

**ETHNIC IDENTITY, ACCULTURATION, AND LABOUR MARKET
PARTICIPATION IN MARGINALISED COMMUNITIES: THE
CASE OF THE ROMA OF SHUTO ORIZARI, MACEDONIA**

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Abstract

Title: Ethnic Identity, Acculturation, and Labour Market Participation in Marginalised Communities: The Case of the Roma of Shuto Orizari, Macedonia

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The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe are a large minority group that experience widespread marginalisation and social hardship. This research is focused on a substantial Roma community in the Republic of Macedonia, called Shuto Orizari. The work explores the construct of ethnic identity for this group, the way they participate in society through their acculturation orientations, and the influence these factors have on outcomes within the labour market. Seventeen people took part in the study across a range of backgrounds and a standpoint methodology was used to articulate the views of social reality for the participants. Information was collected through semi-structured interviews to which grounded theory was then applied.

The findings support existing theories on the construct of ethnic boundaries and social identity. 'Being Roma' is important to all who took part in the study, yet unlike other Roma communities this identity is free and unthreatened. Participants chose two ways to acculturate in society; roughly half of the participants integrated with the majority ethnic Macedonian community and portrayed a comfortable balance with their heritage culture often not seen in other Roma communities. The remaining participants followed a separatist path within purely Roma circles. This introversion produced extremely negative outcomes, most notably the poor psychological and sociocultural experiences within the labour market. The work concludes that although modes of identity construct within this community are different to other Roma groups, a person's acculturation orientation can still dramatically affect life outcomes. This conclusion can help steer policies to improve the experiences of social participation for the Roma of Shuto Orizari, or potentially other large ethnic groups.

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Chapter 1. Introduction to the Research

1.1 Introduction

In this section, an overview of the research project is presented. Firstly, a background to the pertinent issues is laid out through a brief synopsis of the literature review, something that is important in helping to understand the relevance of this work and the reasons for conducting it. The specific research question being addressed by this study is then identified, along with three sets of sub-questions that will help lead the reader through the findings towards the conclusions. The structure of the thesis is then explained so that the layout of the work is clear to the reader, and then finally the personal profile of the researcher is presented, helping to understand the motivation for undertaking this project.

1.2 Background to the Research

The Roma are a pan-European ethnic group, believed to have migrated to the continent from Asia as early as the 9th Century (Čvorovič, 2011) and history states that wherever they have established themselves, persecution and marginalisation have followed as near-universal themes (Petrova, 2003). Over the course of the 20th century the widely-held associations of the Roma as travellers has largely made way as groups have generally settled within urban communities, with substantial populations across the states of Central and Eastern Europe (Huber, 1993). Social exclusion has persisted nevertheless, and today the outlook is particularly poor, with many Roma finding themselves at the very bottom of their respective communities in terms of the widely-accepted indicators of social wellbeing such as unemployment, health and education (Henrard, 2004).

There are a number of tangible, ethnic traits that are commonly associated with the Roma such as a darker skin tone, the common use a comparable Romany language and associations with a similar artisan history (Ahmed *et al.*, 2007). Other social markers such as particularly large family sizes and strongly patriarchal values serve perhaps not only to identify a sense of similarity, but also the relative distance that can exist between the Roma and the dominant communities in which they live (Vivian and

Dundes, 2004). To the outside world, 'being Roma' can carry a distinct set of connotations, most frequently negative, in which ethnic indicators serve to emphasise social misalignment, reinforcing stereotypes built upon poverty and social exclusion. This persistent marginalisation not only pushes the Roma towards the edges of the dominant society, but creates a reverse 'othering' in which they may self-separate from the mainstream and live in relatively closed communities, drawing more heavily on their own people, their ethnic heritage and the differences this holds with the dominant group (Kligman, 2001).

What it means to an individual to 'be Roma' is of consequence, but this process is complex and multi-dimensional. Ethnic identity is never absolute; it varies over time and is a product of personal and collective aspects, or individual and interaction orders (Jenkins, 2005). How an individual perceives themselves and internalises this view is important, but how these views are validated by others, whether from intimate in-groups or more distanced out-groups, is equally significant. The way a person interacts with their surroundings can be a product of their ethnicity, but the relationship with a given community is reciprocal, helping to reinforce or redefine a person's ethnic identity. Berry's acculturation orientations segment these interactions into four categories – separation, assimilation, integration and marginalization – each explaining a different mode of social participation that a minority may choose to follow based on their ethnic experiences (Berry, 1999). Research on the different relationships between ethnicity and social interaction identify that no single mode of participation dominates at either an individual or group level, supporting the view of the complexity of this relationship. Some marginalised individuals feel a need to assimilate ethnically, renouncing their ethnic heritage in order to fit in to their surroundings. For others, marginalisation feeds a 'reactive ethnicity', a strengthening of their heritage as a point of defiance or collective solidarity (Ljubic, 2012). There is no formulaic approach, and this extends beyond groups to the individual. Choosing to assimilate, for example, in order to 'fit in' with the majority may improve one person's sense of belonging, yet for others this can lead to feelings of being compromised, or rejected from their own people (Berry and Sam, 1997). The psychological and sociocultural outputs an individual may experience through their acculturation orientation can be used to gauge the

desirability of their ethnic direction, and may be seen by the relative sense of material and emotional wellbeing that emerges through their interaction with both formal and informal social avenues such as education, welfare, healthcare and domestic life. Nowhere however is this more evident than in participation in the labour market, where outputs extend beyond pure financial revenue to include social inclusion and acceptance, self-esteem and psychological wellbeing (Sheeran *et al.*, 1995).

One community in Macedonia offers a unique scenario in terms of how the Roma live and engage within society. Shuto Orizari, an area located in the capital city of Skopje, is home to a particularly large Roma population of more than 30,000 people (Trehan, 2009). Where other large Roma populations are frequently treated as 'settlements' or even ghettos, Shuto Orizari has a long standing, integrated history within the city. There is a relative freedom and pride that the residents have in their Roma heritage (Silverman, 1996), yet despite this distinctly different set of demographic circumstances, social indicators suggest that the life outcomes are still particularly poor and strikingly similar to many other Roma communities across Europe. Particularly noticeable is the high level of unemployment and the low quality of labour market participation, largely dependent on the informal sector and frequently extending to desperate activities such as recycling communal waste or begging (Silverman, 1996). Quite why this is the case, given the unique and distinctly different set of social circumstances surrounding this community is the focus of this research.

1.2.1 Significance of this Study: Aims and Objectives of the Work

The generic themes addressed in this study – ethnic identity, acculturation and labour market participation – are well-researched. Theories on this however are relatively diverse and outputs are not prescriptive but rather a context-bound product of complex social mechanisms. This is important, as there is little research on these particular themes within the Roma community, and the validity of this work lies partly in the fact that findings cannot simply be transferred from one social group to another. Another significant aspect of this research is the emphasis that is placed on the unique view of social reality held by the members of the Roma community, something frequently overlooked or discarded in literature on marginalised communities. Some writers, such

as Čvorović (2011), focus on 'incompatible' social practices of the Roma within the dominant society, something that ultimately hinders participation and social progress. Others such as Milcher and Fischer (2011) claim a reverse phenomenon, emphasising the inability of social systems to accommodate the Roma, leaving them marginalised and excluded. A frequent failing of both these approaches is that the perception of social reality, the way the Roma internalise and experience day-to-day problems, is viewed very much through the values of the researcher. Facts are reported through the prescribed reference frame of the majority community, rather than accommodating the standpoint of the Roma themselves. To that end, this work is important in that it acknowledges the validity of the situated view of the participants, and seeks to provide a platform for these views to be expressed.

The consequence of this work lies partly in the social importance of its subject matter. At an individual level the labour market is the primary driver for social mobility, an important dimension of life for such a materially disadvantaged community. On a broader level, the labour market can contribute to the development of society, supporting social cohesion against complex ethnic backgrounds such as those in Macedonia. It is hoped that understanding the reasons why, in the face of such unique circumstances, the Roma continue to live in such poor conditions can help direct policy makers in Macedonia. Beyond the specific context of the Roma community, it is also hoped that aspects of the findings may be partially transferrable to other under-researched groups living in complex, ethnically plural societies.

Finally, social research in Macedonia is limited; the academic institutions within the country have relatively modest means, and research in the Balkans by Western academics tends to focus on the larger neighbouring territories such as Serbia and Bulgaria. The fact however that there is relatively little research conducted within this complex, unique set of circumstances offers a particularly important research-based contribution to practice.

1.2.2 The Research Question

Against the scenario provided by this information, the specific question that this research seeks to address is ***“How do ethnic identity and acculturation orientations affect labour market participation within the Roma community of Shuto Orizari?”***.

To answer this question, the research approaches three distinct and sequential sets of sub-questions to help form a story-board of information:

- How important is ethnic identity to the Roma in Shuto Orizari, and how is this constructed?
- What are the different acculturation orientations of the Roma, how are these influenced, and does the nature of social participation have a bearing on opportunities and prosperity?
- What are the labour market outcomes for the Roma in Shuto Orizari, and how does ethnic identity and acculturation shape these?

Each of these sub-questions is explored in separate chapters, with the respective findings being used to formulate a more complete overall picture.

1.2.3 Methodology

A qualitative approach was established as the most appropriate research methodology for this study as this accommodates the intricacies of human relationships in social research, not only in regards to the participant and the complex, personal experiences they seek to articulate, but also in the important relationship between the participants and the researcher (Dreyer, 1998). Semi-structured interviews were selected as the best tool to engage with participants, offering a basic shape to the process around themes that emerged from the literature review, whilst allowing the interviewees space to express themselves openly and freely (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009). Seventeen different Roma people took part in the research across a range of different backgrounds, with a total of twenty-four interviews being conducted in either Romany or Macedonian language through an English-language gatekeeper-translator. These interviews were then transcribed, and grounded theory was applied through a process of iterative

coding to establish themes, piece together the views, and build theories to explain the findings.

Social research is a human process and the ethical considerations that accompany this are of paramount importance, especially when working with marginalised and vulnerable individuals. The participants in this study came from an array of backgrounds, including some of the poorest, most desperate members of the Roma community and for this reason a substantial amount of time and resource was spent structuring the work to protect all those involved from any present or potential emotional or physical harm. This involved detailed planning of the mechanics of the interview process via a structured risk assessment, including practical factors such as location and layout, and 'soft' factors such as dealing appropriately with emotionally-sensitive subjects. The gatekeeper-translator was trained ahead of the process to ensure all ethical aspects of the process were understood and respected such as the informed consent process and maintaining participant anonymity. Finally, post-interview considerations such as data security were also articulated. These proposals were subject to a number of iterative reviews and recommendations prior to approval by the Ethics Review Committee at the University of Leicester.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is presented in eight chapters which follow a logical sequence to help the reader understand the existing work in this field, the focus of this particular project, the way in which the research has been conducted, and the findings that ultimately emerge. *Chapter 1* introduces the thesis, explaining the background to the subject that leads to the specific research question and objectives for the work. *Chapter 2* is the literature review, introducing the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe, then focusing on the large community of Shuto Orizari in Macedonia. *Chapter 3* is the theory review, and considers existing academic work to help qualify the themes that emerged in the literature review. *Chapter 4* outlines the approach to the research methodology. The use of standpoint theory is qualified as a means for providing a representative voice to a marginalised community, and the important ethical issues surrounding this work are acknowledged along with measures taken to manage these. *Chapter 5* presents the first

set of findings from the field work, namely how ethnic identity is constructed within the Roma community of Shuto Orizari. *Chapter 6* presents the second set of findings, namely how people from the Roma community participate within society and the relative outcomes of these directions. *Chapter 7* presents the third and final set of findings from the field work. Here the work builds on the wider themes in the previous chapters and specifically focuses on participation in the labour market, the way the interviewees interpret the meanings and values associated with work and the impact this has on their life outcomes. *Chapter 8* provides a conclusion to the work, pulling together the three previous chapters of results to offer theories about how ethnic identity and acculturation orientations ultimately affect labour market participation for the Roma community of Shuto Orizari.

1.4 Personal Profile

A part-time doctoral study represents a substantial body of work and requires commitment, competing with the many professional and personal challenges that the researcher may face over the several years that this project takes. For this reason, it is helpful for the reader to understand a little about the background of the researcher, and their reasons and motivations for undertaking this work.

I have a long-standing association with ethnic Roma groups within the Balkans. My partner is a Bulgarian national and for fourteen years we have supported a children's home in the North-West of Bulgaria, of which almost all of the residents are of Roma ethnicity. Through this channel, I have become increasingly interested over the course of time in the Roma as an ethnic group, and why they so frequently live on the margins of their respective communities. In 2009 I temporarily relocated for professional reasons from the UK to Macedonia, another Balkan country with a large Roma population. Outside of work I was involved in a number of community activities with the Roma in the capital city, Skopje, and this further increased my interest in their social position. I have found writings about the Roma to be largely prescriptive, with opinions being offered from many quarters, but frequently without any consideration of the views from the Roma themselves. As it became clear that my professional work in Macedonia would most likely stretch over several years, I took the opportunity to

register for the Doctorate in Social Science as a means of increasing my understanding of this complex social situation, whilst hopefully also providing a body of work that may ultimately help to improve people's appreciation, tolerance and accommodation of such a large, disadvantaged ethnic group.

1.5 Summary

This section has offered a walk-through of the research project, providing an overview to qualify the specific research question and the theoretical and methodological ways in which the work has been approached. An important aspect of the Doctor of Social Science (DSocSci) qualification however is the relevance of the research to address real world issues and this has also been addressed in order to justify the work.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The next two chapters offer a review of the existing literature regarding the social positioning of the Roma, both in general terms and specifically in Macedonia, and then provide the theory to help understand and explain some of the observed social phenomena. This chapter serves as a precursor to the theory, outlining the literature themes surrounding ethnicity, identity and social participation ahead of a more detailed academic assessment of these phenomena in chapter 3. The Roma are firstly introduced as a large, trans-European ethnic minority with substantial communities in Central and Eastern Europe. Their historical background is presented, in which marginalisation and persecution emerge as persistent themes over the course of history through to the modern day. The negative attributions towards the Roma are considered, but also the way in which 'being Roma' is internalised and affects attitudes and social participation with the dominant 'other'. Finally, these factors are considered in the specific context of the Roma community in Shuto Orizari, Macedonia. Although the socio-economic conditions for this group are very poor, there are a number of differentiating characteristics from other Roma communities, such as its large size and the ethnically plural structure of wider society, in which the Roma live in proximity to another substantial minority, the ethnic Albanians. Under these conditions, the Roma enjoy a more accommodated position with the dominant group than they experience in other communities. As such, the difficult hardships for the Roma are unlikely to be the simple product of discrimination and marginalisation frequently ascribed to these social circumstances for the Roma elsewhere.

2.2 The Roma Across Central and Eastern Europe

The Roma, or ethnic gypsy communities of Europe represent the continent's largest minority group, with estimates of between 6 and 8 million of the global 12 million population spread predominantly across the states of Central and Eastern Europe (Berger, 2005). Both the names 'Roma' and 'gypsy' are themselves something of umbrella terms, used to describe a broad group of people living in geographically diverse communities and societies. Generally accepted by scholars to have migrated to

Europe from South Asia between the 9th and 14th centuries (Čvorovič, 2011) the origin of the name gypsy is believed to stem from a historical misconception of nomadic groups with Egyptian origins (Petrova, 2003). Variations of this term are widely used, such as Gitano in Spanish, Gyphos in Greek, Zigeuner in Germany and Tsigany in Russian (Koulis, 2005), sometimes with a loosely romantic association held by some of nomadic, free spirited, artisan groups. The name 'gypsy' however has also come to be viewed as a pejorative term, increasingly so over recent years, promoting isolation of the group through its close association with negative connotations whilst placing an emphasis on the external, non-European origins of the culture and language (Ioviță and Schurr, 2004). There is a lack of common agreement on who the Roma are and difficulties can arise as the non-Roma majority frequently fail to agree on who falls into the category (Csepeli and Simon, 2004). In tracing Roma origins, Ioviță and Schurr (2004) demonstrate a strong genetic commonality between selected groups across Europe, yet there is no accepted classification and in practice a generic and arbitrary process of recognition is typically applied, based on a number of commonalities that bind the group. A historically itinerant tradition, a noticeably darker complexion than the wider communities in which they live and the frequent use of a similar, albeit often hybridized language of Romani are typical attributes of the Roma (Huber, 1993). Similarly, many common artisan traditions and professions have typically been associated with the Roma and passed down through generations, such as weaving, basket making, smelting, expertise with horses and facility in music and dance (Brearley, 2001).

