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Gypsy Curse or Gypsy Cursed: An Attempt to Isolate “Roma-Phobia” in the United Kingdom and Russia

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Abstract

More commonly known as “gypsies,” the Roma represent a subgroup of the “Romani” people, characterized by migrant lifestyles and transient living patterns. The Roma make up anywhere from 8 to 14 million people worldwide. History has shown that despite their presence around the world they are among one of the most disadvantaged minorities around the world—on need only look at the Nazi regime in Germany to gain some insight as to their treatment over the course of history. While this marks the apex of discrimination against the Roma, they continue to face widespread prejudice. The Roma are treated unfavorably almost anywhere their presence is noted. This paper focuses on the treatment of this group in the countries of UK and Russia.

These countries are able to provide an accurate representation of both Western and Eastern Europe in order to create the overall picture of European attitudes in general. Similarly, these countries have a variety of factors that show that they are on neither extreme in regards to attitudes towards the Roma. By analyzing public opinion polls in both countries this paper will attempt to isolate exactly who holds these negative attitudes. This paper anticipates that far-right radical, unemployed/economically disadvantaged, under-educated, older respondents are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards the Roma. By running the respondents' answers through

Logit and Stata this paper will achieve statically significant results pointing to a number of behavioral and/or cultural factors held by groups of people in hopes of illuminating the reasons for hateful attitudes. After a result is achieved, this paper will attempt to provide solutions as to how these attitudes can be broken, which can be but are not limited to: educational reforms, legislation reforms, higher degrees of representation of the Roma in various social, political, economic arenas.

Keywords: Gypsy, Roma, Public Attitudes, Russia, Britain, United Kingdom, anti-immigrant attitudes, Roma-Phobia, Antiziganism, minority rights

Introduction

It is no surprise that disadvantaged minorities around the world bear unimaginable hardships for the simple sake of their survival. Though many minorities share this fate, none are as disadvantaged as the Roma people. More commonly known as “gypsies,” the Roma represent a subgroup of the “Romani” people, characterized by migrant lifestyles and transient living patterns. Though they continue to be the most persecuted major ethnic group in Europe, few political leaders are willing to defend the group.¹ The most prominent historical example of this persecution is most certainly the targeted genocide of the gypsies during the Nazi regime. While this marks the apex of discrimination against the Roma, they continue to face widespread prejudice.² In the 1960s, British lawmen hung signs outside of public facilities which read “No blacks, no dogs, no Gypsies.”³ This discrimination is not isolated to Britain, nor does it function solely on the individual level. Frequently, state sponsored discrimination is enacted to further disadvantage the Roma. In France—a country known to embody the values of liberty,

¹ Nicolae Gheorghe and Thomas Acton, “Citizens of the World and Nowhere: Minority, Ethnic, and Human Rights for Roma During the Last Hurrah of the Nation-State,” in Will Guy, ed., *Between Past and Future: the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe* (Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire Press, 2001), pp. 54-70; Amnesty International, “European Union Should Do More to Uphold Roma Rights,” press release, September 8, 2010, <http://www.amnesty.eu/en/press-releases/all-0464/> (accessed November 29, 2011); Matthew Saltmarsh, “E.U. Suspends Case Against France for Expulsions of Roma,” *New York Times*, October 19, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/world/europe/20roma.html?_r=1&ref=france (accessed November 29, 2011).

The most important exception to the claim about European politicians neglecting Roma rights is likely Václav Havel (see Zoltan D. Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethnopolitics* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], pp. 285-308).

² George Soros, “My Message to Europe: The Plight of the Roma Can No Longer Be Ignored,” Open Society Foundations blog, September 22, 2010, <http://blog.soros.org/2010/09/my-message-to-europe-the-plight-of-the-roma-can-no-longer-be-ignored/> (accessed November 30th, 2011)

³ Shields, Rachel (6 July 2008). "No Blacks, No Dogs, No Gypsies". *The Independent* (London).

democracy, and equality—a 2010 program attempted to send gypsies back to Romania.⁴ The discrimination functions on a private individual level as well. In Italy, July 2008, two gypsy girls drowned on a public beach while a nearby Italian couple ignored them. The outcry against this action led a civil rights group to call for an inquiry into the incident.⁵ These are but a few examples of the ill treatment that the Roma face throughout the world and the difficulty they face securing basic rights. The plight of the Roma was recently acknowledged in a platform of the European Roma Rights Center Petition, which called on the European Union to:

“**condemn** all acts of anti-Roma violence, recognising their racial motivation, **ensure prompt State response** to protect Romani European citizens and deliver justice to victims of violent attacks; **implement a “zero tolerance policy”** for public officials engaged in hate speech or other violations of the rights of Roma.”⁶

The platform makes explicit what the Roma have experienced for centuries: a vicious cycle of discrimination, racism, and violence.

Historical Background

The first written reference to the Roma comes from a Sanskrit excerpt in the 11th century, where they are classified as “man of low caste living by singing and music’.”⁷ This early reference shows that the deck has been stacked against the Roma for centuries. In 395, the start of the Byzantine Empire treated the Roma population as slaves to their Byzantine “masters.”⁸ This sort of subjugation continued throughout the course of history, but was strongest during the Second World War. No event more strongly attests to the discrimination and subjugation of the Roma than the atrocities perpetrated during Germany’s Nazi Regime from 1939-1945. Though most people recognize the Holocaust as an ethnic cleansing of European Jews, gypsies, Poles and

⁴ "France Sends Roma Gypsies Back to Romania". BBC. August 20, 2010. Retrieved November 2nd, 2011.

⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/21/italy.race>

⁶ European Roma Rights Centre Petition: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/errc/>

⁷ Hancock. *Ame Sam e Rromane Džene/We Are the Romani People*. p. 13. ISBN 1902806190.

⁸ <http://russianpickle.wordpress.com/2010/09/05/russian-gypsies-and-history-of-roma-people/>

other groups were similarly killed and tortured.”⁹ Ethnic cleansing programs known as “porajmos”¹⁰ resulted in Roma casualties, predicted to be anywhere from 220,000 to 1,500,000 Roma.¹¹ “Between 1933 and 1945, Roma ("Gypsies") suffered greatly as victims of the Nazi persecution and genocide. Building on long-held prejudices, the Nazi regime viewed Gypsies both as "asocials" (outside "normal" society) and as racial "inferiors"—believed to threaten the biological purity and strength of the "superior Aryan" race. During World War II, the Nazis and their collaborators killed tens of thousands of Sinti and Roma men, women, and children across German-occupied Europe.”¹² Historically, the Roma people have been treated as outsiders, pariahs and low-level citizens.

The victimization of Jewish people during the Second World War helped justify the establishment and recognition of the State of Israel. The Roma, unfortunately, have no similar homeland and they rarely find political asylum where they do live. Though the carnage towards the Jewish people is long-standing throughout Europe, countries feel an obligation to remedy some wrongs. Support groups, cultural centers, and historical education about the Holocaust, help to insure the continued preservation of the Jewish culture. Regrettably, there is nothing remotely similar for the Roma in Western or Eastern Europe. The Roma still cannot find a place

⁹ Rick Fawn, “Czech Attitudes Towards the Roma: ‘Expecting More of Havel’s Country?’” *Europe-Asia Studies* 53(8 [2001]): 1193-1219; Open Society Institute, “Current Attitudes Toward the Roma in Central Europe: A Report of Research with non-Roma and Roma Respondents,” September 2005 http://www.soros.org/initiatives/roma/articles_publications/publications/attitudes_20050901/romasurvey_2005.pdf (accessed October 15, 2010); Cristian Tileaga, “Accounting for extreme prejudice and legitimating blame in talk about the Romanies,” *Discourse & Society* 16 [September 2005]: 603-624; Stanislav Daniel, “Hard Times and Hardening Attitudes: The Economic

¹⁰ Matras, Yaron. 2004. A conflict of paradigms: review article. In: *Romani Studies* 5. Vol. 14, No. 2. P.195

¹¹ Hancock, Ian (2005), "True Romanies and the Holocaust: A Re-evaluation and an overview", *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 383–396, ISBN 1-4039-9927-9

¹² Holocaust Teacher Resource Center: <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/sinti.htm>

in which they feel safe and protected. In fact, the Roma continue to face persistent discrimination at the hands of various states. The history of the Roma in the countries of my study (United Kingdom and Russia) is bleak.

There is no clearly established date when the Roma first arrived in Britain, though it is widely accepted that they were making a mark in Europe by 1417. Under the rule of Henry VIII, the Egyptian Act of 1530 was aimed at driving out the gypsy people in Britain. It was not uncommon for the Roma people to suffer mass hangings and executions as well as to be blamed for crimes in which they had no association. Britain certainly never welcomed the group: as early as 1554, British legislation required the hanging of the members of the Roma culture because of unfounded and untrue rumors of black magic, cannibalism and other prejudices of the majority's paranoid imagination. This persecution forced many Roma to be unemployed and to travel around at night, hiding in forests and caves. Ironically, this behavior – which was effectively forced upon the Roma – became a part of the rationale for the majority to look down upon the Roma. More recently, the Roma have had major clashes with local law enforcement in Britain over the right to have public events promoting their culture.

These attitudes are not isolated to Western Europe. In Russia there are six different types of groups of Roma: Ruska Roma, Vlaxitka Roma, Servitka Roma, Lotva Roma, Kalderash and Modyars,¹³ Clearly with so many different groups, Russia is affected by the presence of the Romani people. More importantly, the varieties of languages show that the Roma people carry with them the influence of other countries in Eastern Europe. Though an obvious presence in the

¹³ Ruska Roma: many of whom arrived in the 17th century and speak both Russian and Romani, Vlaxitka Roma: who live in the southern regions of the country, Servitka Roma: who migrated from Ukraine, Lotva Roma: who are from the regions of Lithuania, Kalderash: who live in various villages in the country and Modyars, who speak Hungarian, Ukrainian, Russian and Romani.

country, the Roma continue to be ostracized from the main society. Anti-Roma violence continues to be a constant occurrence in Russia, with very little protection afforded to the group from legislation, lawmakers, or government policy.¹⁴ The Roma in Russia have always faced some sort of image distortion, even as early as their arrival in the country around the 16th century. If the conception of the Roma in the early days romanticized the culture as fortune-tellers and horse traders, the image held by the Russians today has taken a much darker turn. Gypsies are now seen as no good drug dealers and vandals. They are blamed for arson and corrupting the youth of Russia by forcing drug addiction on innocent children.¹⁵ Though the number of Roma drug dealers has consistently been shown to be exaggerated, it does not stop 52% of the Russian population from having negative views about the group.¹⁶

