? We are too different, not only in customs. No Romanian would want to be with a *Spoitori* because we have no money, no school education. For them we are crows, fools, they only want us to work when they need us. (Excerpt from an interview with a *Spoitor* man)

Moreover, a researcher's sexual orientation or identity can also affect the recruitment of participants and even prevent their entrance to the field or determine their exit. As Wallengren reported: "Some of the study participants also questioned the fact that I was unmarried and childless. Because of my involvement in the PRIDE parade, being single and not having any children, some individuals involved in the study asked me if I was gay and told me that if I was, they would not like to participate in the study" (Wallengren, p. 11).

The correct choice of the interview or survey location is fundamental to maintaining reliability, but is a challenging task. This is because the Roma population tends to prefer to be outdoors in the urban context, and in this case, the participants were unwilling to plan appointments. Conversely, among those who agreed to schedule the interview, most did not show for the latter. Moreover, external actors may restrict the choice of the interview location. For example, several Romanian Roma who were staying in Switzerland were forbidden to enter coffee shops or restaurants because some incidents had taken place there in the past. If the interviewer is unaware of these details, which was our case, it can create a certain amount of tension. Conversely, in the rural context, the interviews were conducted behind closed doors, most of the time in the garden of the researcher's residence. In fact, the participants preferred the interviews to be conducted in private and not in public, claiming on several occasions that in the village everyone knows each other, and everyone wants to pry into each other's lives. Thus, an intimate and private space in a small rural town was the best location, as it allowed the interviewees to feel free to express their opinions without fear of rumors and gossip, which is a very powerful mechanism of social control in that town. In addition, most of the time there were no problems arranging interviews. However, there were several occasions when the most respected elder in the community agreed to an interview, but did not

appear at the agreed time and place. Sometime later, the same elder arrived at the researcher's house unannounced and said he was ready for the interview, an act that we interpreted as a way to reaffirm his position of authority.

> Today Gregorio unexpectedly showed up at my house [at] approximately 5 p.m. to be interviewed, after having failed to show up on three occasions. At first, he showed a haughty attitude. I had the feeling that he thought that he was doing me a big favour. He also gave me no explanation as to why he had not shown up the other times. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2019)

Instruments should be adapted for the Roma, but it is possible as well that once designed, they need to be revisited. In Lorena's case, the questionnaire was designed initially for a population composed of late teenagers and young adults. Therefore, we addressed such sensitive issues as victimization, delinquency, and drug use. Then, after the questionnaire was designed, several young teenagers arrived in Switzerland (12–14 years old) and we considered it inappropriate to ask them these questions. In addition, instruments or techniques may need to be adapted not only because of the participants' ethnic background or age, but also their medical conditions, e.g., participants who stammer.

> I couldn't ask her (a 14-year-old girl) about sex work and drug use. I hadn't thought about that beforehand in the surveys with children, but I just couldn't. I was afraid of influencing her, I didn't know what knowledge she had, and I thought it was safer not to ask than to be faced with a family argument because I explained to her what prostitution is. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2018)

The respondents' cosmovision influences the way they provide "general answers" that may differ from a Westerner's point of view. Therefore, follow-up questions and clarifications are necessary to maintain the validity of the research. See the example below:

> I asked him if he had been in Switzerland for a long time and he said, "Yes, very long!" I asked him for an exact number, and, to my surprise, he said, "Almost three months." (Lorena's fieldwork journal, October 2018)

Reliability can be ensured in several ways, first, by allowing the population to become familiar with the researcher for some time before one begins to ask questions in a more "standardized" way. In that respect, the Roma participants were curious about the researchers' life: how much they earn, who is their partner, where they live, where they go out, if they spend a lot of money in the grocery stores, etc. This must be considered to determine the role to adopt. In our case, we decided to share parts of our lives because we found that it helped build rapport and therefore, increased reliability. In addition, we triangulated sources to assess whether the participants had been honest. For instance, Aebi (2006) triangulated self-reported surveys with data from the criminal records of drug users who agreed to participate in a heroin prescription program. This study was conducted in the 2000s when the laws on data protection differed from those today, but it is an excellent example of triangulation in criminological research. We could not do this formally in our own research, but we conducted triangulation informally through discussion with other members of the groups, such as social workers. Without giving them any

information that was disclosed to us, we would pose questions about the members we interviewed beforehand. In addition, it is also feasible to identify signs of "trust" coming from the population study. For instance:

> She showed me an origami book that she has, which she uses for inspiration for the flowers she makes. She asked me to keep it a secret from her because she didn't want other people in the community to know what she does so she wouldn't have any competition. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2019)