2.3 A History of Persecution

A further trait however that can be closely associated with the Roma, arguably more so than those of origin or culture, is one of almost universal marginalization from the wider communities in which they live. Brearley (2001) describes the 600-year sojourn since arrival in Europe, saying that although local communities typically valued their skills and services, the highest authorities in the land, including kings, popes, nobles and magistrates sought to demonise these groups and their heretical practices. Petrova (2003: 121) concurs with this view, describing the fact that although these "strange looking pilgrims" were initially generally met without hostility, there was a perceived threat from these exotic, nomadic people that emerged amongst religious and civic

authorities alike, with at least 148 anti-gypsy laws being passed across Germanic lands alone between the fifteenth and eighteenth century. Gheorghe *et al.* (2011) also describe measures against the Roma across Europe since medieval times, including hanging, drowning, reddening with iron, imprisonment, enslavement and deportation. Despite evidence of this being widespread, this was most pronounced in the states of Western Europe, suggesting perhaps why so many Roma settled in Eastern Europe in the lands governed by the more tolerant Ottoman regime. In more recent times, the Roma were specifically targeted by the Nazi regime, being forcefully expelled from the occupied states and sent to death camps with as many as 400,000 victims losing their lives (Trbojevik and Bogoevska, 2011). During the decades of Communist rule in the states of Central and Eastern Europe, the general intolerance and violence towards the Roma was held in check through strong centralized authorities and a dominant police state, and living conditions improved through socialist employment policies, healthcare and housing assistance. This approach however was typically suppressive to traditional Roma practices, with restrictions on movement, frequent requirements to assume non-Roma identities and the banning of Roma traditions, language and professions (Barany, 2000).

In the years that followed the collapse of Communism, a rise in nationalism, more liberal media and increased economic hardship and insecurity across Central and Eastern Europe resulted in a surge in anti-Roma sentiment as they once again found themselves as a universal scapegoat (Berger, 2005). Many authors have subsequently described the current situation facing the Roma. Henrard (2004) states that today they are victims of universally pervasive discrimination in terms of access to education, employment, healthcare and housing, complemented with racial violence and mistreatment by the police. Hotez and Gurwith (2011) describe the disproportionately high likelihood of infection and disease closely linked to poor housing, inadequate sanitation and malnutrition. Unemployment provides one of the most striking statistics of modern Roma marginalisation, with Berger (2005) stating that whereas around three quarters of the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe were employed under socialism, the overall unemployment figure is typically now around 70%. O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006) support this, describing how unemployment is propagated by widespread discrimination on the

part of employers, and that in the cases where Roma have work this is more likely to be in lower paid, lower skilled jobs or in the informal economy. McGarry (2012) states that the negative ascription of the Roma by mainstream society and the outcomes this produces serve to propagate the construct of thieves, beggars, and parasites that simply do not 'fit' in the wider society.

2.4 Lack of Collective Roma Identity: A Nation Without a Land

A baseline of common origin, language, culture and history are central tenets that bind an ethnic group and, combined with the uniformity of stereotypes and attitudes towards those classed as 'Roma' in Eastern Europe, this goes a long way to suggesting a homogenized, uniform people. These markers of ethnicity help establish boundaries that differentiate between the ethnic group and the dominant society, and will form an important part of the theoretical debate in the next chapter. An interesting view can be taken however, when one considers the definition of an ethnic minority group as "a group of individuals *who identify themselves with each other* on the basis of recognition of common ancestry and features such as biology, religion, culture, history and language and do not belong to the majority of a society" (Minority Rights Group International, 2008: 9). The emphasis here however on the wording '*identify themselves with each other*' is that of my own, and highlights an important dimension of the Roma people observed by a number of writers; where there is a strong ethnic sense of association between Roma from the same communities, broader inter-group recognition is rare.

Blasco (2002: 173) describes the lack of Roma unity, stating "groups very often do not recognize each other as belonging to the same social and moral community". Several centuries of political and structural fragmentation have done little to encourage the view of the Roma as a transnational group, nor to support appeals for international recognition of the history of persecution. Despite having a history that outlasts many other ethnic groups, the Roma lack a traditional motherland (Huber, 1993). This sets them apart from the profile of a typically territorially-based national minority, leaving them with a weak sense of collective belonging, whilst only partially seeking analogies with other nations resulting in a multi-dimensional, diverse and difficult to define identity (Trbojevik and Bogoevska, 2011).

2.5 Self-Identity and the Roma as 'Other'

The debates surrounding the plight of the Roma can be complex and open to much interpretation, but there are two broad societal dimensions that emerge most frequently as the forces sustaining, or even propagating Roma marginalization. Firstly, many authors write of the structural failings of institutions in terms of the formulation and application of policies. Kende and Neményi (2006) tells how the education policies in Hungary reinforce rather than reduce social disadvantage through a selection testing program that substantially raises the likelihood of Roma children being segregated. Bancroft (2001) states that city planning policies in the Czech Republic are a major catalyst for Roma marginalization, with the creation of ghettos designed to contain communities but also serving to stigmatize the out-group, propagating anti-Roma sentiment in the wider society. Rechel *et al.* (2009) describe the need to reform Bulgarian healthcare policies as the health insurance system disempowers many adult Roma, and the wider system creates practical administrative barriers such as an information imbalance due to high illiteracy and lack of instruction in Romany language. Secondly, discrimination from the wider non-Roma public in various forms across society appears to be prevalent in most segments of Central and Eastern Europe. Schneeweis (2012) states that the approach of the Romanian media causes concerns about anti-Roma discrimination, whilst Maučec (2013) describes the widespread negative stereotyping across Europe that leads to rejection and discrimination in all aspects of daily life. O'Higgins and Ivanov (2006) claim that Roma unemployment figures are substantially higher than those for the majority populations, something that is not simply a product of poor education levels, but also heavily influenced by employer discrimination.

The consistency of these findings indicates these phenomena are real and cannot be ignored. Timmer (2010) however provides an interesting insight into another often-overlooked dimension, asking why the benefits delivered by NGOs within Roma communities often fail to reach their full potential. Despite good intentions, organisations frequently emphasise the value of their work by presenting the Roma collectively and "maintain the Roma as problems in need of solutions" (Timmer 2010: 264). In the next chapter the issues surrounding the use of externally-applied categories

by the dominant majority towards minority groups will be considered, but the effects of this approach are demonstrated here. By approaching the Roma on the whole, the NGOs ultimately help to maintain the division within society through reinforced differentiation based around the neediest, most disadvantaged members of the community. Individuals are deprived of agency and the internal influences from the intimate Roma in-group are overlooked. This negative ascription can reinforce a sense of distance and 'otherness' with the wider population in which culture, tradition and history are used to emphasise differences from the mainstream. Yet many common elements of this culture – a strongly patriarchal structure, a propensity for large families, and a reluctance to participate in fundamental institutions such as schooling – are all typically misaligned with conventional views of a 'healthy' and progressive society. Kligman (2001) considers why this is, stating that the 'othering' process within society reinforces negative stereotypes that are often internalized by the Roma themselves, creating an equivalently negative self-identity. Other writers however identify the contribution of self-separation emerging from within the Roma communities, through differences in family structure, values, traditions and expectations. Vivian and Dundes (2004) claim that family size and inter-family relations, gender and age hierarchy, culturally different views on health and traditional suspicion of non-Roma are typical traits that shape the Roma and impede successful delivery of healthcare. Cretan and Turnock (2008) state that preserving elements of their traditional identity is important to large numbers of the Romanian Roma, which supports separation from the mainstream. Čvorović (2011) also claims that many European Roma set themselves apart from the mainstream by choice, as the values they place on factors such as education are not aligned to the wider society. Although rarely cited in policies and frequently overlooked in academic discussion, the self-identity of the individuals within Roma communities, shaped and influenced by the sense of Roma 'otherness' may play an important role in the outcomes we see across wider society.

2.6 The Roma of Macedonia

One example of a large Roma population living on the fringes of mainstream society can be found in the Republic of Macedonia¹, one of the smallest nations of the Former Yugoslavia with a population of just over 2 million people. The most recent population census in 2002 indicated that the two dominant ethnic groups, Slavic Macedonians and Albanians made up 64.2% and 25.2% of the population respectively, with the other significant minorities being Turks (3.9%), Roma (2.7%), Serbs (1.8%), Bosniaks (0.8%) and Vlachs (0.5%) (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2002). Over the period of recorded history, the country itself has been something of a mixed nation, with shifting borders and successive, prolonged periods of occupation and territorial claims from Turkey and the “four wolves” of neighbouring Serbia, Albania, Greece and Bulgaria (Shea, 1997: 322). For almost five hundred years until the start of the twentieth century the lands were part of the Ottoman Empire, and subsequent disputes over the Macedonian territories between Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece were one of the causes of the second Balkan war of 1913. Macedonia ultimately formed part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes that would in turn become Socialist Yugoslavia, where it would enjoy status as one of the six recognised republics. The country escaped relatively lightly from the bloodied ethnic conflicts that dominated the region throughout the 1990s, yet it was far from removed from the ethnic tensions within the region. A temporary influx of 250,000 ethnic Albanian refugees from Kosovo in 1998 and 1999 did little to aid social stability and ethnic tension, with the country closing its borders amongst fears of being pulled into the conflict (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006). The country subsequently stood on the brink of its own civil war over a six-month period in 2001 when regions with large ethnic Albanian minority populations rebelled against the government demanding a revised national constitution recognizing equal rights and representation (Chivvis, 2008).

¹ Although the Republic of Macedonia is frequently recognised internationally as ‘The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ or ‘FYROM’ due to a naming dispute with neighbouring Greece, the term has no legal recognition within the country itself and its use is often seen as inflammatory. For this reason, the terms ‘Macedonia’ or ‘Republic of Macedonia’ are applied throughout this thesis.

Economically Macedonia was typically the poorest of the Republics of Yugoslavia, accounting for around only 5% of the output of goods and services within the federation at the time of disintegration. In the years that followed, economic performance was weakened as logistical access to markets and suppliers in the region was disrupted due to the Balkan conflicts. Trade was also denied with two of the country's largest export markets, firstly through UN sanctions on Serbia and Montenegro, then through an economic embargo with Greece in a dispute over the naming of the newly independent nation (Kekic, 2001). The high unemployment that resulted was underpinned by a lack of private sector jobs due to institutional and administrative weaknesses hindering the creation and growth of firms (Micevska, 2008). Today the economic outlook continues to be relatively poor, with the official unemployment figure yet to drop below 30% in the 20 years since independence. The GDP in purchasing power standards is lower than any country within both the EU and surrounding South Eastern European nations, standing in 2011 at only 35% of the EU27 average (Republic of Macedonia State Statistical Office, 2013). The country has also struggled diplomatically in recent years, finding itself outside the wave of Central and Eastern European EU accession states of the mid-2000s and, although now an official candidate for both the NATO and the EU entry, the process is currently blocked due to the prolonged naming dispute with Greece and, more recently, for a breakdown in neighbourly relations with Bulgaria. As such, the future for many Macedonians remains uncertain.

Estimates of the number of Macedonian Roma vary greatly, and where official figures state that the 54,000 Roma account for 2.7% of the total population, Rechel *et al.* (2009) state that unofficial estimates suggest this could potentially be as high as 260,000 or 12.5%. Despite the continued regime changes within the region and the relatively turbulent past, the country has a long and established history with the Roma. Crowe (2000) writes extensively about this, telling us that that ever since the earliest settlements, different clans were known by their professional designations such as the Barudžije who worked with gunpowder, Džambazi who traded horses, and Aradadžije who built wagons. Under the Ottoman period of rule, some Muslim Roma progressed well in society and Islam remains the most dominant religion amongst Macedonian Roma today. In the last century, many of the Macedonian Roma were able to survive

the holocaust due to the country falling under Bulgarian control during the Second World War and, possibly as a result of Roma support for the Partisan movement, there were substantial developments in terms of Roma recognition in the years that followed. In 1948 Roma were elected to the council of the capital city, Skopje, and a Roma association called Phralipe, or Brotherhood, was formed the same year. In 1971, the Macedonian constitution was amended to recognise the Roma as an official ethnic group, allowing Romani-language publications and a recognised flag.

Nevertheless, even during these relatively prosperous times integration lagged behind the socialist regime's expectations and presented a "serious, basic, social issue" (Barany, 2000: 428). The conditions the Roma of Macedonia face today remain poor, largely consistent with other Roma communities within the region. Unemployment and lack of education are strikingly high, the quality of dwellings is inadequate with homes often lacking a direct water supply, school attendance is extremely low and health levels are substantially worse in comparison with the wider Macedonian population (Save the Children, 2002). There is however, some evidence that despite the hardships, the Roma in Macedonia occupy a slightly unique and possibly less disadvantaged position compared to their ethnic counterparts in other areas of Central and Eastern Europe. Barany (1995) for example, states that the preoccupation and distrust that exist between the dominant Macedonians and Albanians groups has resulted in a relatively 'peaceful coexistence' between the Macedonians and Roma, removed of the same levels of tension seen in other countries. Indeed, there are even claims that the Roma have been used in political negotiation tactics between these sides with Staniševski (2008) telling of accusations from ethnic Macedonian groups of the Albanian minority trying to 'Albanianise' the Roma by exploiting a common Muslim bond. In describing the situation facing the Roma across each of the former Yugoslav states, Latham (1999) claims that although there are negative stereotypes attributed to the Roma in Macedonia, they are often held in higher regard compared to other countries in the region and the discrimination that exists is not supported by state policy. Indeed, some sections of the wider Macedonian public acknowledge Roma achievements, particularly in the arts.

Like other Roma populations across Central and Eastern Europe, education levels are poor and poverty is high, with an estimated two thirds of the Roma living below the poverty line (Trbojevik and Bogoevsak, 2011). In 2005, 71.3% of the able-bodied population were officially unemployed, with views that this number was almost certainly higher as many Roma do not formally register for reasons such as a lack of documentation or simple ignorance (ECMI, 2005). For those with work the standard of jobs is frequently very low, something Bartlett *et al.* (2010) identify when describing income levels across the country. The authors state that although salaries are relatively high in the capital city, Skopje, the average figure is disproportionately small in absolute terms due to the distortive effect of the large Roma community within the city dragging the number down. Trbojevik and Bogoevsak, (2011) state that much of the available work that the Roma undertake is low-skilled and poorly paid within the public sector, pointing out that within large Roma communities there is a particular lack of large private businesses. A notable associated characteristic of the Macedonian labour market is that it has one of the highest levels of informal activity in Europe, something Micevska (2008) attributes partly to relatively poor benefits for the registered unemployed and partly to the difficult administrative criteria to register and access these funds. The number of people participating in the informal economy across Macedonia is estimated to be as high as 19% of the working-age population, but this rises to 59% for the Roma, the highest figure of any of country in Europe (Decade of Roma Inclusion, 2016). The nature of this economic activity can vary greatly, with street vending one particularly common form of work (Latham, 1999) but for the most desperate in society this involves foraging for waste from the communal roadside bins to sell or recycle, an activity that Kremer and Sjostrand (2013) estimate is practiced by up to 5,000 Roma within the city of Skopje.

2.7 Shuto Orizari

One specific part of the capital city, Skopje, is referenced time and again in literature about the Roma of Macedonia, namely that of Shuto Orizari. The history of this particular community is relatively short; following the earthquake in 1963 that destroyed a substantial section of Skopje, a relief site was built with American aid to house the displaced population, including a substantial Roma group from the

community of Topaana, a part of the city that suffered some of the worst damage. Over time this became a permanent settlement and as other Roma moved to the area part of a general theme of rural-to-urban migration, parts of the district were handed over to Roma leaders (Friedman, 2017). More and more new dwellings were constructed, and today the community of Shuto Orizari is home to an estimated 30,000 Roma, a figure often cited as the largest such community in the world (Stefanovska, 2012). ‘Shutka’ as it is colloquially known by locals, forms one of the ten central municipalities of the City of Skopje. The municipality is the only settlement of its size in which the Roma form a majority, estimated to be around 75% of the total population, and has both a Roma Mayor and Member of Parliament. Its location relative to city centre can be seen below in figure 1.