This plague of blame has not left the Roma people. In Britain, if the Roma wish to create public events, legislation frequently makes it extremely difficult for them to do so. Permit requests for the use of public land submitted to the lawmakers on the local level, frequently get denied because the applicant is of Romani culture. In fact, almost 90% of planning applications are denied to the Roma, a disproportionate number when compared to the 20% denied to the non-Roma applicants.¹⁷ What makes the negative public opinion in England even more perplexing is the fact that the Roma communities in other countries of Western Europe have made it a specific goal to assimilate to the majority culture and to adopt the primary language. “Romani communities that settled in the westernmost ‘fringe’ countries, such as Portugal and Spain, the United Kingdom, and the Scandinavian countries (with the exception of Finland), some 5-6 centuries ago, have abandoned Romani and have adopted the majority language (albeit

¹⁴ ERRC: <http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=331>

¹⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8142993.stm>

¹⁶ A recent poll by the independent Levada Centre

¹⁷ "Gypsies and Irish Travellers: The Facts". Commission on Racial Equality (UK).

retaining some Romani vocabulary in group-internal conversation). Speaker communities in these regions consist predominantly of later immigrants from central or eastern Europe.”¹⁸ After the expansion of the EU in 2004, many of the eastern European Roma migrated to the West. The disdain therefore would most likely come from those eastern European Roma who have not assimilated to the culture of their western European counter-part well enough to not “ruffle any feathers.” Contemporary issues continue to shine light on the vast discrimination that the Roma people face, though past history has not been much kinder.

Though the overall number of Roma is extremely difficult to determine, the best estimates for the worldwide Roma population ranges anywhere from 8 to 14 million.¹⁹ Roma are difficult to count precisely because Roma individuals are often afraid to identify themselves as such for fear of retribution. As a consequence, the Roma are likely to identify themselves with the main ethnic group of the country in which they live.²⁰

Status of Roma in Select European Countries

Evidence suggests the Roma-phobia is prevalent both in the Eastern and in the Western parts of the continent. There are significant populations of Roma in Spain, England, France and Italy. With a reported 650,000 gypsies in Spain, the Roma make up 1.6 percent of that country’s total population.²¹ Spain is unique among European countries in that it makes a continuous effort to create open communication and inclusion to ethnic minorities that live among the majority

¹⁸ The status of Romani in Europe—Report submitted to the Council of Europe’s Language Policy Division, October 2005

¹⁹ Council of Europe compilation of population estimates

²⁰ The Decade of Roma Inclusion is an initiative launched in February 2005 by eight countries in the region, the World Bank, the Open Society Institute (OSI), and other international donors. The countries include Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, FYR Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovak Republic. <http://go.worldbank.org/ELVUPU6V80>

²¹ Again, because of underreporting there is almost certainly a larger population of Roma in Spain and other countries

culture. This policy seems to extend to the Roma population as well. Though the Roma have faced numerous attempts at expulsion and discrimination in the country's history, the Spanish Constitution promotes anti-discriminatory laws. "The Constitution of 1978 formally placed Spanish Roma on an equal legal footing with other Spanish citizens. Article 14 guarantees equality and full citizenship, and prohibits discrimination on grounds of racial origin, religion and gender for all citizens."²² Though Spanish attitudes are most definitely not universally positive toward the Roma, Spain is among the most bearable place in the West for Roma groups to try to assimilate.²³ With its moderate openness to ethnic minorities, Roma communities have found more support in this country than they have anywhere else in the West.

If Spain is at one end of the spectrum in promoting the human rights for the Roma communities, France is at the polar opposite end. Roma make up about less than 1 percent of France's overall population, with only 500,000 who report that they are Roma. President Nicolas Sarkozy, when he was serving as Minister of the Interior, championed efforts to expel minorities and immigrant workers, including the Roma. When Sarkozy became President in 2007 he had an unclear plan as to how to deal with human rights for ethnic minorities.²⁴ As expected, Roma in France are notoriously isolated. In a series of polls conducted in 1998, France was found to be the most racist and xenophobic country in all of Europe. In fact, one in three French people can be classified as "racist," according to a survey commissioned by the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights.²⁵ Not only has Sarkozy implemented a "Roma relocation" program—a move condemned by the UN—which has sent over 1,000 Roma back to Romania,

²² <http://www.errc.org/article/spanish-policy-and-roma/1740>

²³ European Roma Rights Center—Spain Roma Attitudes
<http://www.errc.org/cikk.php?cikk=1740>

²⁴ <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=1622>

²⁵ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4832238.stm> Survey of 1,011 people was carried out by the CSA polling institute for the National Consultative Commission for Human Rights

but also the group is consistently blamed for social and economic problems within France; Sarkozy calls them an “unsolvable” problem.²⁶ If Spain is representative of the “best” Roma can experience, France is most certainly representative of the worst the Roma experience.

Italy on the other hand, is a country decidedly divided on Roma rights and inclusion. Roma make up 0.22% of the population with 130,000 Roma. The research in Italy on the subject is hard to isolate but a recent example of these divisive attitudes comes from a case involving the drowning deaths of two Romani girls. Two young gypsy girls lay dead on the beach for three hours while a couple sat yards away eating their picnic and sunbathing while looking at the scene. Needless to say, an attitude such as this is inhumane. The story raised a powerful outcry from Italian minority rights groups, causing citizens to confront their attitudes toward the Roma. Some were obviously outraged and showed that publically. Others showed the same nonchalant attitude as the beach couple. With current data, though the outlook seems bleak, the attitudes are too divided to obtain a consensus.²⁷

The highest Roma population in Eastern Europe can be found in Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia. Of those countries, Serbia has the most positive attitudes towards Roma. There are 108,193 reported gypsies in Serbia, making up 1.44% of the population. The World Bank conducted a study in 2005 outlining attitudes towards the Roma. Attitudes and treatment of Roma have substantially improved since Slobodan Milosevic’s regime from 1997-2000.²⁸ Serbia as a country is known as relatively anti-Semitic and less xenophobic than neighbouring countries. Perhaps because of their focus on other enemies, the Roma population has been treated