4 Ethics and Emotions: Misunderstandings, Cosmovisions, and Boundaries

It is noteworthy that none of our studies were submitted to an ethics committee for approval due to the inexistence at that time of both the committee and the obligation to submit our research project to such an organ. Nevertheless, the reader should note that this might differ depending upon the country, university, and topic of study. From our experience, there are several ethical challenges that emerge when studying the Roma: their comprehension of what they are about to participate in, the researcher's need to respect the participants' cosmovision, and his/her role in the journey. With respect to the first, some potential participants do not, and may never, understand the meaning of "survey," "interview," "academia," "university," or "consent." This is highly problematic given our ethical responsibility to obtain informed consent. We attempted to explain our profession as much as possible, but it was challenging for them to imagine what scientific research was about.

Second, the participants may live highly different lives from the researcher: Some respondents beg, others farm, others engage in sex work, and other are stay-at-home parents, or have customs that differ greatly from ours. Interviewees' cosmovision—their worldview—can be troubling in some cases, and this is an ethical risk that researchers may face. For instance, our participants expressed conservative views about women's role in society, early marriages, and pregnancies on the part of 14-year-old girls, as well as homophobic commentaries. This can be shocking for a liberal Westerner (the average social scientist), and one can feel the urge to "correct" the person; nevertheless, this is not our role. It is essential to respect and attempt to understand the participants' cosmovision and adhere, at least in part, to their rules during participant observations or an ethnography. Nevertheless, we needed to state our position when faced with certain potentially illegal or dangerous situations. First, one Roma man asked Lorena once about the way in which one could bring a girl and "put her on the street" to make money for him, i.e., sexually exploit a woman. She was obliged to tell him that it is not possible to do such a thing because it is illegal. Second, one participant had harassed Marc for several weeks. The latter, who was under the influence of alcohol, chased him around the village aggressively asking for money and tobacco. As a consequence, the non-Roma neighbors wanted to react violently to make the man stop his behavior. Marc had to intervene to avoid a major confrontation and, rather than informing the police, he

preferred to discuss it with the most respected Roma man in the *Spoitori* community, who talked sense into the man and made him stop his behavior.

The Roma populations that we studied requested much assistance, and it is an ethical question to consider how much the researcher should help. They were not shy about coming to us and asking, "Would you help me also with a job?" "Can you help me to have one of these CVs?" "Can you give me 20 euros?" We did not give money on principle, because, first, we were students ourselves with no research funding, but also because we were afraid that this would be discovered and the participants would participate in the research only for the purpose of obtaining financial gain. Nevertheless, we always told them where to go to seek help.

With respect to the emotional effects the research can have on both the researcher and participants, these were related to several aspects in our studies. First, the researcher spends a great amount of time with the population observed, and it is sometimes difficult to maintain the necessary distance from the informants so that affective relationships do not corrupt the objectivity of the research. Staying too close to the informants, to the point of identifying with them, can leave a researcher who becomes a "native" unable to address the research questions critically or even generate a feeling of guilt if the results of the research conflict with the interests of the group or a segment of the group. To avoid this situation, it is necessary to maintain a balanced relationship between the researcher and the informants.

> I need to take a break for a few days for self-criticism. At times I feel that I have a responsibility to defend the traditions of my Roma informants vis-à-vis the non-Roma population because I am aware of the discrimination they suffer daily and because I would like to break with Eurocentric canons. However, I do not want this feeling to lead me to romanticize certain cultural practices and lose the capacity for critical reflection and objectivity in the analysis of the data collected. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2017)

Second, it is common to feel strong emotions—sadness, fear, or a sense of being overwhelmed—when a researcher witnesses the harsh conditions some participants endure. Sometimes, one hears or even witnesses crude crime and crime-related stories. One example is the case of child marriages, where 13- and 14-year-olds marry for their parents' convenience and are forced to drop out of secondary school.

> Emotionally, it affects me to be in front of homeless people and in an enormous precariousness. It's hard to talk about such private things and then tell them: "Thank you for your time and your trust" and then go home, continue with my structured life, with a higher economic comfort than his. I understand that I can't do anything and that it's not my fault, but it still affects me. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, November 2018)

> Local authorities, as far as I have been told, do not apply any kind of prevention or awareness-raising measures with respect to arranged child marriage, they only act ex officio if there are signs of domestic violence. It is painful to see how the Roma women I have interviewed reject this practice in silence and accept it in public under the male gaze. (Marc's fieldwork journal, 2018)

> When we got to the question of intimate partner violence, he told me that he had hit his girlfriend and I asked him how far he had got in hitting her. He told me: "To give you an example, the whore had cheated on me, and I hit her until I was calm and then I shaved her head." He told me that this way the community could also see what she had done. (Lorena's fieldwork journal, 2019)