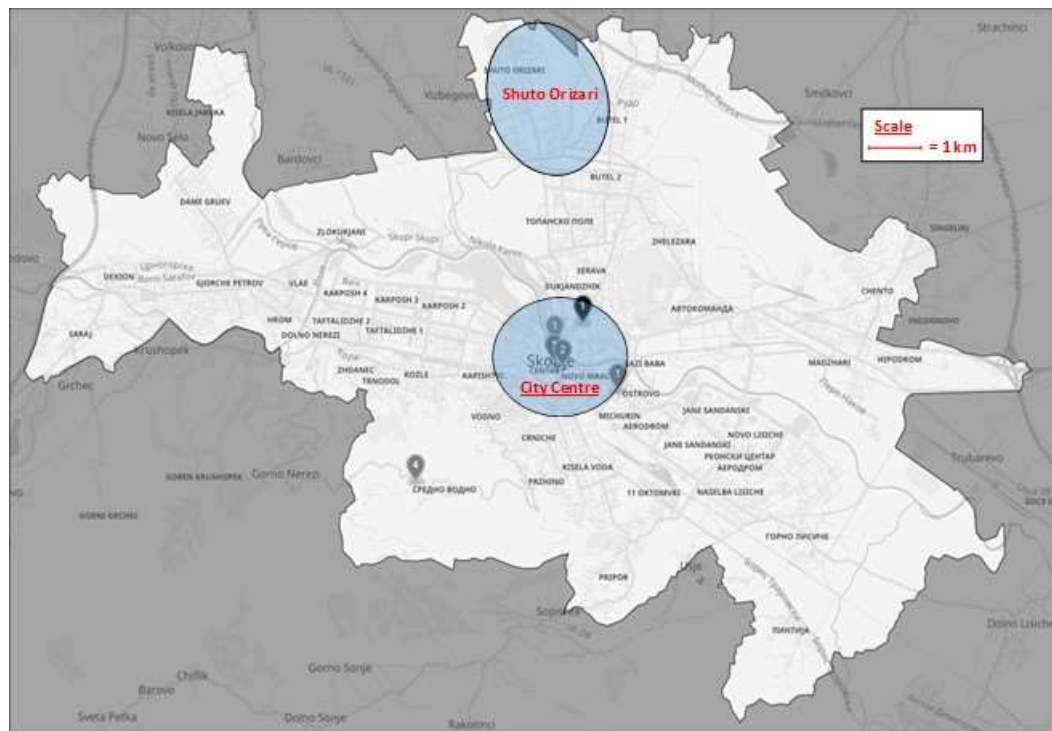


Figure 1: Map Showing the Location of Shuto Orizari within Skopje City (modified from <https://www.openstreetmap.org>)

Life for many of the Roma in Shuto Orizari is clearly very difficult, and indicators of social hardship are much worse than other parts of the city (Trbojevik and Bogoevsak, 2011). A number of writers acknowledge however that this phenomenon is less pronounced than in other large Roma groups, with a degree of Roma influence that stems from the

cultural and ethnic freedom within the community (Silverman, 1996). Not all Roma suffer social hardships, and where many struggle, some within Shuto Orizari have prospered, resulting in economic stratification (Latham, 1999, Silverman, 1996). These mixed fortunes are articulated by Bartlett *et al.* (2010) who describe how the Roma community experience the widest range of income distribution of any ethnic group, with the highest 20% of the community earning 20 times more than the lowest 20%, compared to a multiple of only 8 fold for the ethnic Macedonians. The varied conditions across Shuto Orizari can be seen in figure 2 below, a selection of images that show the different standards of infrastructure – modern homes and shops along with basic accommodation and market stalls – all interspersed and closely juxtaposed within relative proximity of the municipality.



Figure 2: Selection of Images Showing Varying Standards of Infrastructure within Shuto Orizari (taken April 2018)

2.7 Summary

There is a large body of literature on the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe and this chapter has sought to explore and identify the dominant academic debates ahead of presenting the theoretical models in the next chapter that help explain these occurrences. Themes of marginalisation, social exclusion and poverty have been identified as important subjects in the discussions surrounding this ethnic group. Despite the relative abundance of work on the Roma from some of the larger economies within the region, the Roma of Shuto Orizari represent a substantially under-researched community, yet they occupy a unique space that underlines the need for further work to understand this group better. In terms of Roma groups, Shuto Orizari is concentrated and large – possibly the largest of all Roma communities – and this offers an important opportunity to help understand the dynamics of ethnic identity within this particular set of circumstances. Shuto Orizari however also holds an important place within the structure and outcomes of a wider country, both formally as a recognised Roma-governed municipality, and informally with its history and established location within the capital city. This is of consequence. Shuto Orizari is diverse, yet like so many other Roma groups the residents are frequently disadvantaged, and in material terms many exist on the absolute margins of society. By understanding the nature of their participation in important social institutions such as the labour market, steps can ultimately be taken towards improving to socio-economic outlook across the immediate and wider society.

Chapter 3. Theory Review: Poverty, Social Identity and the Importance of the Labour Market

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the existing literature describing the outlook of the Roma was reviewed, and the findings will now be considered against the backdrop of current academic theory. The Roma are consistently identified as being particularly poor and this chapter opens by explaining poverty as a multi-faceted social phenomenon, the complex output of many factors. An important aspect of this is social identity, a construct existing equally at both a superficial and deep level through individual and collective dynamics. One of the central pillars here is a person's ethnic identity, and this will be explored to examine how ethnicity can be constructed and interpreted, and the different socialization factors that can ultimately influence this. The way that a person perceives they belong to a given ethnic group, and that group's ultimate degree of social participation is also significant, these acculturation orientations will be reflected upon to see how they change substantially in different contexts, and can greatly shape a person's life outcomes. A particular emphasis is placed on the different ways ethnic minority groups participate in the labour market, and the positive and negative experiences that can result from this. Finally, the existing research that has been conducted with the Roma is reviewed and contextually placed against this theory. As with the more general body of academic work on themes of social identity, acculturation and labour market participation, this chapter concludes that there is no single common view towards the Roma and findings can vary greatly depending on many different factors shaping the social context. There is also a conclusion that there is relatively little specific research on the Roma in this field applicable to social science, and this in turn reinforces the relevance of this research.

3.2 Poverty: A Complex Set of Transient Social Circumstances

When considering why sections of a given population live in poverty, there has been a historic diagnosis that poverty has been a specific affliction of a disadvantaged group set apart from the mainstream. Byrne (2006: 23) describes how this view has been prevalent since the nineteenth century, with the term *residuum* being commonly

applied to present the idea of “a group that has somehow been left behind”, based on a cycle of deprivation in which disadvantage is transmitted through the generations in both genetic and cultural terms. In the 1950s and 60’s the renowned American anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1966) articulated a more contemporary view of this theme, describing the ‘culture of poverty’ in which the poor share common traits built upon low expectations and negative attitudes and behaviours. These in turn are passed through the generations to propagate a cycle that ensures families remain in poverty.

The culture of poverty theory has been subject to much criticism since its publication. Writing in 1969, Valentine describes this approach as ‘Social Darwinism’, in which the view is taken that the poor cannot enjoy equality unless they adopt middle-class conventions. The writer describes the approach as a “pejorative, moralistic tradition..... weak in method and static in theory” and ultimately concludes that Lewis’ work stratifies society along largely ethnic lines and simply aims to do away with the *culture* of poverty, not poverty itself (Valentine, 1969: 181). Rogalsky (2009) provides a more updated criticism of the culture of poverty, explaining how the contemporary view of poverty is largely accepted as being a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon built upon different structural influences such as deindustrialisation, decentralisation, classism, racism and access to education funding. Payne (2001) supports this view, categorising eight groups of resources whose presence or absence can shape the effects of poverty: financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships and role models and knowledge of hidden rules. The author states that where one resource may be lacking such as, say, finance, this can be compensated in other areas like strong emotional or relationship resources, alleviating the burden of poverty. Hobcraft (2002) approaches the subject from a different perspective by examining the quantitative interplay between different factors including partners, spatial location and educational attainment. By looking at precursors and evidence of circumstantial links, the writer determines the statistical links for poverty-related outcomes as a complex combination of dependencies and causal directions.

Finally, Cuthrell *et al.* (2009) claim that poverty is not an absolute term but is temporal and is shaped at a given time by different characteristics and circumstances. *Situational poverty* typically lasts for shorter periods of time and is caused by a specific set of

circumstances. *Generational poverty* is a cyclical effect seen over at least two generations of families. Lastly, *absolute poverty* equates to a focus on the bare essentials for living and sustenance with no extra resources for social expenditures. As the nature of poverty changes and the time of the cycle becomes much longer, it is much more challenging, or even unlikely to break the cycle. This however is always possible, and the cycle can be reduced or even ended with appropriate, if difficult circumstantial changes from either the individual or the supporting structures. Imai and You (2014) demonstrate this point, looking at long-term destitution in rural China and ways in which the chronically poor can exit poverty. By considering data over a 20-year period, the writers conclude that people have a greater chance of alleviating 'persistent poverty' through certain factors such as completing of secondary education. The nature of labour market participation is important too, with the reliability of agricultural employment offering a greater chance to exit poverty than the instability of urban work associated with out-migration.

3.3 Identity, Socialization and Ethnicity

3.3.1 Identity

If poverty is not prescribed but is a circumstantial effect shaped heavily by the way people perceive they belong to society, then the way an individual interprets circumstances, identifies with their surroundings and chooses to interact with them will ultimately be a major factor in determining their life outcomes. To that end, the construct of identity and the socialization mechanisms that underpin this are of absolute primacy. Jenkins (2005) draws from established concepts within the social sciences such as Goffman's work on symbolic interaction and Giddens' structuration theory to suggest that the world is constructed and experienced through three distinct orders. *The individual order* is the human world as made up of individuals and the experiences that go on in their heads. *The interaction order* is the human world as constituted by the relationships between individuals and the interaction between people. Finally, the *institutional order* is the human world of patterns and organisation, of established ways of doing things and Jenkins states that the theorisation of identification must accommodate the individual and collective in equal measure. At an

individual level, identities are created through internal definition, or self-ascription of how the person perceives themselves through dimensions such as selfhood, 'human-ness' and gender. Referencing the work of Jenkins, Karlsen (2004) describes how the individual draws on different parts of the self from a 'cultural supermarket', such as age, gender or social class to construct an identity that holds a unique place within the social context. There is a superficial, 'nominal' aspect to identity – effectively the label or name that an individual may assign to their identity – and this can change over time. The 'virtual' aspect of identity however is the deep-rooted, consequential dimension of identity that is grounded on experience and remains with the individual.

In line with Jenkins' interaction order, identity also needs to be validated by those with whom a person has dealings, and through interaction people carry an associated collective identity that follows the lines of either *groups* or *categories*. An important distinction is drawn however between these two largely analogous terms. The internal definition of ethnic identity is a signalling of one's self-identity to other people either as a personal or a collective process. From this, the identification of a 'group' is something that holds meaning to its members, a common association that they are happy to connect with as a representation of their identity. The external definition of ethnic identity however is an other-directed process, something imposed from outside the group. In some cases, this may simply be a consensual validation of the internal identity, but it may also be a conflicting definition in which different names, traits or characteristics are ascribed. This 'category' is not simply analytical but can be punitive, much to the detriment of the social experiences of those being categorised. The capacity for this to happen depends on the degree to which these categorisations are socially validated and have meaning in the lives of others, to which *power* and *authority* are important. Power is the access and control of resources, whilst authority is something that can only be effective if legitimised by others (Jenkins, 1994). This is starkly demonstrated through the broadly-applied terms of *Gypsy* and *Roma*, both of which are frequently applied in a social context for the subjects of this research. Blasco (2002) states that the term 'Gypsy' is often used as an imposed category, something that "has increasingly come to be seen as a pejorative term that reflects the world-views and oppression practices of the dominant population". The same author contrasts this

with the use of the term 'Roma', something that carries a positive self-association to the group, reflecting "a rich heritage and cultural dignity and distinctiveness of the oppressed, but also resisting people, as well as their common history and identity of interests". In Roma communities, both of these terms can have meaning, they are used daily by dominant social actors, groups that are powerful, who control society's resources such as the media, education systems and labour markets. These same social actors also have authority, their views and policies are widely accepted and legitimised by wider communities, and ultimately by the Roma themselves. These simple terms, once validated in this way, can have far-reaching influence on the way the Roma interpret, experience, and ultimately choose to participate within society.

3.3.2 Socialization

If identity is the vehicle through which an individual brings meaning to life, then it is the development of these meanings through understanding and interpretation of values, symbols and norms that shapes how the individual ultimately functions. Key to this is *socialization*, a complementary process to identity construction described by Kalantari (2012: 246) as "the process by which we learn and adapt to the ways of a given society or social group as to adequately participate in it". There are two distinctly different yet interactive axes through which these processes occur and whereas instinctive, or biological socialization considers the evolutionary adaptations that influence experiences, it is the second axis of sociocultural socialization that is of particular interest to the social scientist (Grusec and Hastings, 2008). There are many agents that contribute to the socialization process, supporting the myriad of experiences and influences that a human may be exposed to throughout life. Although there is no single, universally accepted academic model to explain these phenomena, there are several well-organised, often complimentary standpoints.

One model to explain the processes of Group Socialization was proposed by Moreland and Levine (1982). Central to this work is the temporal aspect of the socialization experience, that the status and commitments of groups members change over time. Through a reciprocal set of revaluations – how the group contributes to personal needs and vice versa – a sense of reward and commitment is established. If commitment levels

ultimately diverge, then this can lead to conflict and ultimate departure from the group. Moreland and Levine's model emphasises the view that socialization effectively occurs in a group setting, and emphasises the different stages through which the process passes. There are a number of criticisms of the Group Socialisation approach, the most prominent of which is the view that whereas the family unit is frequently considered to be a major contributor to the socialization process, parents as both individuals and primary carers, are considered to have relatively little long-term influence on their child's development (Luster and Okagaki, 2005).

A different view on Socialization comes through Oetting and Donnermeyer's Primary Socialization Theory (Oetting and Donnermeyer, 1998) which approaches the subject from another perspective, focusing on the factors that actually contribute to the socialization process rather than the dynamism and temporal nature of the process itself. The theory posits that there are only three major socialization agencies – the family, school and peer groups – and these hold a dominant influence in how people shape and interpret their world. Other factors such as the media, religion, community, and culture should not necessarily be overlooked, but their impact is substantially less and often mediated through the three primary agencies. Primary socialization theory was largely developed through the study of delinquency and views behaviours in value-based terms, with desirable, prosocial activity contrasting with deviant or delinquent behaviours considered unacceptable to wider society. One major shortcoming of this particular model is that the nomination of prosocial and deviant behaviours requires a reference frame of social values, something at odds with the nature of social research that represents groups through standpoint theory in which the situated view of the individual is considered objectively and free from judgement.

A third type of socialization model is proposed in Arnett's theory of narrow and broad socialization (Arnett, 1995). As with primary socialization, Arnett purports that in most contexts the family is the primary socialization unit whilst not ignoring the contribution of other agents such as peers, school, work and the media, but claims that distinctions in the experience arise between different cultures. This 'cultural socialization' assumes two general positions. *Broad socialization* encourages individualism, independence and self-expression, whereas *narrow socialization* emphasises the values of obedience,

conformity and meeting cultural expectations. The 'broad' experience stems from the relative divergence and broadness of paths individuals take, whereas the 'narrow' experience is narrow in the anticipated range of variation due to the expected conformity. Arnett's view also compares with Primary Socialization theory in so much as it addresses the nature of the socialization experience rather than the actual dynamic of the process in Group Socialization, it holds a greater relevance to social research as the orientations remain value free.

3.3.3 Ethnicity

A primary set of values and associations transferred through the socialization process, something that provides a fundamental mode of identity construction, relate to the ethnic connection an individual makes with their surroundings. Despite being a deep-seated concept within the social sciences, there is no generally accepted definition of the term 'ethnicity' and Gabbert (2006) writes extensively on the subject, telling us that over the course of history the term has been used interchangeably with such terminology as 'race' and 'nationality' yet there are important distinctions. The term *race* has often been applied relatively generically to represent large subdivisions of humankind, such as White and Black. Although this still holds strong associations today with physical markers or biological characteristics, its application along such lines is increasingly outdated as modern genetics accepts that interbreeding between human populations renders the notion of physical traits based along distinct boundaries meaningless. The term *nationality* on the other hand was initially applied to societies in the developed world to describe the majority population in a given country (as opposed to 'tribes' in the developing world). More recent uses are diverse but frequently hold implications of territorial alignments and political structures representing a state. The Greek term *ethnos* was in use from around 750 to 650 BC to describe large undifferentiated groups, but entered popular use in the late 19th century. The current term 'ethnic' stemmed from the 'ethnological' societies devoted to the study of origin, characteristics and progress of the world's different peoples through consideration of religion, behaviour, lifestyle or phenotype.

Zagefka (2009) speaks of the current 'terminological fuzziness' in defining ethnicity, describing how characteristics are not necessarily fixed but subject to human agency and may vary over time. Ethnicity is a social construct like all other forms of cultural life and as such, an ethnic group only exists through its social representation. Although the writer explains how the social sciences have largely discredited any notion of ethnicity along biological determinism, other interpretations of ethnicity can be subject to criticism for being equally as impermeable, divisive and immutable. Describing the need for a multi-faceted approach to the subject, the author states that scholars who reject prescriptive, primordial notions of ethnicity, often involuntarily reinforce this view by considering ethnicity to be founded through the sole dimension of culture. Cartrite (2003) attempts to address the problem by trying to identify the different 'markers' associated with the theme. By conducting a literature review of major works in political science to identify the most commonly referenced components relating to the term, the most frequently referenced themes include common descent (or myth thereof), territorial claims, language, culture, history, religion and economic ties. Some or all of these aspects can be considered valid dimensions of ethnic identity.