²⁶ <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n2/world/europe-hostility-gypsies-roma-france-romania-bulgaria-sarkozy-sasho-radoslavov-43352.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2008/aug/17/familyandrelationships.roma>

²⁸ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTROMA/0,,contentMDK:20749979~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:615987,00.html>

more favourably in Serbia than any other region in Eastern Europe. “Nevertheless, in different historical periods Gypsies in Yugoslavia (Serbia more specifically) enjoyed more favourable treatment by the majority than in most of the neighbouring countries at the time (see Crowe, 1995).”²⁹ Therefore Serbia could be seen as the most positive representation of Roma attitudes in Eastern Europe.

Not surprisingly, Romania has the largest population (in number) of gypsies in Eastern Europe with a reported 535,000 Roma. This number comprises 2.46% of the population. A qualitative study conducted by the World Bank Organization in 2005 indicated that Romanians had a negative view towards the Roma, though it also showed that this negative attitude was not all encompassing for all Roma in Romania. Respondents tended to differentiate between “good” and “bad” Roma.³⁰ The study also indicates that a small group of Roma are able to integrate and become successful despite an overall negative outlook. However, this success could only be achieved after completely renouncing any connection with Roma identity. The Romanian society ascribed negative characteristics towards the Roma, some of which included “lazy, dirty and liars.”³¹ There are also example of ‘ambassadors for change;’ people who fight for Roma rights

²⁹ Bojan Todosijević, “Anti-Jewish and Anti-Gypsy Attitudes in Hungary and Yugoslavia: Social and Psychological Determinants,” MA thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 1998), http://www.personal.ceu.hu/students/98/Bojan_Todosijevic/staro/MA_nationalism.pdf (accessed November 20th, 2011);

³⁰ “Good Roma: Respondents felt that these were the majority of people within the culture. These Roma were seen to have an adherence to tradition and culture, be skilled craftsmen and be family and community oriented. “Bad” Roma: Respondents felt that these were the hooligans of the group, lazy, uneducated or involved in the drug trade.

³¹ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTROMA/0,,contentMDK:20749979~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:615987,00.html>

on a local level, though much of their work has yet to improve the grim situation.³² Though not overwhelmingly negative, Romania represents an attitude nowhere near as positive as Serbia.

Bulgaria has the highest percentage of Roma with 4.67% of the population or 370,908 people reported. However, the Roma population is projected to be as high as 7%-10%. The current situation for the Roma is bleak; 84% of the group live below the Bulgarian poverty line and have been forced into uninhabitable ghettos. However the attitudes in Bulgaria are difficult to isolate. Bulgaria is culturally tolerant, however some respondents in World Bank Survey called the Bulgarian attitude “excessively tolerant” causing some resentment towards Roma.³³ And though the Roma were integrated into the economic system 15 years ago, many Bulgarian respondents now feel as though the Roma have lost their way.³⁴

Figure 1 shows the populations across European countries that favour the expulsion of immigrants in general, not just the Roma. Anti-immigrant attitudes in general, however, are reflective of the fairly harsh attitudes that are held in relation to the Roma. As Figure 1³⁵ shows, the highest percentages of populations that favour the expulsion of immigrants belong to Romania and France. Of the six countries, three had populations close to 25% that were in favour

³² Several local leaders, Mădălin Voicu (Roma MP) and Nicolae Păun (Roma MP) were most frequently mentioned

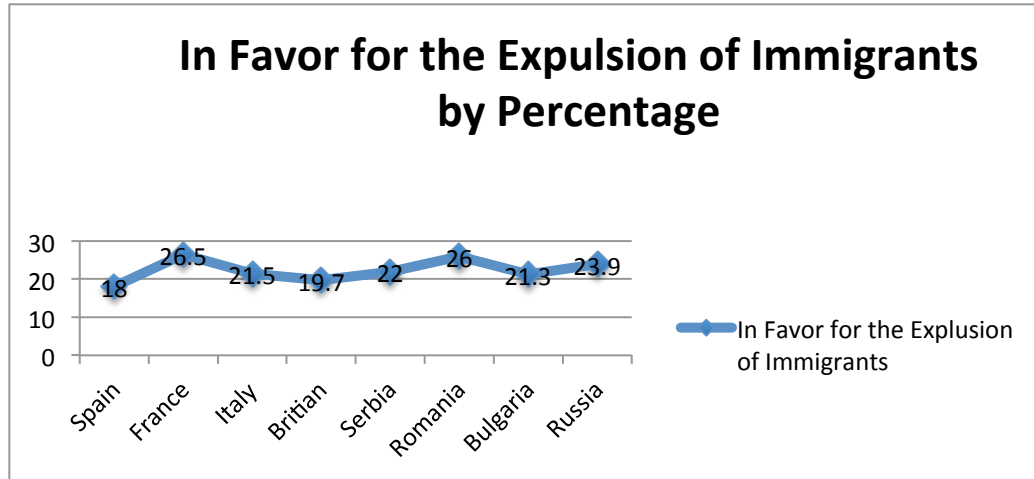
³³ It is important to note that this “excessive toleration” could prove negative for the Roma. If some citizens hold negative views towards the gypsy culture, it is possible that at some point they would be able to take hold of public opinion and possibly use the moderate attitudes of citizens, who might just have some slight reservations towards the Roma, to completely reverse public opinion and make those moderate attitudes into radical ones by pointing out “excessive toleration. This is to say that if at some point attitudes were to change, they could easily but the Roma at a much greater disadvantage.