Moreover, as a woman, it was difficult to see other women with so much less agency, who endured not only domestic violence, but simply held the status of a human of less value in the community. The following was a particularly emotional interaction that still has an effect on Lorena:

> I would like to be like you, Lorena. A free person, not wearing a skirt anymore, giving up tradition and finding a new life. Look, you're Roma, but you wear pants, you don't care about anything, you're happy, you have a normal life. I have to wear this fucking skirt and be a Gypsy. And I'm tired of it. I would like to sleep in the street, to work, to have a normal life. (Lorena's fieldwork Journal, 2018)

Our manners to cope with strong emotions were (i) to write about our emotions in our fieldwork journal, (ii) to take a certain distance from our participants, e.g., take time off, (iii) to debrief with colleagues and friends as well as our partners who provided advice and understanding, and (iv) to carry on with our lives (e.g., practicing our hobbies).

4.1 Lessons Learned and Methodological Perspectives

Here, we summarize the lessons that we learned during the years that we conducted participant research with the Roma in Switzerland and Romania. First, it was necessary to communicate openly with the gatekeepers and the participants about the objectives of our research. Second, we had to protect our participants and the communities we studied. In that respect, one needs to be cautious with the methodology, as well as disseminate the results and limitations of our studies, i.e., generalization of findings, transparently and honestly. The instruments used must be adapted and pretested to be as valid as possible. In that respect, research groups should consider including a member with Roma ethnicity among their staff, or someone with the linguistic and cultural knowledge who can connect with the study population. The researcher should consider that the location and setting in which the interviews are conducted may be crucial to the results. For example, in the urban context, where impersonal relationships prevail, there are many alternatives of a relatively safe and intimate space for interviewees, for example, in any coffee shop. In contrast, in the rural context, where face-to-face relationships dominate, it is more difficult to find a location where interviewees feel that they can express their opinions freely without fear or embarrassment of being heard by others.

Third, it is necessary for researchers to create a roadmap to conduct the fieldwork properly. However, they should also be aware that they will not be able to follow this roadmap on some occasions for unforeseen reasons. Therefore, they must be able to find alternatives, adapt to changes, and re-plan certain aspects of the roadmap. For example, informants may not arrive to give an interview they scheduled, or the researcher may have to modify the interview question script in part when new information relevant to the research emerges that was not foreseen in the initial script.

Fourth, it is fundamental to reflect on their role as a researcher, for instance, whether one intends to introduce oneself as a Roma insider, a *Gadje* interested in the Roma, a *Gadje* with Roma connections, etc. In addition, we must consider how much of our life we are comfortable sharing and the implications of this act. It is also imperative to consider the potential influence of one's gender and even sexual orientation or identity on the fieldwork. Researchers may need to ask for the spouse's permission to conduct an interview with a woman, or perhaps conduct a survey in a group. All of these decisions affect the study's reliability and validity. For example, if one is interested in domestic violence, it would be unwise to conduct an interview with the spouses together. People may also flirt with the researcher or, conversely, mock him/her. We recommend not taking remarks personally and remaining professional, but accepting that sometimes we will feel strong emotions. The researcher must maintain a balanced relationship with informants. S/he must approach them and create a bond based on mutual trust, but also maintain a certain socio-affective distance to prevent emotions from interfering with the analysis of the data collected. In the same way, the researcher may be involved in a minor conflict with a member of the group observed and whenever possible should seek a solution to the problem to avoid aggravating the situation further. For example, it is preferable to turn to the leader or authority figure in the group in question to find a more effective and less burdensome solution than that which could be offered by *Gadje* law enforcement, for example.

Fifth, the researcher must be self-critical and question his/her own assumptions. Sometimes the same concept can have different meanings depending upon the researcher and the informants' cultural schemes, for example, the conception of the passage of time illustrated herein. Further, the researcher must be critical of the conceptual categories, sometimes romanticized or reductionist, offered by the general literature available on the aspects of a social or cultural group studied, as they do not coincide with the social reality sometimes, as for example, the category "nomadism."

To conclude, criminological and socio-legal research with and among the Roma can be a highly enriching journey during which the researcher needs to consider several aspects and may face different challenges. Although we recommend beginning with a thorough research plan in which the researcher defines his/her role, one needs to be flexible and able to adapt to different contexts and participants. In addition, the researcher should maintain an open mind with respect to other cosmovisions and intellectual honesty to identify difficult emotions and maintain a certain neutrality throughout the research process. Finally, it is imperative to be critical of one's own data and aware of their limitations, which we recommend expressing transparently when the results are disseminated to avoid over-generalizations that could stigmatize the Roma.

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