Work by Fredrik Barth (1969) provides an important set of insights into ethnicity and its role in identity formation, focusing on ethnic groups, collective forms and their differences. Although primarily an anthropologist, his work has now been widely accepted within the social sciences (Jenkins, 2005), particularly a number of claims made in his seminal work 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries' published in 1969. Barth claims ethnic identity is not fixed, it is not a birth-and-death reproduction but rather a flexible concept that varies over time through social interaction. He identifies the important interpretive nature of the subject, distancing it from any absolute terms by telling us "ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves" (Barth, 1969: 10). Karlsen (2004) supports this by considering the modern use of the term ethnicity and its importance in the construct of both individual and group identity. We are told that being 'black' is no longer an absolute biological category based on binary racial criteria, but rather this should be considered an identity construct based on ethnic factors consolidated through internal and external processes. What it actually *means* to be a member of this group is important, and ethnic aspects that

transcend skin colour and ancestry to include lifestyle and social experiences – Jenkins’ definition of the ‘virtual’ – can reposition the view on who is, or is not black. The evolutionary nature of these boundaries is something Chambers *et al.* (2002) lean towards when writing about the importance of language in ethnic identity formation, on one level as a broadly tangible marker, but at another level through ‘polyphonous identity’ formation through the intimate, multi-layered nuances of the spoken word. Two particular dimensions of language are important – variation and change – and whilst it is the variation of language across society that helps demarcate ethnic boundaries, it is changes in the way an individual or community use language over time that emphasises the constant evolution and redefinition of these boundaries.

The central pillar of Barth’s work is an emphasis on the differences between groups, and the maintenance of boundaries to support the construct of ethnic identity. It is largely through cross-boundary social interaction with other groups that differences are identified, something that in turn maintains internal commonality within a given ethnic group. Barth however does not overlook relationships inside the boundary, and the interaction between members of the same ethnic set. Membership within an ethnic group requires the individual to recognise themselves within the group, but also be recognised by other members. The in-group relationships share common standards, and an acceptance “to be judged, and to judge oneself by the standards that are relevant to that identity” (Barth, 1969: 14). Other writers also acknowledge the important role of boundaries, with an emphasis on language as a particularly salient marker of social identity. Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982: 7) take this view, telling us “social identity and ethnicity are in large part established and maintained through language”. This is supported by Giles and Johnson (1987) who draw heavily on established work by Tajfel (1974) regarding the role of group membership in the development of social identity. Where individuals who are dissatisfied with their social identity may elect to change groups in order to seek more positive outcomes, the authors discuss the effective use and adaptation of language as a means of boundary maintenance and evolution between groups to seek more favourable outcomes.

Karner (2007) states that ethnic boundaries are not only established by cultural meanings and power relationships between an ethnic group and the Other, but from

the structure of the group itself and the power relationships within this. These can be built upon lines such as age and class, but within Roma communities gender is of particular relevance. The writer continues by pointing out the patriarchal inequalities within Roma groups, in which women on one hand are frequently subject to a subservient role in the home, and on the other hand are expected to work daily to support income generation for the family. Martsenyuk (2015) also writes about this gendered power balance, describing the traditional practices in some Roma quarters such as the arranged betrothal of children, the social emphasis placed on a girl's virginity, and the value placed on a woman's ability to bear many children. The writer suggests that the roles of marriage and motherhood may have evolved in part as a survival strategy for Roma women, noting that these practices appear more pronounced in the more economically disadvantaged communities. Oprea (2005) also identifies this, citing child marriage as a ritual response from within the community to combat an external threat from an oppressive majority and Gamella *et al.* (2015: 2) state "these differences have historical roots and have to be understood within complex systems of historical exclusion and discrimination that often-induced dialectical processes of opposition, resistance, introversion and cultural reaffirmation". Reed (2013) however points out that the taboo around these subjects is slowly being eroded and the practices are now being increasingly challenged and resisted from within Roma communities, supporting the view once again that ethnic boundaries are in a constant state of revision and redefinition from the actor that establish these.

Another aspect of ethnicity that Barth addresses is the material dimension, explaining that to truly actualise an identity an individual must be able to play this out in society and in order to do this, they require a certain level of resource, or 'assets'. He makes this point by considering access to productive resources, in this case land access and rights for grazing cattle, something of primacy for rural communities within parts of Africa and the Middle East. A specific scenario in Darfur is laid out, in which the ethnic Baggara groups allocate grazing rights indiscriminately based on simple membership of the community. This in turns promotes husbandry practices, and provides access to a style of life that then effectively reinforces membership of the community. By contrast in the Middle East, access to grazing land is purely transactional, based on purchase or

lease of the land. This process is controlled and ethnic identity is of little to no relevance. Conclusions that are drawn from this once again reinforce Barth's views that there are important material components to ethnic boundaries, and these can vary greatly according to the circumstances.

3.4 Acculturation Within Ethnically Diverse Societies

3.4.1 Acculturation and Ethnic Identity

In ethnically diverse societies, the nature of social participation and cohesion can frequently depend on a delicate balance of compatibilities. In cases where communities fragment, the strength and contribution of ethnic identity to this process has been considered in terms of both cause and effect. Hagendoorn (1993) looks broadly at a number of historical and contemporary cases to explain the anthropologically-oriented view that differences in ethnic identity lead to cultural misunderstandings that can ultimately result in exclusion of the weaker group. In generic terms, for example, job interviewers frequently misinterpret cultural politeness of a minority for disinterest in the role, something that ultimately leads to high failure rates. Çelik (2015) on the other hand identifies a reverse sequence to be true when studying Turkish youths living in Germany. The writer talks of 'reactive ethnicity', a product of discrimination and unequal treatment due to membership of an ethnic group. These marginalisation processes serve to strengthen ethnic identification and consciousness of the disaffected minority, and creates an ethnic solidarity based on resistance and opposition to the majority group.

The simple strength of ethnic identity alone however does not provide an adequate explanation for the degree of interaction between different groups, and the nature and degree of *acculturation* within a society needs to be considered. Writing on the subject of belonging and integration in 1967, Graves (1967) uses the term acculturation to describe a phenomenon occurring when two ethno-cultural groups come into contact with each other. More recently Chae and Foley (2010: 467) describe acculturation as "how ethnic minority individuals adapt to the dominant culture and associated changes in their beliefs, values and behaviour that result from contact with the new culture". Central to the understanding of acculturation is the notion of a heritage culture, or the

culture of the minority group being located within the dominant group. The strength of the links between ethnicity and acculturation is clear for many scholars, and appears analogous to the important notion of boundary formation and maintenance emphasised by Barth. Schwartz *et al.* (2006) state that heritage culture is primarily an embodiment of the strength and nature of ethnic identity. Phinney *et al.* (2001) also support the view that ethnic identity is inextricable from culture, stating that “ethnic identity becomes salient as part of the acculturation process. The distinction between the constructs of ethnic identity and acculturation are unclear, and these two concepts are often used interchangeably”. More specifically we are then told by the authors, “ethnic identity is that aspect of acculturation that focuses on the subjective sense of belonging to a group or culture. As an aspect of acculturation, ethnic identity can be thought of in terms of the theoretical framework that has been used to understand acculturation” (Phinney *et al.*, 2001: 495).

Early theories on acculturation were bipolar, positing that individuals were simply either acculturated or not (Abe-Kim *et al.*, 2001). More recent views have taken a multidimensional approach and one of the most influential contributions has been from Berry’s model of four acculturation orientations. Berry considers two separate dimensions, ‘cultural maintenance’, or the extent to which the minority group value and wish to retain their heritage identity and ‘contact-participation’, or the strength with which the members of the minority group wish to seek out and participate in the daily life of the wider society. There are four resultant orientations (Berry, 1999):

- *Separation* reflects the desire to maintain minority group culture and identity at the expense of rejecting relationships with dominant groups.
- *Assimilation* reflects the wish to relinquish the minority culture and replace this with the majority culture.
- *Integration* is characterised by the desire to retain important features of the minority culture, but also adopt those of the dominant group.
- *Marginalization* is the rejection of both minority and dominant cultures in which individuals lose contact with both groups.

Research applying this model of four orientations shows there is no single, dominant acculturation strategy adopted across minority groups. In researching Pakistani Americans, for example, Khaleque *et al.* (2015) find that there is a predominant leaning towards their own heritage culture (the separatism orientation). Nieri *et al.* (2011) however find a more balanced distribution when researching Mexican preadolescents in America, with strong representation across all orientations except marginalization. Acculturation approaches towards the majority culture may not only vary within a given ethnic group, but may also change for a given individual for a given context. Rojas *et al.* (2014) demonstrate this effect when conducting research with Romanians living in Spain. The work concludes that those that hold prejudices against Spaniards are more likely to prefer integration in public areas such as the workplace, but separation in private areas such as the home and intimate community. Conversely however, Romanians who do not hold these prejudices demonstrate completely different set of orientations, namely assimilation in public areas and integration in private areas. Berry *et al.* (1989) also state that orientations are not necessarily fixed and there can be 'acculturation flux' over time as attitudes change or people explore different desired outcomes. A relative softening of French-Canadian attitudes is provided as evidence, in which previously strong views of separation have been challenged as more people consider the relative merits of integration with the mainstream.

An important aspect of the four-orientation model is the assumption that the minority, or non-dominant group is free to choose the strength of their identity and the ultimate level and nature of participation with both the minority and majority groups. In reality however this may not be the case. Practices that support integration, for example, must be conducted willingly by the minority group, but they must also be accepted and embraced by the dominant population. This becomes increasingly complex in plural societies, or "those in which a number of different cultural or ethnic groups reside together within a shared political or social framework" (Berry, 2011: 2). In these scenarios, a *mainstream-minority* society maintains an equal footing for all minorities, but each of these groups remains on the fringes of society. This scenario may be maintained and tolerated, but true pluralism is ultimately seen as undesirable and there is a tendency for long-term goals to orientate towards some kind of assimilation. A

multicultural society on the other hand not only acknowledges the different minority groups, but institutes adopt their processes according to their interests and needs. It is only under this scenario that a society achieves true pluralist status. Berry's concluding views on plural societies is that wherever the acculturation process is impeded, the original four orientations may take a different strain. This is demonstrated through the example of assimilation, in which the minority may relinquish their heritage identity in order to adapt that of the wider society. Where this is voluntary, as was largely the case with Irish immigrants to the US during the nineteenth century, Berry calls this assimilation a 'melting pot' and can lead to mutually acceptable outcomes for the minority and majority. He contrasts this however with the case of Aboriginal Australians, many of whom over the course of history have adopted the majority culture under conditions of pressure or duress in a situation described as an assimilation 'pressure cooker'. The end result may be similar cultural and ethnic orientations, but the different freedoms and willingness to do so will result in a substantially different type of social participation.

3.4.2 Outputs of the Acculturation Experience

A second aspect of Berry's research focuses on how individuals operationalise their cultural position, or how well they view their acculturation experience. This work borrows heavily from Ward (1996) who identifies two ways in which individuals adapt to their acculturation process. *Psychological adaptation* considers the aspects of stress, emotional wellbeing and overall life satisfaction that a person experiences through their acculturation experiences. *Sociocultural adaptation* considers the social competence in managing daily life due to their relative degree of integration into the host society. Just as there is no single, formulaic approach to predict the chosen acculturation orientation of a given ethnic group, neither too is there a certainty of the degree of positive outcome that one scenario offers over another. Sam and Berry (2010) state in general terms that the integration orientation tends to demonstrate the most consistently favourable adaptation outcomes. This is supported by Berry and Sabatier (2010) who consider the psychological wellbeing of minorities in Canada and France, offering the view that those who remain close to their heritage culture but also involve themselves in the wider society (the integration orientation) tend to be more adjusted in school and

experience higher self-esteem. The research however also demonstrates the potential for divergent outcomes, identifying a weaker correlation in France than Canada, something attributed in part to the participants' experiences of discrimination. Hichy *et al.* (2013) demonstrate the view that acculturation outputs are not necessarily prescriptive by concluding the opposite to Sam and Berry when conducting research on the acculturation orientation of Coptic Orthodox Christians in Egypt. The writers state that psychological adaptation, or overall life satisfaction, is optimised through a choice of separatism towards both the dominant majority and other large minorities in which cultural exchange is kept to a minimum. Lu *et al.* (2012) research the link between acculturation strategy and sociocultural adaptation – in this case specifically job satisfaction – for professional Chinese immigrants in Australia. The work identifies that those who are prepared to relinquish their Chinese culture through an assimilation strategy report the highest levels of job satisfaction. In other work however, assimilation orientations are found to have negative sociocultural adaptations – in this case poor physical health through obesity – for Mexican immigrants living in the US, something that increases for those living as second or third generation settlers (Creighton *et al.*, 2012).

As these cases all demonstrate, the avenues along which an individual from an ethnic minority may take towards acculturation within a dominant society can be varied and are the output of context-bound circumstances that may change over time. There is no formulaic guarantee of success, but the importance of understanding acculturation outcomes cannot be overstated. This ultimately shapes the psychological and material wellbeing for individuals, families and communities alike. A particularly important aspect of the acculturation experience, the one that perhaps offers the most substantial collective influence towards the material and emotional outcomes of life, is that of the labour market and this will be considered in the following section.

3.4.3 The Social Importance of Labour Market Participation

The labour market provides a number of important inputs into the mechanisms of social participation. It provides people with different levels and types of physical resources, what Barth recognises as the means needed to shape a person's ethnicity. It also offers

an important channel for the acculturation process in which individuals participate in different ways within society, ultimately lending heavily to the resultant psychological and sociocultural outcomes. Fang and Gunderson (2015) extoll the importance of the labour market beyond simple material wealth, stating that the labour market is the first line of defence against social exclusion, providing not only a source of income, but contributing to important social ties and shaping aspects of identity such as self-worth. Experiences in the labour market extend far beyond work: individuals may turn their back on a labour market (and by implication, wider society) that they feel has turned its back on them. Entry into work can reverse a downward spiral for vulnerable people and provide a means of participation in community life. The nature of work, or perhaps more consequentially the lack of it, can have a profound impact on the individual and has been demonstrated to have negative effects on self-esteem and psychological wellbeing (Sheeran *et al.*, 1995) but also physical health (Wanberg, 2011). Unemployment brings a much broader societal impact that extends beyond the financial burden of support imposed on an economy and the loss of human capital (Jurajda and Terrell, 2009). Being unemployed can have impact on the family unit and can lead to deterioration in spousal wellbeing, marital instability and children's educational attainment (Ström, 2003). McDowell (2000) researches the decline of manufacturing industries and describes the importance of economic participation on shaping the socially-valued attribute of masculinity. As a conclusion, increases in unemployment rates in advanced industrialised areas has led to increases in suicide rates amongst low-achieving young men that fail to enter the labour market.

Higuchi (2014: 119) emphasises the importance of the labour market in shaping an individual's identity, stating that "in modern industrial societies, identity itself is based on work. In a system in which employment has an almost juridical status, work is the guarantee of identity and the nucleus of socialization for the majority of people". The writer then proceeds to describe a spiral in which the loss of work frequently leads to an individual internalising negative emotions to the extent they may take a withdrawn role with family and friends. If an individual accepts social welfare for any period of time, this can reduce their resilience and increase their dependence on the system, and the measures that are paradoxically intended to provide support have the opposite

effect. Re-entry into the labour market becomes increasingly difficult over time and the person's identity can become trapped within a structure of marginalization. Morris and Barnes (2008) look at the different types of social exclusion, pulling these together into categories including material exclusion such as housing or income, spatial exclusion such as restrictions on where people can live or travel, access exclusion to public and private goods and services, health and wellbeing. A key theme in all this is the extent and nature to which socially excluded groups, such as those based on gender, disability or sexuality, participate in the labour market.

3.4.4 Ethnicity and Labour Market Participation

Amongst the most vulnerable groups susceptible to low-quality work or unemployment are the socially excluded. The Council of Europe states that this in itself propagates a much more substantial set of problems, identifying the inability of these individuals or communities to participate within the formal labour market as being the starting point of a sequential and causal relationship. From here, poverty is propagated as the same excluded members of society don't take part in dominant cultural and social patterns, lose social contacts, live in stigmatised neighbourhoods and are not reached by welfare agencies (Lister, 2004). Veenman (2003) explains how participation in the labour market is a manifestation of formal bonding, and that limited labour market participation puts social cohesion under pressure through its implied lack of social reciprocity. Applying a relatively broad view on the subject, we are told that failure of minority groups to participate in the labour market increases dependency on social benefits, reduces interethnic contact and generates a negative perception of the minority group within the wider society. This in turn increases the likelihood that the minority will cling to their ethnic identity, destroying cohesion through a vicious cycle.

Bisin *et al.* (2011) consider the same social consequences of failure to participate in the labour market specifically along the ethnic lines of first and second generation immigrants within the EU. Taking a relatively linear approach, the authors state that a strong ethnic identity ultimately leads to difficulties in finding a job whereas immigrants that shed their original ethnicity fare almost as well as the majority population. Battu *et al.* (2007) draw a compatible conclusion, describing 'oppositional identities' in which

those from ethnic minorities may choose to absorb the majority culture and will be more likely to gain work. Conversely, there will be individuals from the group with stronger connections to dominant ethnic socialization factors may reject the majority culture, despite this clearly being to the detriment of their chances in the job market.