³⁴ <http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/COUNTRIES/ECAEXT/EXTROMA/0,,contentMDK:20749979~pagePK:64168445~piPK:64168309~theSitePK:615987,00.html>

³⁵ These are projected numbers based on a variety of sources including the Council of Europe and statistics compiled within the country profiles of <http://focus-migration.hwwi.de/Country-Profiles.1349.0.html?&L=1>

of immigrant expulsion. Among the six countries between one-fifth and one-quarter of the population favoured the outright expulsion of immigrants.

Figure 1—Percentage Among General Population that Favor the Expulsion of Immigrants



Selection of Case Studies

For this study, I have selected attitudes toward the Roma in Britain and Russia.³⁶ These countries are ideal for comparative purposes for various reasons. First, the two countries have a substantial population of Roma. Britain has the second largest Roma population in Western Europe (90,000), while Russia has the fourth largest Roma population in Eastern Europe (182,766). Second, the countries represent different parts of the continent (West and East). Third, there is accessible data on popular attitudes toward the Roma in both countries. Fourth, there is a long history of discrimination against the Roma in both countries. Finally, the policies and attitudes toward the Roma in these two countries do not fall on either extreme in their

³⁶ By providing an overall survey of attitudes towards Roma in Europe, this paper attempts isolate attitudes in specific countries that could be representative of the eastern part of Europe and the Western part of Europe. Evidence has shown that attitudes in the West have been unrepresentatively good, unrepresentatively bad and/or difficult to isolate. The same goes for Eastern Europe: certain places show that attitudes fall on either extreme or are difficult to isolate.

respective region of Europe. In this way, they can serve as representative countries for their part of Europe as a whole.

Literature Review

While there have been a number of studies on the Roma,³⁷ the conclusions on popular attitudes toward the group remain unclear. This article will focus on this unfulfilled gap in the literature by analysing the factors that explain discriminatory attitudes toward the Roma in Britain and Russia. Europe as a whole has a population of 9.8 million gypsies, according to the Council of Europe. Much of the literature written on the subject has focused on the historical treatment towards the Roma, specifically in Eastern Europe. Some of the articles focus on statistical data to show prejudice, but might only focus on a specific population such as students or police officers.³⁸ Tomas Calvo Buezes focused his Spanish study on the conflicting attitudes

³⁷ It is of foremost importance to identify who would fall under the category of a member of the Romani culture. It is not sufficient to just classify them as travellers, for Irish travellers speak their own language of Shetla and not the Romani dialect associated with the majority of gypsies. Conclusions made from: *Ethnicity and the American Cemetery* by Richard E. Meyer. 1993. "... though many of them crossed the Atlantic in centuries past to play their trade." Though customs of the Roma and Shelta are similar they should not be seen as members of the same culture. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper I will be focusing on the Romani culture and not on the Irish travellers, which are sometimes lumped into a broader category of "gypsies," especially in England. The Roma ethnicity can be traced strictly back to the Indian subcontinent and speak some form of the Romani language. Conclusions made from: *Questioning Gypsy Identity: Ethnic Narratives in Britain and America* by Brian Belton

³⁸ Tomás Calvo Buezes, "From Militant Racism to Egalitarian Solidarity: Conflicting Attitudes Toward Gypsies in Spain," *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 7(1 [1977]):13-27; Martii Grönfors, "Police Perceptions of Gypsies in Finland," in Diane Tong, ed., *Gypsies: An Interdisciplinary Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 75-96; Carmen Gómez-Berrocal and Marisol Navas, "Predictores del prejuicio manifiesto y sutil hacia los gitanos," *Revista de Psicología Social* 15(1 [January 2000]):3-30; Marisol Navas Luque and Isabel Cuadrado Guirado, "Actitudes hacia gitanos e inmigrantes africanos: un estudio

towards gypsies in Spain. He focused on the attitudes of students in order to isolate these views. The results showed that though “Roma-phobia” existed, it was less intense in students than in the majority of society. This study came to the conclusion that Roma were thought to embody the evil and degradation of society. Though an important focus group, the study’s focus on student attitudes narrows its scope. The same goes for Martii Gronfors’ study of Finnish Roma-phobia. The study concentrated on the sentiments of members of the police force toward Roma. The study found that members of the police force were more likely to suspect or arrest a Gypsy than a native Fin. However, the narrow scope of this report once again limits its generalizability on the topic of popular attitudes toward the Roma.³⁹ Marisol Navas Luque’s study on public opinion focuses on overall stereotypes towards a wide variety of ethnic minorities, not just the Roma population. Her study failed to isolate a reason specific for antiziganism.⁴⁰ Other articles illuminate the problems facing the Roma, but neglect the more sociological explanations for the existence of Roma misery.⁴¹ Studies frequently group the Roma with other minority groups to isolate causes for discrimination against all ethnic groups.⁴² Bojan Todosijevic, for example, isolated anti-gypsy attitudes in Yugoslavia, but his study grouped these results as synonymous to anti-Semitism. Though this is clearly important work, it fails to address the specific reasons for

comparativ,” 2010?, http://www.cop.es/delegaci/andocci/files/contenidos/VOL21_1_2.pdf (accessed November 2nd, 2011)

³⁹The sample size of this group was limited and it focused only on the police force.

⁴⁰ Another word for a fear of Roma. The literature has not settled on what term to use though most scholars more commonly use “Roma-phobia” in academic works. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiziganism#cite_note-51.

⁴¹ Robert E. Koulisch, “Attitudes towards Roma Minority Rights in Hungary: A Case of Ethnic Doxa, and the Contested Legitimization of Roma Inferiority,” *Nationalities Papers* 31(3 [September 2003]): 327-345.

⁴² Bojan Todosijević, “Anti-Jewish and Anti-Gypsy Attitudes in Hungary and Yugoslavia: Social and Psychological Determinants,” MA thesis (Budapest: Central European University, 1998), http://www.personal.ceu.hu/students/98/Bojan_Todosijevic/staro/MA_nationalism.pdf (accessed November 20th, 2011);

antiziganism.⁴³ Other works look specifically at psychological factors in anti-Roma bias, but neglect economic and political reasons for this bias.⁴⁴ Valentin Sazhin, who tried to isolate Roma-phobia in Ukraine, conducted one of the most thorough studies, using a sample size of 10,000 people.⁴⁵ Sazhin concluded that the main reason for the Ukrainian hostility towards this group was the aggressiveness of the few gypsies who partake in illegal activity. The actions of a small group of gypsies then poison the minds of the majority towards all Roma. However, this study was conducted right at the fall of the USSR and focused solely on Ukraine. The political upheaval that Ukraine was experiencing at the time could have possibly skewed the data. The existing literature makes clear that there is widespread discrimination against the Roma. What is missing from the research is a close analysis for what explains popular prejudice against the Roma.

Theories to be Tested

There is no quantitative study of public attitudes toward the Roma in England or Russia. Empirical literature does exist in other countries such as Spain, Germany and Ukraine. These studies find that factors such as age and gender had little effect on popular attitudes toward the Roma, while education did. According to a study of Roma in the USSR, those with less

⁴³ The root *zigan* is the basis of the word given to the Roma people in many European languages. Note however, that in several regions "zigan" and its variations are considered derogatory and offensive. Many activists and scholars prefer the phrase "Roma-phobia" http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antiziganism#cite_note-51.

⁴⁴ Soňa Kariková and Bronislava Kasáčová, "Attitudes to the Romany from the View of the Psychosemntic [sic] Research," in Beata Kosová, ed., *Khetanes – Together: The anthology from the 1st seminar of Transnational Partnership of EQUAL project, Teplý Vrch, 23rd-25th of September 2005* (Banská Bystrica, Slovakia: Pedagogical Faculty, Matej Bel University, 2006), pp. 75-91;

⁴⁵ Valentin Sazhin, "Attitudes towards Gypsies in Ukraine (1989)," *Nationalities Papers* 19(3 [September 1991]): 337-357.

education had more negative and intolerant view towards the Roma.⁴⁶ Partisanship in a right-wing party also contributed to a negative view towards the Roma.

This paper will test four theories on popular attitudes toward the Roma.⁴⁷

1. Education

Education seems to be a very important factor in determining attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Greater levels of education often promote a liberal attitude. Weakliem⁴⁸ came to this conclusion when he stated in his article that “increased education boosts support for racial and ethnic minorities.” Some point to the fact that an increase in education—particularly college or exposure to university school education—allows citizens to experience new trends and liberal ideas. They are then able to accept changing values and new schools of thought. Education, too, promotes the important ability to think on more critically, to ask question of global importance, and to question conventional attitudes. This theory would predict that those with more education would have more positive attitudes toward the Roma, while those with less education would have more negative views. Exposure to education and academia is seen as a positive force in

⁴⁶ Valentin Sazhin, “Attitudes towards Gypsies in Ukraine (1989),” *Nationalities Papers* 19(3 [September 1991]):337-357.

⁴⁷ Robert E. Koulis, “Attitudes towards Roma Minority Rights in Hungary: A Case of Ethnic Doxa, and the Contested Legitimization of Roma Inferiority,” *Nationalities Papers* 31(3 [September 2003]):327-345.

⁴⁸ Duane Francis Alwin, Ronald Lee Cohen, and Theodore Mead Newcomb, *Political attitudes over the life span: the Bennington women after fifty years* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991); Kenneth A. Feldman, Theodore Mead Newcomb, *The impact of college on students* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994); David L. Weakliem, “The Effects of Education on Political Opinions: An International Study,” *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 13, no. 2 (June 2002):141-157; but see Mary R. Jackman, “General and Applied Tolerance: Does Education Increase Commitment to Racial Integration?” *American Journal of Political Science*, 22, no. 2 (May 1978):302-324.

liberalizing negative attitudes towards the Roma. Uneducated or non-college graduates are more likely to hold negative attitudes towards the Roma, according to this theory.

2. Economic Frustration Theory

A second set of theories argues that there is a link between economic conditions and attitudes toward ethnic minorities. The theory asserts that bad economic times can contribute to hostile attitudes towards ethnic minorities, who are seen as economic competition for scarce jobs. This theory would predict that members of the majority cultures would feel more inclined to blame the Roma for the country's economic difficulties. Those who were unemployed would be more likely to have negative attitudes toward the Roma. Not only unemployment, but also vandalism, and governmental disorder are aspects that can be attributed as the fault of the Roma. Frustration with poor conditions and the loss of jobs would be expressed through disdain for members of a minority group. This antagonism would then be directed at the ethnic minority—the Roma. Respondents who have recently become unemployed, suffered financial loss, or feel economically vulnerable would direct anger at the Roma and therefore hold antizaginst attitudes.