This work of both Bisin *et al.* and Battu *et al.* draws similar conclusions that strong ethnic ties ultimately result in poorer work prospects. Common to this is a dependence on informal social networks within the minority groups that increases with the strength of ethnic identity. Salway (2008) also considers these social networks when researching experiences from within the ethnic Bangladeshi community of London, something she refers to as 'forces of inclusion' that also include residential concentration and informal information channels. She confirms that these factors strengthen a degree of isolation, but identifies an increasing desire from members of the community to reject these values, to 'break out' and connect with the wider community. Despite this desire however, these forces of exclusion or negative experiences such as abuse and discrimination ultimately constrain aspirations and limit opportunities. Echoing Çelik's view of 'reverse ethnicity', this leads to an introversion and reinforced reliance on 'our own people', which in turn supports persistent disadvantage. In acculturation terms, Salway's findings indicate a desired leaning towards integration or even assimilation with the dominant group, but social influences ultimately leading to marginalisation with the end result being both poor psychological and sociocultural outputs. Nekby and Rödin (2010) research a similar theme in a different context, this time with ethnic minority groups in Sweden, and identify the potential for balance. Immigrants who choose to only identify with the majority (ie. assimilation orientation) experience very similar labour market outcomes to those who integrate with the majority but also choose to retain a strong identity with their minority group in parallel (ie. integration orientation). The conclusion for this particular study is that accepting the majority culture is important for success within the labour market, but this is compatible rather than at the expense of an individual's minority ethnic identity.

3.5 Identity, Acculturation and Labour Market Participation of the Roma

3.5.1 Social Identity of the Roma

Research on the Roma is dominated by the poor social conditions under which large sections of the population live across Europe, with a frequent emphasis on the nature of social participation and a view that the desired state is assimilation into the mainstream. There is however, relatively little research on the contribution of ethnic identity to this subject, and the findings from existing work have been mixed and inconclusive (Dimitrova *et al.*, 2015). The way the subject has been approached has also been eclectic, with scholars addressing the issues from fields such as psychology, anthropology, ethnography, healthcare and political and legal science. Yet despite the relative dearth of research within the social sciences, the findings to date can be interpreted to offer some helpful insights.

At an individual level, Pnevmatikos *et al.* (2010) conclude that Greek Roma children aged four to eleven understand that their culture differs from the majority group and start to construct a strong social identity based on different aspects of Roma society. The values associated with ethnic identity may change over the course of a childhood and beyond, but there is a stable core of highly valued, emotionally-charged aspects that participants understand to be permanent and should accompany them for life, protected from external influence at the expense of an abandonment of their ethnicity. The early betrothal of children was one particular value that was understood by the research group to be a core ethnic trait, a non-negotiable dimension of being Roma. Language too was important, but with a degree of partial-permanence as Greek language is also introduced as being acceptably compatible as a child grows. Finally, some ethnic markers such as traditional dress are localised within a family environment, with participants understanding that this may be accepted or neglected without ultimately compromising an individual sense of Roma identity. This research draws heavily on the influence of the family unit and Abubaker and Dimitrova (2016) also identify the family as a particularly dominant socialization agent in establishing Roma cultural values. This is concluded through research into levels of engagement at school for pupils in Bulgaria with the view that Roma children have a much stronger family

orientation than majority Bulgarians and successful participation in school will ultimately rest on a dependency on the family to provide the direction and drive to achieve this. Dimitrova *et al.* (2015) also address the issue of Roma ethnic identity, this time considering the connection to life satisfaction. The findings indicate that although the life satisfaction of Roma adolescents is lower than the majority Bulgarian sample, Roma ethnic identity is nevertheless important as it carries a positive association with life satisfaction. Once again the work also concludes that family is an important form of socialization, and mothers and fathers' strong ethnic identity is also connected to their adolescents' equivalent ethnic identity, something that in turn supports a willingness for intergenerational continuity.

A particularly common theme when considering social participation is that of the collective identity of the Roma as viewed by others, what Jenkins describes as the external imposition of a category. At its most fundamental and failing level, this is offered as a lazy abstraction of a simple stereotype. Vivian and Dundes (2004) provide an example of this when considering health-related behaviours of the Roma from a 'socio-cultural' base. This work, conducted at distance through literature reviews, builds on the widely-attributed use of categories and stereotypes, concluding that there are cross-cultural impediments, or 'typical Roma traits' to delivering health care to the Roma. These factors are listed to include superstitious beliefs surrounding medical care, and family hierarchies that prevent sensible medical practices, but the work provides nothing to understand more intricate views on healthcare engagement from the Roma perspective. Čvorović (2011: 27) takes a similar approach to try to qualify the "ethnocentric nature of certain elements of Gypsy culture" in Serbia and its contribution to poor social outcomes. The researcher addresses themes such as juvenile marriage, gender-based roles and accelerated reproduction in terms that judge these practices against accepted Serbian norms, concluding "efforts to improve education, health, living conditions, encourage employment and development opportunities for Gypsies/Roma are essential, these objectives cannot be attained without directing the changes needed within Gypsy/Roma culture itself. The initial point for change must come from an increased sense of responsibility among the Gypsies themselves" (Čvorović, 2011: 27-28). The intimacy of the Roma as a close group, and family as the major contributor to

the social structure lends itself heavily to aspects of Primary and Group socialization theories, but by the same token suffers the same persistent problem from Primary Socialization Theory of allocating prosocial and deviant social behaviours. By drawing up value-based structures, this work offers little beyond a comparison between two different reference frames, one from the majority and one from the minority, with a persistent undercurrent of respective positive and negative comparisons throughout. The relative distance of the ethnic boundaries of the Roma within the Serbian community are laid out, but beyond this is no attempt to understand the social constructs from inside that boundary.

Timmer (2010) considers the shortcomings of these types of approaches, and the need to consider the self-association processes that build identity from within the minority group by asking why the success of NGOs working in the interests of the Roma in Hungary fall substantially short of delivering its full potential. The writer acknowledges a requirement for an NGO to distinguish a collective “needy subject” (Timmer, 2010: 264) at an organisational level in order to draw a contrast between the subject and the wider communities to maintain recognition and funding. Nevertheless, this generalisation towards the most tangible problems affecting the Roma population may actually be the source of setbacks as it typically offers a homogenized identity of the group, stereotyped around those with the greatest needs. By approaching the Roma as a category, the well-meaning efforts fail as the perspective from within the group – the associations, meanings and values that provide the ethnic identity of being Roma – are overlooked, reinforcing ‘otherness’ and unwittingly depriving individuals of agency. Csepeli and Simon (2004) also identify two distinct failings in this generalisation of the Roma. Firstly, the actual categorisation of the Roma is inconsistent and frequently arbitrary and superficial, with ethnic markers such as skin, speech, way of life and family name varying from group-to-group, country to country, sometimes depending on the prejudices of a given interviewer. Secondly this work serves to highlight the fact that the Roma themselves are not a common, highly-homogenised group but vary substantially in how they perceive themselves through their own in-group perception. This in turn is contextually-bound, influenced not only by strength of association to

history and culture, but also by prevalent socio-economic views and conditions that may lead people to wish to belong to the group or not.

3.5.2 Acculturation of the Roma within the Dominant Society

Like the views of Csepei and Simon, Prieto-Flores (2009) seeks to address the negative attributions of the mainstream towards the Roma, such as marginality, low levels of education, unemployment and poverty, stating that this not only influences society's view of the Roma, but also the way Roma individuals form their own identities and define their ethnic boundaries. The work is telling, as it challenges a widely-held view by writers such as Barany (2002) and Koulis (2005) that the Roma follow a canonical path of assimilation in which minority populations seek to leave their heritage identity behind and assimilate with the majority over time. Against a predominantly negative backdrop from wider society, this work considers how the strength of Roma identity varies with individuals as they obtain a university education, adopt professional roles and move towards the middle class. The more widely accepted academic view, is that social mobility and Roma identity are weakly associated, and that the Roma follow a straight-line path of assimilation in which minority populations seek to assimilate with the majority over time, leaving their heritage identity behind. The work finds that although there is sometimes a connection between upwards mobility and willingness of individuals to assimilate into society, this is not always the case. This is relatively exploratory work in an under-researched field, and one striking finding is that interviewees with higher incomes were more likely to identify themselves as Roma than those on lower incomes. The writer concludes that a segmented theory is required to understand integration and participation, and that more work is needed to understand social identity and acculturation of the Roma beyond the margins of society (Prieto-Flores, 2009).

Gkoka (2016) also looks at Roma interaction with the majority community along similar lines, considering identity construct of Roma living in Greece. Setting the scenario from this work, she consolidates views from previous research to summarise that "subordinate minorities frequently develop a cultural frame of reference which is oppositional to the dominant community's norms", the behaviour of which is required

for an individual to be endorsed by peers and belong to the minority group (Gkofa, 2016: 3). Particular means through which the oppositional identity can be articulated are language, religion, lifestyle, social and economic status. Accessing mainstream dimensions of society such as a university education can be difficult for an individual without generating a sense of unfaithfulness or betrayal to the heritage Roma culture and students have found ways of coping with this burden through a balance of cultural and language frames of reference, something Gkofa describes as 'accommodation without assimilation'. The research specifically engages with academically successful Roma youth and of the research participants, all sought to maintain a degree of kinsmanship with other Roma, but did so by striking a balance between being rejected as no-longer Roma by peers whilst navigating the negative stereotype of the mainstream. This process involves a process of positive self-identity reconstruction of ethno-cultural aspects ('being Roma') in contrast to prevalent negative views in society, in parallel with an equally positive emphasis on the national aspect ('being Greek'). Participants identified the importance of having support, and the influence of role models to help the next generation along a similar path.

Further research on acculturation is offered by Ljubic *et al.* (2012) who focus on the attitudes of the majority in-group with an emphasis on the relative levels of threat as viewed from the mainstream. This perception of threat can vary over time based on factors such as previous group relations and socio-economic context and is founded on the belief of group members that inter-group relations can have detrimental outcomes in terms of either economic or symbolic threat. Perceived economic threat concerns competition for scarce resources such as housing and employment and symbolic threat relates to an assumed threat from other groups based on different morals, norms and values. Different threats emerge in different settings and this work focuses specifically on the Roma in Serbia, whose life outcomes have varied over time. Under the relative prosperity of the Yugoslav regime and supported by a government policy of multiculturalism, a move towards a true accultural integration was both possible and desirable by many, in which steps were taken towards Roma access to healthcare, employment, housing and education. In the years following Socialism the conditions of the Roma deteriorated. The perception of the majority group of an economic threat

from the Roma was increased, attributed to generic Roma associations of poverty and reliance on social benefits. The symbolic threat was heightened by an overall intolerance towards ethnic groups in a post-war society. In this context, general rejection of the Roma through dominant attitudes of segregation and marginalisation was dominant. These distinctions in the social landscape are important as they serve to re-iterate Berry's view on the importance of freedom in the acculturation orientations. Under a Yugoslav climate of 'Brotherhood and Unity', the choice of Roma integration was both willing on the part of the Roma, and receptive on the part of the Yugoslav Serbs. Through a shift in attitudes in the post-conflict years however, these freedoms were limited with a departure from willing freedom of acculturation. Where once there was a 'melting pot' of assimilation, this was either reduced to a 'pressure cooker', or assimilation was rejected completely. Where the resultant orientation of separatism was ultimately at the expense of a freedom of choice, social cohesion was ultimately threatened. This work by Ljubic *et al.* also serves to demonstrate the temporal nature of identity and acculturation, where a shift in the climate can destabilise a process with substantial socio-cultural outcomes. In a separate paper, the same authors also demonstrate the context-driven nature of acculturation attitudes towards the Roma, conducting studies with majority-population adolescents in both Serbia and the Netherlands. Youths in the Netherlands with little to no exposure to Roma communities recognise a higher perceived threat than those in Serbia with substantially higher contact opportunities. Reasons for this are hypothesised, including a lack of familiarity of Roma people with the Dutch, and controversial immigration policies that have heightened the public perception of out-group economic and symbolic threat. The results of this had negative connotations for aspirations of accultural integration with Roma students (Ljubic *et al.*, 2013).

Finally, there is very little research that acknowledges Roma identity and acculturation directions either in an ethnically-diverse plural society, or specifically within Macedonia. Johansen (2004) however indicates a complexity in the definition of a 'majority population' by stating that although the ethnic Macedonian group is clearly dominant, the minority ethnic Albanian group is substantial and distinctly different in terms of a number of ethnic markers such as education, family size and level of employment.

Latham (1999) also writes about the ethnic composition of the country, offering the view that emphasis on tensions between ethnic Macedonians and Albanians leads the majority of the population to view the Roma more benignly than other parts of the Balkans. The writer states that the Roma “are more likely to be able to pass as Albanians” (Latham, 1999: 219) based on the fact many of the Roma are Muslim and have a comparable darker skin tone, although she offers no indication as to whether this is actually the case.

3.5.3 Roma and the Labour Market

The issues surrounding poor labour market participation within Roma communities and the outcomes that result from this are very well documented in factual terms and there is an abundance of detail in the public domain reported by both government and non-government sources, complemented by information generated through peer-reviewed academic literature. These analyses generally cover common themes and often lead towards compatible conclusions. Discrimination within the labour market is one subject that is often present in literature about the Roma and in researching negative wage biases, for example, Drydakis (2012) identifies occupational segregation in which Roma employment is not only dominated by low-skill, low-pay jobs, but that there is a negative bias that leads the Roma towards this type of work. O’Higgins and Ivanov (2006) state that there are two dominant social mechanisms that exclude the Roma from the labour market, namely, poor levels of formal education, and discrimination, something that results in endemic unemployment and a dependence on participation in the informal economy. Kertesi and Kézdi (2011) point to poor levels of education and low participation rates in schools as main driver in economic outcomes. Ram (2007) and McGarry (2012) are two of many writers to consider the hardships of poor labour market outcomes through the impact of government policy, in this case in the context of EU membership or accession.

On one level these works help to establish facts to construct an informative picture of Roma participation within the labour market, whether formal or informal, high- or low-skilled, legal or illegal. This information however has its limits. Earlier in this review the work of Timmer (2010) was referenced in highlighting the need for non-government

organisations (NGOs) to align the findings and conclusions of their reports to the objectives of their organisations. By the same token, the interpretation and outcomes of peer-reviewed academic research on this subject can also vary in line with the methods and direction of the work. Drydakís' research on the negative bias towards the Roma, for example, applies a purely statistical approach to conclude that there is a need for better implementation of laws, rules and regulations to prevent discrimination. O'Higgins and Ivanov primarily assume an economic stance in their work, in one aspect looking at types of employment to conclude that a greater level of employment within the private rather than the public sector would ultimately be beneficial to the Europe's Roma communities. Kertesi and Kézdi identify the constraints of a large family as driving poor educational outcomes that affect employability but the consideration from an economic viewpoint overlooks the importance of family size within the wider Roma social structure. The findings from Ram and McGarry, namely that EU membership draws attention to the difficulties facing the Roma but ultimately does little to improve circumstances, and the benefits of having a transnational EU Roma strategy, are approached from a largely political stance looking at policies as an input, and social conditions as the resultant output. Where all these works are informative on one level, they offer largely prescriptive views dominated by a mandate to improve access to better quality work, and to increase the level of formal labour market participation for the Roma with very little attempt to understand the Roma standpoint on these issues.

Many of these papers draw relatively linear conclusions, a tangible set of outcomes based on a tangible set of inputs. A relatively small number of writers either challenge the more widely-held views, or approach the subject from a more Roma-oriented standpoint. Milcher and Fischer (2011), for example, address the broadly institutionalised view that employment discrimination towards the Roma is universal. By applying a statistical approach specifically to wage discrimination, the authors state that although there is conclusively wage discrimination along ethnic lines in Albania and Kosovo, this is not the case in Bulgaria, Croatia and Serbia where differences are accounted for through 'other characteristics'. Although this research does not seek to understand what these other characteristics may be, it starts to differentiate communities from a simple broad-brush approach and identifies once again that

acculturation orientations based on receptiveness and relative freedoms can vary greatly, in this case articulated through nuances in the labour market. Indirect comparisons can perhaps be drawn here with the work from Ljubic *et al.*, namely that these negative sentiments towards the Roma can be both temporal and context-bound by specific circumstances, such as perception of threat from the majority.