3. Post-Materialism

Ronald Inglehart's post-materialist theory⁴⁹ points to the difference between adherence to traditional values and post-materialist concerns. The theory argues that older respondents have more traditional values and are therefore more likely to have a negative view towards ethnic minorities. This would most likely point to the possibility that older, more conservative respondents more would most likely disapprove of the presence of Roma among the majority

⁴⁹ Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977).

culture. Because this theory is focused on generational trends, it is expected to have some reflection and correlation to age. Post-materialists are less likely to have experienced fear or insecurity relating to the economy and are more likely to embrace such causes as free speech and the rights of ethnic groups. Thus, this theory argues that younger, more educated respondents will have more positive views toward the Roma than older, less educated persons.

4. Ethno-Partisanship Theory

An ethno-partisanship theory posits a link between membership in right-wing parties and negative attitudes toward ethnic minorities. The theory would predict that members of those parties would express opposition to the Roma. Therefore, it is estimated that respondents who aligned with radical parties such as the Neo-Nazi party in Russia, or the British National Party in England are more likely to oppose any ethnic minority, especially the Roma. Politicians use the racism and xenophobia to gain votes. By using the Roma as a pawn in this electoral effort, ethnic minorities are targeted. They are frequently blamed for social, political, and economic problems that exist in country. Radical political leaders take this as an opportunity to relegate blame unto a group already disadvantaged. The ethnic group therefore becomes both the scapegoat and the bargaining chip for the radical right. Because respondents can learn much of their political and economic information by listening to the leaders of their political party, hostile attitudes are formed by adhering to the message that a radical party leader portrays to a willing audience. Respondents who sympathize with right-wing parties, in short, are much more likely to have disdain for the Roma.

Methodology

In order to test these hypotheses, this paper will analyze public opinion surveys in Russia and Britain. For the British analysis, data was obtained from the Eurobarometer 57.2. The

Eurobarometer analyzed national attitudes towards various ethnic minorities. Question 25 asked “Q.25. I would like you to tell me how close you feel to the following groups of people”, and included “Gypsies” as one of the group’s on the list.

For the Russian data, I used data from the World Social Survey (A140) from 1994. There are many relevant questions in this survey to help gauge attitudes towards Roma. Among the questions asked were: “Who would you not like to see as your neighbor?” This question included “gypsies” as one possible answer.⁵⁰ The answers included a scale ranging from very positive to very negative attributes. The respondents’ answers to these questions will help isolate specific Russian attitudes toward Roma in those years. In order to test the attitudes toward Roma in these countries, statistical regressions will be analyzed through Logit and Stata to estimate the effect and severity of public opinion upon this group. After analyzing the surveys on the dependent variables, this paper will use the STATA program to conduct a multivariate analysis of the various Roma-related question. This Logit analysis will help further isolate and analyze the people who hold these anti-Roma attitudes and their reasons for doing so.

Table #1 shows the statistical regressions for the British data. The British Data disconfirmed existing theories by yielding no statistically significant results. When testing for income, age, gender, and education, no variable reached statistical significance. It is possible that the relatively small size of the Roma population in England has kept them from public view, so that respondents have not had enough personal exposure to the Roma to form a particularly negative attitude. If that is the case, however, it is curious that there remain significant policy

⁵⁰ The difference in questions between the British and Russian survey could possibly be attributed to the fact that there is a difference in culture between Western and Eastern Europe. Therefore the wording of the questions asked is different. Ideally, it would have been better to use identical questions. Unfortunately, because of the difference in years of the studies this paper is limited to the items that are actually asked in the British and Russian surveys.

disadvantages for the Roma. Perhaps the negative policies are driven at the local level, where activists mobilize against the Roma, but those localized movements have little effect on attitudes nationwide. Alternatively, it is possible that respondents don't want to admit social prejudice, even in an anonymous survey. The regression findings, shown in Table 1, might also indicate that people have developed strong anti-Roma attitudes because this issue has taken a backseat in relation to other issues on the British spectrum.

Table 1—British Regression Findings

| Not Close to Gypsies | Odds Ratio | Std. Err. | Z Score | P> z | 95% Conf. | Interval |
|--------------------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------|-------|-----------|----------|
| Income | 1.070687 | .0658749 | 1.11 | 0.267 | .949056 | 1.207907 |
| Age (Recoded) | 1.067063 | .0559127 | 1.24 | 0.215 | .9629157 | 1.182475 |
| Female | 1.015962 | .1195039 | 0.13 | 0.893 | .8067776 | 1.279385 |
| Education (Age at which degree was earned) | 1.434728 | .3470437 | 1.49 | 0.136 | .8930461 | 2.304969 |

Figure 2 shows the regression data from both the Russian and British surveys. Though Britain did not yield statistical results, at the .05 levels, it does come closest to statistical significance in the “Age” and “Education” categories.