Another writer to challenge widely-held views by looking from within the Roma community is Pantea (2009) who acknowledges the need to protect children from unacceptable forms of harmful child work, but argues that the definition of 'child labour' as a catch-all term for any kind of work, including forms of domestic light work, is socially unhelpful. The author states that it should not be overlooked that this can form an important part of some Roma social structures, and addresses the fact that the rigid policies and definitions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) are structured upon the single Western model of childhood. It is relatively unusual for socially-dominant conventions such as the negative attitudes towards child labour to be challenged, and, like Pantea, this is something Saitta (2010) does when considering how a Kosovan Roma group that settled in Italy in the 1970s have gained a livelihood through informal employment, both legal and illegal. Where conventional views would indicate that this is a means of socially reproducing poverty between generations, the conclusion that the author draws is that this is paradoxically a means of social advancement. Central to this is the fact that the Roma group in question indirectly accept that any aspirations of formal work would be practically limited to low-pay, low-quality activities, in a hostile environment that would do little to provide any genuine socio-economic enhancement. Rather than join the mainstream, informal work choices of the group are governed through their own choices, offering a social identity built upon personal dignity, something that offers a greater sense of social advancement. Kiprianos *et al.* (2012) challenge a number of conventional views surrounding low levels of Roma schooling in Greece, including the notion that poor levels of integration and commitment are due to gender values, substandard living conditions and lack of financial resources. Amongst the conclusions is the fact that poor participation is largely down to an incompatibility with perceptions of future priorities within the family unit. Where the basic life skills in early schooling such as reading and writing hold a degree

of practical value, the development of a trade is a valued investment in a family's future and competes to diminish the value of further schooling. Where the authors identify the importance of this identity, they also point out that decisions to participate in school may redefine boundaries, but also push members out of the group.

Finally, Maeso (2015) highlights the failure of employment initiatives aimed at the Roma. Using the case of Portugal, she describes how efforts to improve employability by focusing on empowerment and interculturality ultimately fail as they are built upon racial stereotypes that reinforce the negative characteristics of the Roma 'other'. This work emphasises the importance of social identity and an understanding of acculturation by identifying a need for greater debate and understanding around the mechanisms and means of articulation surrounding social integration.

3.6 Summary

In this chapter the relationship between identity, ethnicity, and acculturation has been explored with the conclusion that these are complex products of individual and group components. For ethnic minorities, these dimensions of life vary over time through influences from within a person's ethnic group, but also through their relationship with the dominant Other. They are particularly consequential, and how they shape a person's participation in society has a substantial bearing on the quality of life. For the Roma communities across Central and Eastern Europe there is a commonality regarding particularly poor life outcomes, most notably within the labour market. Where many communities are disadvantaged and live in difficult conditions however, the underlying factors that shape ethnic identity and participation in society can be diverse. This work offers the opportunity to gain a greater understanding of these phenomena through research into the particular circumstances surrounding the Roma community of Shuto Orizari, Macedonia.

Chapter 4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Introduction

For any research project to succeed it is essential that the design of the research instrument is well thought out, thorough and justified. Without a rigorous approach the validity of the findings can be called into question and so in this chapter the methodology of the work is laid out and qualified. Firstly, the epistemological position is presented, something that emphasises the particular problems in representing excluded groups and validates the use of standpoint theory as a way to provide a voice for the interviewees. Semi-structured interviews are then qualified as an appropriate research instrument, and the structure and design of the process is explained. Finally, there are many ethical issues to be taken into consideration when researching marginalised and vulnerable communities and these are discussed at the end of the section.

4.2 Representations of Social Reality for Excluded Groups

The reality of life for socially excluded groups – the experiences, perceptions, values and understandings of the world and its interactions – are all too commonly misunderstood and falsely represented by the dominant, majority group. By failing to accommodate the position from which marginalised people see and interpret the world, the academic research process frequently fails to appropriately articulate the findings of the work and provide a representative voice for the participants. Understanding and managing this form the central tenet of this research process.

4.2.1 The Social Reality of Marginalised Groups

A fundamental underpinning of social science is the construct of knowledge – *how we know what we think we know* – and understanding the epistemological position taken by the researcher is critical if we are to accept the validity of claims made through their research. Nowhere is this truer than in work with marginalised groups, participants on the fringes of the dominant wider society whose representation within the research process is dependent not only on their own contribution to the work, but equally as significantly in how this is translated into knowledge by the researcher. The social

research process contains no single, absolute set of truths and cannot be considered as a quantifiable, positivist phenomenon measurable within a fixed reference frame. Instead societies are a complex set of interactive relations which, when viewed by an outsider, require translation and interpretation as best as possible to represent what the researcher understands he or she has observed. Yet the academic research process frequently fails to explain social reality, and marginalised groups are misrepresented by the resultant bodies of work. Institutionalised norms and the values that these are built upon – typically the dominant, male-oriented, colonial forces that have shaped much of the modern environment – provide a lens to the social world established around a specific, partial version of the truth. Physical actions may be factually undeniable, but the meanings, values and interpretations that these carry are very much constructed at a specific time and within a particular social location. It is only through placing this within a justified reference frame that we can consider this to be qualified knowledge.

Work within the aboriginal communities of Australia, for example, offers many cases of how the established, dominant, normative framework leads observations to be socially misplaced and research to be misrepresentative. Foley (2003) speaks of the frustration felt by many indigenous postgraduate researchers in Australia with a system that fails to represent the views of their home communities. The author describes the historical dominance of a power structure built upon Anglo-European male values, effectively eliminating indigenous social systems, knowledge, traditions and cultural sciences. Where the European settlers determined the legitimacy of knowledge, indigenous ‘reality’ has no indigenous input and is constructed in non-indigenous languages for a non-indigenous audience. Along similar lines, Abu-Saad (2008: 1902) explains the fundamental right of the indigenous people in Australia to “speak to the dominant society with their own voices and words, rather than be spoken of or about”. The writer describes how work that expresses aboriginal views that lie contrary to the accepted understandings of the wider, dominant white structures frequently fails to be published as it is simply discredited through the peer review process.

4.2.2 Misrepresentations and the Roma

It is not only through the starkly contrasting structures of colonial societies that we see the potentially exclusionist nature of social research. A marginalised group that has co-existed with wider 'host' communities for many centuries, yet who frequently find themselves misrepresented by the research process, is the Roma. Writing about the subject, Aiello *et al.* (2013) state that much of this work fails to provide a voice for the Roma themselves and does little to improve their lives, actually serving to reinforce stereotypes and social exclusion. Munté *et al.* (2011) follows along similar lines, saying that social exclusion of the Roma is reinforced through academic research that inadvertently legitimises stereotypes rather than help to overcome them. O'Nions (2010) provides an example of this when analysing educational inequality with the Roma compared to the wider communities, telling of the need for greater educational parity whilst explaining the disadvantages and barriers that the Roma face. Central to this is the poor standard of living, a preference for low-quality work over education, and a tendency for children to work alongside parents. Another case can be seen in Milcher (2006) who considers poverty amongst the Eastern European Roma, describing coping strategies to alleviate this including small scale agriculture. In both these texts the Roma's plight is explained in sympathetic tones, yet the conclusions to the work do little to help the reader understand this from the perspective of the Roma themselves. O'Nions references the Roma's attitude to school from the viewpoint of the authorities and structures of the European Union, underlined throughout by an unspoken understanding that schooling, the value this adds to life and the character that this builds, is an essential dimension of a healthy life. Nowhere however, does the author acknowledge that the Roma may hold different values to schooling, and education may not be considered a virtue developed in the classroom, but perhaps within the family unit. It could be that the Roma may not attach a social stigma to school absenteeism, but perhaps consider it a head start to enable traditions and values to be passed down sooner rather than later. Milcher too states that Roma are less likely to sell home-grown produce than members of the wider communities, something that results in a lost revenue stream in the combat against poverty. We are not told however how this food

is distributed, and the value and currency this may hold within the informal networks that support the more intimate communities in which the Roma live.

So why does this misrepresentation occur and on such an apparently widespread basis? Surely few would put forward an argument to claim the academic community conscientiously seeks to subjugate marginalised groups. Yet in looking to understand these processes, this view may actually provide a window into the inadvertent truth borne out of the structure upon which the academic community is built. To recognise the exclusionary nature of this research one must acknowledge the normative reference frame within which these findings are placed, something that has emerged over the centuries to define the dominant construction of knowledge we see today. At its most fundamental base, social knowledge requires the researcher to reject any notions of the logical, objective positivism of the natural sciences. Research cannot be value free. It is supported by a hierarchical infrastructure and a disinterested, impartial perspective is impossible. Nor is subject-object separation possible, they are both influenced by the same sociocultural factors and are unable to operate as distinct, non-interacting entities. The scientist too, with a lifetime of schooling, facts and experiences, cannot completely remove existing cultural understandings, assumptions and bias. These factors lead to the conclusion that pure objectivity is simply not possible (Swigonski, 1994).

But acknowledging this divergence from positivism does not in itself ensure a true representation of the research subject. If there is no single social truth, then the validation of research is not in the findings themselves, but in their qualification and translation. However subjective and partial the view of the researcher may be, it is the epistemological position they take that validates the insights they provide. This has historically led to a common failing of the researcher and the research community alike. By overlaying their own values and partiality to contextualise their findings, the researcher is guilty of failing to represent the group they observe. By failing to reject this, but instead validating this work within the framework of the body of power, the wider academic community too is guilty of merely reinforcing established biases. All too often we see an ethnocentric approach, one in which the in-group is seen as virtuous and superior, with universal value standards that transcend those of the inferior out-

group. Hammond and Axelrod (2006) state that language, physical features, religion or territorial boundaries are frequently used to demarcate differences. Where ethnocentricity may commonly be associated with extreme outcomes such as ethnic separation, conflict and instability, the reality is that its presence is ubiquitous and can be seen in day-to-day activities across the spectrum of society.

4.2.3 Dominant Forces and the Power Balance

At its heart, this type of research provides a telling insight into the dualism of social enquiry, defined by a power balance between the dominant group and the Other. This hierarchy of binary oppositions, whether rich and poor, educated and non-educated, or in the case of this research white Englishman and Roma, sets the reference point against which measurements are defined and judgements made. In his seminal postcolonial text 'Orientalism', Saïd (1978) wrote in depth about how this balance plays out by considering the understanding of the Middle East through the representation of these cultures by the dominant powers of the West. The writer describes orientalism as a concept to represent the "subtle and persistent Eurocentric prejudice against Arabo-Islamic peoples and their culture" (Saïd, 1978: 56). Central to this is the fact that Western scholarship of the Arabic world and Asia in general is demeaning, harnessing views of backwardness and a lack of civilisation whilst holding social elements that are exotic, titillating and frequently sexual. The dominant West derives a sense of superiority over the oriental Other, placing their societies at a lower stage of development.

Another author that writes about representation of marginal groups is Moreton-Robinson (2013) who argues we can learn most about the failings of representation by drawing in depth from society's most fundamental dichotomy: man and woman. The issues addressed by feminist scholars hold true to excluded groups of all kinds, each fighting to reproduce knowledge in the face of a constant struggle against "normative dominant patriarchal conceptual frameworks" (Moreton-Robinson, 2013: 331). Hundleby (1998) describes *feminist standpoint*, as an epistemology that improves the approach to knowledge by accounting for the social positioning, or situatedness of the social agent. The writer states that where the dominant group sees themselves as a

separation from the world, women have a standpoint that offers a different perspective. The out-group has greater experiences in defining their own social positions, having to not only negotiate their own class, gender, race and ethnic environments, but also the environments of those who hold the power. The lack of privilege potentially offers an advantage to the contribution to knowledge through a less partial epistemic vantage point. Swigonski (1994) succinctly summarises this notion for marginalised groups, stating that experiences structure one's understanding of life, and standpoint theory is based on the idea that "the less powerful members of society experience a different reality as a consequence of their oppression" (Swigonski, 1994: 390).

4.2.4 Standpoint Theory: Representing the Roma

Returning then to research on the Roma, the stark difference when applying a standpoint approach can be viewed by comparing and contrasting two research texts that discuss the poor social standing of the Roma from Serbia. Both emphasise cultures and values, particularly the practices of marriage at a young age, and place this in the context of the failings in institutional policies. Firstly, Čvorović (2011) describes how strategies to address the poor living conditions and social difficulties do not succeed. The work clearly demonstrates a strong empathy to the Roma's plight and sets out to provide a roadmap to improve this situation. The author proceeds to describe the 'problems' that emerge from cultural traditions and norms within Roma society, with an emphasis on juvenile marriages. The writer states by way of conclusion that "although efforts to improve education, health, living conditions, encourage employment and development opportunities for Gypsies/Roma are essential, these objectives cannot be attained without directing changes needed with Gypsy/Roma culture itself" (Čvorović, 2011: 27). By contextualising and ultimately judging the values and traditions of the Roma within the normative reference frame of the dominant community, the writer has failed to understand the interpretation of the world through the Roma's eyes, and by extension, failed to provide a voice to express this.

We can now look at work by Bošnjak and Acton (2013) who also research juvenile marriages amongst the Roma in Serbia and Bosnia. In this example, the authors

emphasise the difference in cases between the Roma and the dominant ethnic group, telling us that whereas cultural values in the West have progressively demonised this practice it is simplistic to blame Roma groups for not assimilating this view. Instead the authors, through a process of semi-structured interviews, elicit the standpoint of Roma participants, particularly girls and women, to describe a set of complex historical, social and economic circumstances that support this practice. As with the work of Čvorović, the paper ends with references to failing systems of authority. In stark contrast however, the authors state “in order to make choices according to a person’s own sense of what matters, a person must regard her projects as *worth* pursuing” (Bošnjak and Acton, 2013: 662), concluding that many of the systems and interventions fail in part as they do not build on the systems of meaning of the Roma participants.

How then, in practical terms, can research accommodate the potential for such failings in representation? Standpoint theory provides an epistemological position to help understand this problem, but to truly serve as a vehicle of change towards inclusive research this needs to be articulated from the theoretical to a working practice. Sosulski (2009) draws on the work of standpoint scholars to describe a ‘standpoint method’ for working with marginalised groups, helping the reader to use individual narratives to uncover underlying social and political relationships. The author lays out a three-phase process with practical advice on techniques for each step, from information gathering, through analysis/consciousness-raising for the practitioner, to advocacy and action. Firstly, authenticity and authority are key to the work. The research professional must trust in the participants’ insights, understanding that their social location provides an authentic narrative. Whether existing social rules seem to apply or not, the researcher needs to accept that it is the participant that speaks with authority. Secondly, the agency of the subject is important and the need to centre the work around ‘active’ participants. Focusing on their experiences and wellbeing rather than simply the maintenance of social systems breaks down the dominant ideologies and hierarchies. Finally, the writer describes the need for reflective awareness, analysis and consciousness-raising. Here Sosulski (2009) describes the processes of reflection and analysis as being important for redefining the power relationship, as it will reveal ways in which the participants’ experiences fit into the social order. It is by hearing ideas that

run counter to their own thoughts and finding disjoints with their own understanding that the researcher is able to grow their own consciousness. The active involvement of both participant and researcher at all stages is a view that Aiello *et al.* (2013) are also at pains to emphasise. Writing about the Workaló research project with the Spanish Roma, something that ultimately led to greater institutional recognition for the group, the success where other initiatives had failed is largely attributed to an egalitarian dialogue. Focusing on the strength of the arguments rather than the position and views of the researcher, knowledge is built up by including the subjects in the investigation. To that end, the emphasis of research *with* rather than *on* the Macedonian Roma is of absolute primacy in the design, practice and review of any research.

4.3 Design of the Qualitative Research Instrument

The discussion over qualitative and quantitative methods in social research is well documented, with established opinions for and against each approach. In this section, the choice of a qualitative research method is presented with arguments to justify its application.

4.3.1 Justification for a Qualitative Methodology

Despite increased complexity and sophistication of the epistemological debates, empirical research remains the dominant strategy within social sciences (Bryman, 2008). Cost effective and accessible techniques such as online surveys, telephone interviews and self-completion questionnaires help to reach a wide yet targeted audience with a high participation rate. There are many though who call into question the application of empirical methods to research the social sciences. Dreyer (1998) for example, claims that while the quantitative research paradigm is applicable for the subject-to-object relationship of the natural sciences, it fails to address the subject-to-subject complexity of the relationships between human beings, including the ethical challenges that this research presents. Sayer (2000) describes the multiple mechanisms operating in social relationships and states that the research design requires abstraction to identify and attribute causal responsibilities. In considering the methodological approach to social research, Mason (2002) acknowledges that both qualitative and quantitative methods can be applicable, and lists a number of questions that the

researcher should address when considering their approach, including “why might I want to speak to or interact with people to generate data in order to answer my research questions?” Mason (2002: 62-67). The answer to this question is very much embedded in the complexity of social enquiry and the particular need to locate the findings using standpoint theory. The research explores values, meanings and behaviours; complex causal relationships that do not follow a natural order but rather they exist in a constant state of revision defined through social actors. To that end, a purely qualitative, interpretist approach using semi-structured interviews was applied to this work, enabling freedom of expression whilst offering a sensible degree of structure to ensure core themes are maintained at the heart of the research.