Figure 2—Regression Data Comparison: Russia and United Kingdom

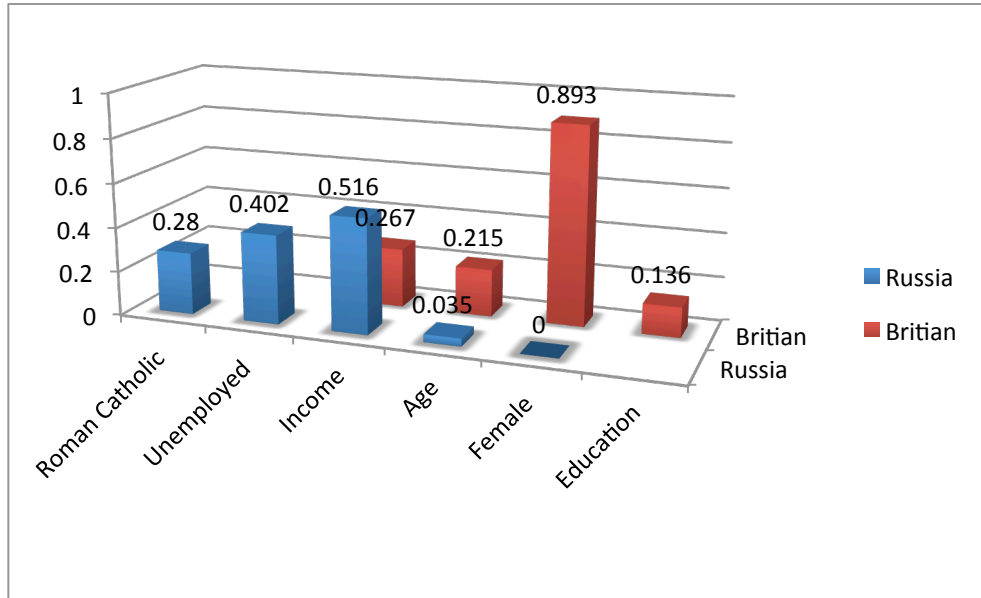


Table #2 shows the results from the Russian surveys. The Russian data did yield some statistically significant results, which confirmed some theories, while disconfirming others. As the post-materialist theory predicted, age is powerfully correlated with negative attitudes toward the Roma. Older respondents, who are more likely to hold traditional values, were much more likely to express that they did not want to have a gypsy as a neighbor. While gender was not a theory that I had predicted would explain attitudes toward the Roma, it was the most powerful predictor of negative attitudes. Interestingly, however, being a female made a respondent much more likely to hold a negative view toward the Roma. This finding contradicts many gender theories that note that women are more likely than men to hold socially tolerant attitudes. A possible explanation for this finding is the unique nature of the Roma community. For the most part, Roma women are much more public than are Roma men. The public face of the Roma community are women, some of whom are seen begging on the side of the road, selling their services as fortune tellers, or even soliciting money in public places. It might be that women are more likely than men to reject the Roma because of their perception that Roma women are responsible for sullyng the reputation of all women.

Table 2—Russian Regression Findings

| Gypsies as Neighbors | Odds Ratio | Std. Err. | Z Score | P> z | 95% Conf. | Interval |
|-----------------------------------------|------------|-----------|---------|--------------|-----------|----------|
| Roman Catholic | 1.009662 | .0089914 | 1.08 | 0.280 | .99219922 | 1.02744 |
| Unemployed | .9330221 | .2026346 | -0.84 | 0.402 | .7934775 | 1.097108 |
| Income | 1.050945 | .0804601 | 0.65 | 0.516 | .9045073 | 1.22109 |
| Age (Young Less Likely to Discriminate) | .830585 | .0732687 | -2.10 | 0.035 | .6987096 | .9873508 |
| Female | 1.575839 | .2026346 | 3.54 | 0.00 | 1.224778 | 2.027526 |

Conclusions and Recommendations

The history and data show that the Roma face widespread discrimination from various groups. The historical treatment of the Roma in Britain portrays a grim social climate with no signs of improvement. Watchdog groups as early as March of 2012 chastise the British government for their inhumane treatment of the Roma.⁵¹ Clearly, this grievance needs to be addressed and studied further.

In order to shatter conservative views that contribute to prejudicial attitudes towards Roma, several options can be explored to address the problem of anti-Roma prejudice. It is vitally important to invest in future research in order to demonstrate how pervasive discrimination against the Roma is. Very little is known about the reasons for the widespread discrimination against the Roma. Public opinions surveys could capture the causes for these

⁵¹ http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2012/03/01/uk-undermining-gypsies-rights_n_1313021.html

attitudes and possibly address their underlying foundation. The understanding gained through future research could therefore create a climate where it is a “tradition” to be accepting of the Roma. Such research and study would help curb the damage done by misguided attitudes. Similarly, classroom applications can teach human rights and tolerant social attitudes from a young age: teach the future, our children, that not only can these groups coexist peacefully; they can add value to each other’s lives.

Not only can the majority culture be socially liberalized, but also much can be done with the educational policies and procedures for the Roma. It is important to equalize and set a standard for Roma education. This would not only incorporate the Roma better into the majority culture, but also help create an atmosphere where children interact with one another without bias. This would also revolutionize future employment opportunities for the Roma and dispel the common perception that they are unwilling to work as hard as members of the majority culture.

A revision in governmental structure can also benefit the relationship between the Roma and the societies in which they hope to live. Program revisions can look into the laws that are harming the Roma people; revising these laws in such a way that would enable them to escape the vicious cycle of discrimination, would help to eliminate prejudice. Research shows that political groups make claims about the Roma people in order to achieve votes and popularity. To do so is a clear exploitation of the Roma community. Parties should be held accountable for these vicious tactics. Furthermore, it is important to try to create some sort of official “Roma representative” in both the British and Russian governments to ensure that effective political representation for this disadvantaged group.

Many of these recommendations function on the hope that there can be an open and honest communication with the Roma. The fear that the Roma people feel as a result of believing

in their own culture should not be an acceptable in any society. Safe and effective communication as well as the educational options listed above could help bridge the gaps between the groups and destroy hatred and prejudice. The Roma culture is so profoundly rich in history and tradition that its customs would only serve to enrich the majority culture, not to hinder it. By shattering attitudes of suspicion and hatred, understanding can be achieved, enabling a group, so often viciously persecuted, to be accepted humanly and lovingly.