These interviews were inductive, applying grounded theory to build an understanding of the observed phenomena. Grounded theory itself is an approach in which an understanding of a subject is typically general and constructed through existing knowledge and literature. Theories then emerge through the analysis of the data, an approach that is considered appropriate when social interactions are studied to explain a process rather than verify an existing theory (Lingard *et al.*, 2008). Grounded theory requires an acknowledgement of the key themes, but the overall rejection of preconceptions about the interpretation of results. Since its conception however by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, there have been debates about the true possibility of pure induction in a society built upon knowledge and understanding. One such writer that addresses this is Thornberg (2012) who speaks of the real-world limitations of the purest forms of grounded theory in which literature reviews are conducted at the end of the research so as not to influence the findings. Thornberg argues that even with this stance, pure induction is impossible, and a more practical balance can be found through ‘informed grounded theory’. In this approach, the researcher simply accesses existing literature and theories in a way to consciously place them in terms of their relevance, fit and utility in order to build new theory from afresh. As there is little existing research to build upon regarding ethnicity, social participation and labour market outcomes for the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe this research is relatively exploratory and as such, this approach was considered appropriate. In a manner very similar to and compatible with the use of standpoint theory, and equally applicable to this work, full

impartiality and objectivity may never be completely possible, but by acknowledging this, prejudices can be understood, contained and overcome.

4.3.2 The Relationship Building Process

Marx (2001) talks of an imbalance of power in the research process, telling us of an inequality that exists, a phenomenon contingent on many factors such as hierarchy, race, class, location and gender. Although the author concludes that the researcher ultimately holds the authority, this will vary in degrees on a case-by-case basis. Sullivan *et al.* (2001) also speak of a power balance, yet claim both the researcher *and* researched can be vulnerable and establishing a rapport is critical to the developing research relationship. Eide and Kahn (2008) support this view, stating that social research should involve a mutual standpoint between people where the quality of the output of the enquiry, the actions, reactions, recollections and meanings provided by the subject, are dependent on the relationship that develops through the interview process.

Pitts and Miller-Day (2007) write in detail about the evolution of the relationship and its importance on the quality of the research, identifying patterns and maps that emerge. The writers describe five progressive, semi-permeable phases – other orientation, self-in-relation, self-and-other linking, interpersonal connection, and finally partnership – each involving a more open level of trust and intimacy.

The most intimate *partnership* phase in which both parties come to regard each other as friends with a reciprocal sincerity that extends socially is extremely rare and unnecessary for most research. Before the process can be productive however, there is a fundamental need at some point in the relationship for the participant to understand the questions ‘how does the researcher seek to benefit from this and in what way could this hurt me?’. Against this requirement, the phase Miller and Pitts-Day describe as *self-and-other linking* is often the minimum level of relationship that the researcher should aspire to, in which the respondent starts to believe that the researcher is genuinely interested in their experiences and starts to disclose increasingly personal information. To this end, the parameters of the research – the settings, the length of the process and the structure and style of the interviews – all tried to strike a balance that provided the

opportunity for the interviewer and interviewee to develop a sincere and meaningful connection, whilst accommodating practical time constraints and the potential for over-familiarity. This fine balance is revisited later in this chapter when considering the potential limitations of the research process (section 4.6).

4.3.3 The Involvement of Other Parties: Gatekeepers

There is a great importance in conducting research within socially disadvantaged, marginalised, or hard-to-reach groups, yet there are difficulties in accessing potential participants and this frequently leads to academic under-representation (Bonevski *et al.*, 2014). Bhopal (2010) provides an insight into the challenges of conducting social research within Roma communities, explaining that the way the researcher is regarded by the Roma community, whether as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’, will determine the nature of the relationship and ultimately the quality of the output. In this work, differences in my own social background and ethnicity to those of the participants were considered great enough to require the use of such ‘insiders’ as gatekeepers to the local community and this requires consideration when being built into the design of the field work.

Over the two years preceding the field research I worked at establishing a presence within a community centre at the heart of the Roma community in Shuto Orizari. The centre, named *zdruzhenie za zashtita na pravata na deteto* (translated literally ‘Association for Protection of Children’s Rights’ but known in English as ‘The Daily Centre for Street Children’) is a not-for-profit local initiative aimed at providing a number of basic services to some of the more disadvantaged families within the community. Children that visit the centre are offered a simple meal, basic education and group activities, with parents encouraged to become involved with their child’s participation in return for advice and support to help address social issues and barriers they face. The centre however is not only accessible to the poorest members of society, but has an involvement in other avenues of the community, such as supporting social events and activities. This wider presence is important in order not to limit the demographic outreach of the interviewees to only the most vulnerable in society and ensure there is access to a varied group of participants. There are four members of staff at the centre and they have a longstanding relationship with the local community and

provide a valued input. As such, their support as gatekeepers to encourage participation in this research was important, particularly at the start of the process, in order to break down barriers and help understand that the research was non-threatening and sought to ultimately be of benefit.

4.3.4 The Involvement of Other Parties: Translators

Temple (2002) states that the role of a translator is frequently overlooked in the research methodology, yet this should form a critical part of the research design as the translator should not only interpret linguistically, but should serve as a 'cultural broker'. Although most Macedonian Roma speak Macedonian, their native first language used amongst their own community is Romani. Fluent Romani however is very rarely spoken by non-Roma and, coupled with the requirements for the translator to speak fluent English, the choice of candidates was relatively limited. Nevertheless, the need to conduct the interviews in Romani was considered a very important dimension of the research methodology, not only as a way to extract the subtleties and nuances that come through speaking one's native language, but also as a means of helping to remove one of the barriers in the relationship process. Temple claims that the use of a native language translator is not only acceptable if accommodated into the research design, but generates an enhanced level of integration with the participant by providing access to the otherwise closed dimension of culture. Bloch (2004) speaks of the value of using insiders when researching vulnerable or marginalised groups, yet points to the selection process as being an important part of the research itself. Following a relatively lengthy selection process, a Romani translator was recruited to facilitate the interviews. This person is ethnically Roma, coming from Skopje with an intimate knowledge of life within the Shuto Orizari community. The candidate is also a third-year university undergraduate who had previously passed a short-term summer scholarship in the US and speaks fluent English, Romani and Macedonian.

4.4 Semi-Structured Interviews

4.4.1 The Interview Process and Data Collection

The centre where the interviews took place provided a busy, lively environment and is considered an appropriate setting for the interviews as participants were relaxed and comfortable in the informal settings, yet the open plan classrooms provided the space, privacy and discretion needed for the personal subject matter. The process involved only the researcher, research participant and translator and each interview took approximately sixty minutes. The interviews themselves were structured using a 'mind map' technique, a simple-to-follow visual chart providing direction and linkages to key discussion themes to help steer the conversation. This permitted a loose degree of structure without requiring detailed consultation during the process, enabling the researcher to concentrate primarily on the quality of dialogue without impacting the flow of the enquiry. The mind map template for this process can be found in Appendix 1.

All interviews were recorded using a digital dictaphone, enabling the focus to remain on the dynamics of the interview itself whilst providing a means to review the dialogue in more detail at a later time and a slower pace. An important aspect of the interview process is located in the context of the discussion and the nuances, actions and gestures of the interviewee can emphasise a point in a way that the words in a dialogue perhaps do not do justice (McLellan *et al.*, 2003). Although some of the subtler 'soft' factors of the interview such as vocal intonation will inevitably have been lost through the translation process, where relevant behaviours were observed they were noted and included in the transcription as an important part of the interview. The dialogue itself aimed to follow guidance set out by Kvale and Brinkman (2008) in which questions were kept short and brief wherever possible, allowing the interviewee space and time to express themselves and gain confidence. Relatively open, indirect questions allowed freedom of expression, and probing or follow-up questions were used to help expand on a specific subject of interest or relevance. Attempts were made to largely avoid direct questions, particularly when discussing uncomfortable subjects.

4.4.2 Pilot Interviews

The research process requires a substantial level of preparation and Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) state that interviewing should not purely rely on the personal intuition of the researcher. The same authors also claim that the process still requires a degree of 'craft' nevertheless, and there are common conceptions that interviewing is either semi-skilled labour, a skilled craft, a professional expertise or an art-form, requiring specific skills, sensitivity and knowledge on the part of the researcher. In order to develop an appropriate interview technique and to ensure that the process design was effective in meeting the research objectives, a small number of pilot interviews were planned ahead of the main field work to mimic the conditions of the actual interviews but as a practice run. From the first pilot interview however it became clear that the process was productive, with interviewees speaking freely and patiently. On review of the first couple of interviews it was decided that the content was already appropriate and these were assimilated into the main body of work. No further pilot interviews were conducted.

4.4.3 Selection of Participants

A large sample size is not necessarily required in qualitative research; the emphasis instead being placed on the quality of the enquiry. Nevertheless, the work seeks to understand the views across a community and for this reason the sample must try to reflect this group whilst also taking into consideration the time and resource constraints of the study. In total seventeen different people took part in the interviews; a mix of male and female, employed and unemployed. The initial participants were identified and approached via the gatekeepers working at the centre. Once the number of interviews started to build, requests were made by the researcher to try to find people from relatively wide, yet particular profiles to ensure a mixed representation of the community. The general profiles of participants were discussed and approved by the researcher before candidates were approached and asked to take part in order to ensure candidates were appropriate.

The narrative in the interview findings draws on the contribution from all of the interviewees. As part of the informed consent process, the names of the participants

have been anonymised using comparably ethnic Roma names from within the same community. Given the possible lack of familiarity a reader may have with Roma names however, a short summary of each of the participant's details is provided below as a simple reference point to help the readability of the work.

- *Alana* is a 50-year old lady, she was married at the age of 13 and has 7 children. She has very little contact with people outside of the Roma community and Romany is the dominant language in the lives of her family. As a young woman she spent some time living in a small village, but relocated to Skopje when her husband died. She now lives in very poor conditions, relying on recycling bottles and charity to survive.
- *Bilal* is an 18-year old man who was born in Serbia but moved with his family to Macedonia seven years ago. His father is self-employed, his mother works in administration and he has one sister. He has enrolled at university to study a degree in Informatics and hopes to work as an IT Manager one day. He mixes in both Roma and Macedonian circles.
- *Dika* is a lady in her late-30s who was born in Kosovo to a Serbian father and Macedonian mother and has 6 brothers and sisters. They moved to Skopje when she was 3 years old and has a son and a daughter, both of whom completed high school and are currently seeking asylum abroad along with her granddaughter. She has a very large extended family and mainly mixes with Roma, but also has a few daily acquaintances who are Macedonian.
- *Django* is a 22-year old man, he was born in Germany whilst his family sought asylum, then returned to Macedonia as a baby. He lives in a very intimate Roma community with his parents and 8 brothers and sisters and is the only member of his family with a regular income, working as a cleaner. He didn't complete school, and was quite recently married to a girl from a village outside of Skopje. They have one baby son.
- *Ergin* is an 18-year old man who lives with 10 other members of his family. He left school at the age of 11 and earns a living recycling waste with his brother, although he once worked for three months as a plasterer for some friends. He

mixes in an almost entirely Roma circle, he has no children but was quite recently married.

- *Enis* is a 76-year old man who lives in difficult conditions with 14 people in a single room. None of his family work and they all rely heavily on charity, also spending their days recycling waste or begging. He once worked in a cigarette factory many years ago and also spent time living in an asylum centre in Germany before his application was refused and he returned to Macedonia.
- *Fifka* is a 75-year old lady who has lived all her life in Skopje. She left school at the age of 10, was married at the age of 17, and although she herself didn't have a working profession, she is very proud of her two brothers who worked in journalism and acting, and her sister who trained in medicine and now lives in Jordan working for the Red Cross. She lives in relatively comfortable conditions, but also benefits from charitable support through some NGO programs.
- *Hassan* is a 42-year old man who has 8 children and has more than 20 people living in his home. He assumes a strong position as the head of his family and his social circle is almost entirely Roma. He left school at the age of 13 and has held a few short-term informal jobs such as labouring for a gardening firm and working as a cleaner. He unsuccessfully sought asylum in Germany many years ago and is planning to return again in the near-future.
- *Ibrahim* is a 75-year old man who has lived all his life in Skopje. At one point in his professional life he held three concurrent jobs, as a courier, a facilities supervisor and an import-export agent. Following this he opened two shops during the 1970s, although he fell on hard times in recent years and now struggles financially.
- *Luca* is a 19-year old man who lives alone with his mother, although he also has a half-brother and a half-sister. He studies Public Relations at university which is possible through access to Roma scholarship funding. He is very proud of his Roma heritage but mixes equally with Roma and Macedonians in his day-to-day life.
- *Marco* is a man in his early 30s and works as a production operator in a large factory. His mother was from Serbia and his father from Kosovo but they moved to Skopje when he was a baby. He left school to work when his father died, but

has aspirations for all three of his own children to finish high-school and attend university. His personal life is almost exclusively lived within the Roma community, but at work he integrates with a largely Macedonian team.

- *Matilda* is a 30-year old lady who is married with three children – two babies and a young girl that attends school. She does not work but her husband is a mechanic and they are financially relatively stable. Her family have all lived in Skopje for several generations and are very close, but she also mixes in daily life with Macedonians.
- *Meri* is a middle-aged lady, she has 6 children and rents a single room with her family in very poor conditions. She lived with her husband in another town in Macedonia but returned to Skopje with her children when they separated. Her children are not all formally registered with the authorities and she struggles to earn a living begging or recycling waste. Many years ago she and her husband sought asylum in Germany, during which time she worked informally in a hotel until she was refused the right to stay.
- *Olovina* is a lady in her late 20s, separated from her husband with 4 children. She has no job and lives in very difficult circumstances, relying heavily on charity. She lives in a predominantly Roma community, but encourages her children to speak both Macedonian and English. She lacks formal documentation for some of her children, and is currently awaiting trial for begging.
- *Selina* is a 24-year old lady, she has 5 children and shares a house with 16 people. She was born and raised in Serbia before marrying at the age of 13 and moving to Macedonia. She originally lived in another large town, Kumanovo, before settling in Skopje 11 years ago. She lives in heavily Roma-centred circles, struggling to earn a living by recycling communal waste and relying on charity.
- *Timbo* is a 19-year old man with a Croatian mother, a Macedonian father and one brother, currently registered to start studying Management at university. He mixes with both Roma and Macedonians and has an open mind to working abroad in the future, with relatives in Spain, the US and Croatia.
- *Vano* is a 67-year old man who is now retired. He was raised with nine brothers and sisters, and following his conscription to the army he qualified as a plumber. He worked for many years for a large firm and when he lost his job he continued

self-employed in the profession. Outside of work he also volunteered to help in his community in the local Commission for Fire and Ecology.

4.4.4 Interview Transcription

Transcriptions were made within 48 hours of the interviews, ensuring behaviours, actions, comments and interpretations could be mapped against the dialogue whilst this was still fresh in the interviewer's mind. Transcribing a full interview is a lengthy process with a one-hour interview taking several hours to transcribe. Halcomb and Davidson (2006: 40) state that "closeness between researchers and the text is critical to the research design and philosophical tenets of the methodology" and recommend verbatim transcription as a beneficial, although not necessarily essential, approach to discourse analysis in grounded theory. This recommendation was taken into account and interviews were transcribed in full. The process itself of copying the content of the interview into a written narrative was not simply an exercise in data collection, but a tool to ensure the direction, style and context of interviews evolved and was adjusted as appropriate. Transcription also offered a very important opportunity to reflect on the approach to the work, an essential step in helping ensure objectivity.

4.5 Data Analysis

The analysis of data was an ongoing process over the course of the interviews, identifying and then reshaping themes and patterns as new information came to light. This in turn helped to provide a degree of direction and structure to future interviews, and to build up theory as the research evolved. Through an iterative process of grouping, or coding, themes emerged that were increasingly more specific and insightful, until a theory was assembled through the analysis of the narrative. LeCompte (2000) provides a logical five-step approach to analysing qualitative interview data, based on the principles of coding raw transcripts to build patterns and structures. This method was applied in this work:

- Step one: *tidying up the data*. The first step of data analysis was to make sure that the outputs generated from the interviews are orderly and accessible to enable a preliminary assessment of the body of work.

- Step two: *finding items or 'units of analysis'*. This required repeated reading through, or sifting transcriptions to find key themes or fields of text of particular relevance. Leading indicators were applied to identify items such as 'frequency of inclusion', 'common omissions', or 'open declaration'.
- Step three: *creating stable sets of items*. By comparing and contrasting the identified items, these were grouped as 'things that go together' such as items that were alike, items that differed slightly and may require a re-analysis or sense check, and items that differ greatly and potentially negate each other. In this stage taxonomies were applied to help the grouping using classifications from common themes drawn from the theory.
- Step four: *creating patterns*. Patterns were made up of taxonomies that appeared to be related or fit together in meaningful ways. LeCompte likens this to linking sections of a jigsaw puzzle, such as all the sections of sky, or land, so that the whole image starts to merge. Once patterns emerged, the most important ones were identified, which in turn started to provide a coherent explanation of the phenomena being studied.
- Step five: *assembling structures*. Groups of patterns were assembled into structures. Together these formed an overall description of the issue under investigation and helped support theories explaining what has been seen.

4.6 Limitations of the Research Methodology

The complexity of the philosophical debates that surround social science means that the research process itself is inevitably imperfect, something Bechofer and Paterson (2000: 99) conclude by stating that "social science will always contain a degree of compromise". Much credibility rests on the methods used, which in turn are open to be challenged and contested through the epistemological position the researcher assumes. The use of a semi-structured, qualitative interview process has been justified earlier in this chapter, and limitations of the process such as the skill of the interviewer, the willingness to participate and the use of translators have been acknowledged and addressed through the research design.

One particularly important aspect of both grounded theory and a standpoint methodology is the need for objectivity when listening to views and building theory around these, and in this work there are opportunities for this to be compromised that warrant further discussion. The importance of building relationships in order for the interview process to be constructive is balanced by the dangers of over-familiarity, and Bechofer and Paterson (2000: 99) explain the need for middle-ground claiming it can become “surprisingly easy in an interview to hear what one wishes to hear, or what one believes it is likely one will hear”. The relationship with the participant is important, but interviewers are often expected to be naïve as it adds authenticity to the interest, it encourages people to speak up without threat of rebuke, and it helps people to feel they are masters of their subject. Interviews can be subject to diminishing returns as the process progresses and the interviewer becomes better known to the interviewees, and also begins to have a greater grasp of the subject being researched. This point can extend beyond any potential influence over the participants and erode the principles of objectivity that are so important in grounded theory. In this regard, the gatekeeper-translator played a helpful role by symbolically serving as a reminder of the ethnic differences between the interviewer and the interviewees. The use of a semi-structured process also ensured no two interviews had identical content and the interviewer was not able to slip into complacency with the subject matter. By the same token, roughly one-hour interviews were found to offer a comfortable medium in terms of being long enough to develop the relationship process without this extending into over-familiarity. The benefit of these relatively short interviews however is also something of contention, as it might be argued that these do not offer enough time to unpeel complex subjects in minutiae. The need for this however was felt to be unnecessary and beyond the relatively broad, exploratory scope of this project. It is acknowledged though that future work that could seek to expand on specific subjects might benefit from a longer, more detailed ethnographic type of study to offer a deeper, more rigorous level of authority and understanding.

The use of a single social centre for the research may also be considered a limiting factor in the applicability of the research findings due to the potential to accumulate people from a focused catchment area, too many like-minded individuals, or people that fall

under a similar type of influence and thinking. Simply asking if participants knew each other or had much in common would clearly be a breach of the confidentiality of the process, but attempts were nevertheless made during the candidate selection process to try and understand a little about the person's background through basic criteria such as the potential candidates' age, gender, area of residence, socio-economic background and whether or not they had previous ties with the social centre. From this, a conscious attempt was made to try and reach out to different areas of the community to balance representation. Another possible limitation in using the same social centre is the potential for a common social desirability bias – a word-of-mouth process conveying what the interviewer 'wants to hear' ahead of any interviews. To avoid this, confidentiality on the part of the researcher was applied at all times, interviews were staggered over several months and participants were approached at relatively short notice when asked to take part, something that offered little time to over-prepare any answers.

4.7 Ethical Considerations

By its very nature, the human dimension of social research brings with it a number of unavoidable ethical considerations that need to form an integral part of the research design. The guidelines for ethical social research laid out by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) within the UK states "research involving primary data collection will always raise issues of ethics that must be addressed" (ESRC, 2012: 3) and lays out a framework for this underpinned by principles of transparency, integrity, confidentiality and informed, voluntary consent. Macedonia itself does not have its own codes for research ethics (Risteski, 2007) and so adherence to the ESRC guidelines was the approach taken in this project. One of the fundamental underpinnings of the approval to proceed to field research at the University of Leicester is a rigorous vetting process of the ethical approach to the work, and the proposal for this project was subject to a number of iterative exchanges and challenges prior to being approved. The main ethical points are considered in this section.

A theme that emerges in literature on the Roma is a general suspicion and resistance to participation in research (Grönfors, 1982, Munté *et al.*, 2011) and for this reason there

was a modest incentive for people to take part. Research in which the respondents fail to provide sincere responses significantly compromises the validity of the work (Deniz and Çitak, 2010) and every effort was made to ensure that the incentive does not become the emphasis for people taking part. Wendler *et al.* (2002) categorise four different types of participation payments – reimbursements, compensation, appreciation and incentivisation – and state that these are increasingly being used in research. Each type of payment generates a distinctly different set of considerations but is acceptable if the issues surrounding them are planned correctly in the research design. In this study, a bag of domestic products of a modest value was offered in appreciation and gratitude for the time and resource spent on participation. This was selected after discussion with members of the Roma community to ensure that this was culturally appropriate, materially insignificant and represented a token of gratitude rather than a driving reason for participation. Potential interviewees were also informed at the start of the process that this gift would be offered even if they chose not to participate or withdrew during the process. The use of the facilities and the support in identifying participants was provided on goodwill on the principle that the research has good intentions and ultimately seeks to improve understanding of the Roma community to the wider world. Given the specific skills required from the gatekeeper-translator, along with the time contribution and commitment to the project, it was considered reasonable for this role to be paid for the service and this was budgeted into the project. A good full-time first-job monthly salary for a university graduate in Macedonia is typically of the order of €250 and this figure, adjusted on a pro-rata basis to reflect the time spent on the work was considered a realistic and justifiable expense.

Informed consent is a fundamental part of social research, ensuring the participants are aware of the objective of the work, the way the research will be conducted, and the use of the data. With such low levels of formal education, presenting and explaining the themes of the research and the notion of doctoral study in a meaningful way to the interviewees was a challenge that was addressed in the stages of ethical approval. The process of selecting a translator with an academic background, someone who understands the research process but also identifies with life within the Roma

community offered a bridge to any conceptual gap and enabled this to be explained as a theoretically accessible and meaningful concept. An informed consent form was made available in both Romany and Macedonian language (see Appendix 2 for English language translation of the informed consent form) and in cases where participants were illiterate, the informed consent process was conducted verbally and recorded as a substitute for a signed written document.

The role and input of the researcher also had the potential to impact on another issue reflecting the difficult and potentially emotive subject matter, something that carries a concern about the possibility of participant 'social desirability bias', or the potential for participants to "present themselves favourably with respect to the current norms and standards" (Zerbe and Paulhus, 1987: 250). Here not only the researcher-researched relationship is important, but also the researcher-translator relationship and a trust that the tone and context of the process is delivered with the required subtlety to avoid any unnecessary stigma whilst addressing the problem. For this reason, training material was prepared covering core themes, namely an overview of the project, ethics in social research (based on the six principles published by the ESRC), the specific role and inputs of the gatekeeper-translator, and the interview process itself. A substantial time was spent explaining these points, and at the end of this training a 'code of conduct' pledge was signed by both researcher and gatekeeper-translator outlining the reciprocal ethical commitment to the process (see Appendix 3). The issue of bias however leads to a further consideration, this time to the role of the researcher and the desire to retain impartiality throughout the course of the research. Authors such as Marx (2001) have shown that objectivity can be eroded through positional power and such impartiality is inevitably lost through the researcher's relations with both the research subject and the wider world. The subject of the study was frequently linked to the emotive themes of social wanting and poverty, and with participants inevitably holding a different perspective on life's outcomes to those of the researcher, it was also important that this work remains free from any ethical judgements. This was something that was taken into consideration constantly through the process of reflection and review during interview transcription that followed shortly after each interview. This links heavily to Sosulki's standpoint method (Sosulki, 2009) laid out in section 4.2, in which reflection and

analysis are an integral part of the research process to ensure appropriate representation of the participants.

Protection of all participants, both in physical and emotional terms, was also an important aspect of the ethical consideration for the work. A risk assessment outlining the risks, likelihood, impact and mitigating actions was compiled and submitted for ethical approval prior to the work (see Appendix 4). One aspect of note that emerged during the work was the potential for emotional distress as participants explained their difficult life circumstances. Although this information was willingly volunteered, it was clearly upsetting for some people who would cry as they spoke of their problems. In these cases, the subject matter was always treated respectfully, and interviewees were given time and space to gather themselves with the opportunity to change subjects or step out of the interview process if they wished. Finally, guarantees of anonymity were offered to all participants through the use of pseudonyms, password-protected data storage, and adherence to the University of Leicester's policy on research data that states "confidential information must be destroyed and disposed of securely once it is no longer required" in this case at the award of the doctorate degree or the end of studies if the degree is not completed (University of Leicester, 2016: section 5.5). The University also encourages collaboration and resource sharing between institutions and for this reason, a sanitised version of the research data will be offered to the UK Data Service (formerly the ESRC data archive).

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, the frequent failure of social research to provide an accurate voice for marginalised groups was identified, and the emphasis that this study places on accurately representing social reality for the participants. The use of a semi-structured interview process to achieve this was explained, based on principles of judgement-free evaluation and a continuous reflection on the part of the researcher to acknowledge and accommodate the power balance in the research process. Finally, there are ethical issues that surround social research within marginalised communities and the ways in which this work has sought to address these was presented, something of absolute importance in the research process.

Chapter 5. Research Findings: Social Identity for the Roma of Shuto Orizari

5.1 Introduction

The research question that this chapter seeks to address is *‘How important is ethnic identity to the Roma in Shuto Orizari, and how is this constructed?’*. Understanding what it means for a person to be Roma, and how they identify with their wider ethnic group is a complex and often subtle process. Simply asking someone ‘how Roma do you feel?’ or ‘how strongly do you connect with Romany culture?’ is clearly pointless, lacking in depth, context, and without any clear standard against which it can be compared. Instead, the semi-structured interviews provided a rich diversity of responses and opinions, views that on face value may appear independent and disconnected but in effect offered layers of detail to provide a more complete understanding of the subject. In some of the interviews the dialogue led to a specific question: whether the interviewee considered themselves to be primarily Roma or Macedonian. This insightful information will be considered in more detail in the section on acculturation, but it should be emphasised that this comes complementary to, rather than at the expense of, their degree of Roma identity. Instead, the views across a spectrum of subjects offer a much more sophisticated window into understanding Roma identity and its construction, and this is explored in more detail below. The use of Romany language, attitudes to gender and economic hardship were themes that arose time and again as strong ethnic markers, subjects that provide a common association and set the Roma apart from the wider society. Views on these subjects varied, and helped understand not only the aspects of commonality in an individual’s Roma identity, but also degrees of divergence. Nevertheless, there is also clearly a collective sense of being Roma, and the strength of this identity also creates a tendency to self-associate as being ‘more Roma’ than other Roma groups.

5.2 Language

Perhaps the most common ethnic marker that emerged over the course of the interviews was the use of Romany language, something that was spoken by all the interview participants. Enis, for example, explains that his family only speak Romany at home and although they all know how to speak Macedonian, this isn’t something they

need to do particularly often. Alana echoes a similar sentiment. Telling how she grew up in a family that only spoke Romany, she describes how she learnt Macedonian through the necessity of living as a child in a Macedonian community in a village near the town of Tetovo. She now has seven children and whereas the eldest only speaks Romany, the other six have been brought up to also speak Macedonian. This however is indicated as a social necessity rather than a lifestyle choice, as we are told that all of the children have married Roma partners:

“We all speak Romany. When there’s a need to speak Macedonian we do so, but otherwise we just speak Romany.” (Alana)

Other interviewees from similar social positions also emphasise the importance of Romany language, but appear more receptive to using Macedonian in day-to-day situations. Dika, for example, describes her predominantly Roma social circle, but takes a slightly more integrated view towards the Macedonian community and their language, telling us:

“We have Macedonian friends and Roma.... the primary language is Romany but if we find ourselves with Macedonians we’ll speak Macedonian.” (Dika)

Barth (1969) acknowledges the importance of commonality in the markers of ethnic identity and speaking Romany language certainly offers this. All the interviewees were comfortable speaking Romany in their day-to-day lives and in Shuto Orizari this is the norm. Speaking Romany establishes an ethnic boundary, offering exclusive entry to a particular club. Someone cannot pretend to speak the language; it takes time to learn. Its applications outside of Roma circles are also limited. To that end, it not only requires practice, it requires commitment, and those who speak Romany are almost always going to be Roma. The ubiquity of this practice in some ways helps set a baseline for Roma identity, but in itself does little to act as a differentiator. It is perhaps therefore not so much *whether* people speak Romany, but rather *how* people choose to do so. In many cases the use of the language was dominant and for a few this seems the only known means of verbal communication. For others however, Romany is just one aspect of social interaction, a complimentary equal to the Macedonian language.

Meri, for example, tells of a more integrated approach regarding the use of Romany. Explaining a very similar experience to Alana, living in the town of Prilep in a community that only spoke Macedonian, it was still clear that Romany is the native language of the family. Unlike Alana however, she now actively encourages her children to integrate with and speak other languages, not just Macedonian but also Turkish which she has learnt from her mother and voluntarily passed down to her children. Rather than suggest however that this open attitude to speaking other languages compromises her Roma identity, she clearly feels a very strong connection to her heritage culture as she describes traditional dress, cuisine and wedding traditions with an enthusiasm that surpassed many of the other interviewees.

Marco has a distinctly different social position in his family life and also described a relatively open approach to languages. Working in a large company he integrates with non-Roma on a daily basis and encourages his children attending high-school to take a more cosmopolitan outlook on life. With this set of circumstances and values one might be forgiven for thinking Marco's personal and communal Roma identity would be more dilute, and that he would connect less with the culture of his immediate surroundings, yet nothing could be further from the truth. As a lifelong resident of Shuto Orizari, he talks with pride about the evolution of the area since his youth, and describes the degrees of Roma influence in the community over this time. He makes it clear that Romany is the only language spoken at home and openly talks of his preference for his children to marry Roma partners. Perhaps as a consequence of mixing more with non-Roma than many of the other interviewees, Marco also emphasises the point that being Roma shouldn't be hidden:

"I'm very proud that I'm Roma, for example, at work there was a guy that is Roma and had studied at the (university) faculty and didn't want to say that he's Roma in front of the Macedonians. I spoke to him and told him that if someone respects you, he'll respect you whether you're Roma or not, so you should be proud of your ethnic background." (Marco)

This point is congruent with Luca, who, like Marco, mixes a lot with non-Roma and was happy conducting the interview in Macedonian, despite declaring his first language as

'definitely Romany'. He studies public relations at university and the fact he has an ethnic Macedonian girlfriend goes some way to demonstrate his outward reach. Nevertheless, he too retains a fiercely strong Roma identity:

"I'm very proud, whenever I go anywhere I declare myself as Roma. If there's anyone around that speaks Romany, I always speak it with them..... I'm proud that I'm Roma and I would say it loud and freely". (Luca)

These differing views on the use of language, whether through a practical daily requirement or simply a desire to connect more to the wider community, start to pick up a point that Barth identifies as a particularly fundamental dimension in ethnic identity formation. Commonality is clearly important, but defining and maintaining the boundaries through differences is critical. If Romany language offers a common entry point, then the different ways in which non-Romany languages are spoken will start to individuate differences, creating unique boundaries between Roma and the wider world. This will be on a personal, family, and much broader societal level and define both the individual and interactive orders that Jenkins speaks about. Language is a communal process; it provides a connection to the group but the linguistics of the spoken word provide the unique personal interpretation. Unable to speak Macedonian, for example, Alana's eldest daughter may internalise her world through a purely Romany frame of reference. Substantial parts of Luca's life on the other hand are engaged and interpreted through Macedonian language. On one level meanings and contexts will be ascribed, experienced and absorbed, but language is also an outwardly-reaching sense of expression, a choice of how to display a symbolic belonging. Luca may openly speak Romany in the presence of others, or he may decline to do so completely in the presence of his university peers or parents of his partner. How he and others choose to apply this distinctly Roma marker, will be how he outwardly chooses to be interpreted by the wider group.

5.3 The Importance of Gender

Language is applied as an ethnic marker that reaches out to both the nominal and virtual aspects of social identity. The internalisation of the connotation and meaning is personal and shapes the deep-rooted dimension of the individual. Language however is

also external, it is articulated and heard. Although not a physical or visible concept, it has a distinctly tangible, social aspect and how it is used can offer an articulation of the superficial, nominal identity. Another ethnic marker that emerged very regularly over the interviews, one that perhaps carries less outward expression but certainly holds strong, intimate personal connections was that of gender roles and divisions within society. Some of the dialogue touched on areas of common debates within general society, such as male and female roles in the labour market, and there was no clear pattern that emerged. On one hand Marco lamented the loss of what he sees as the traditional male breadwinner model, where men go to work and women remain at home to keep the house and raise children. On the other hand, however, Fifka, at 75 years old, clearly held a different view. Whilst regretting not working herself, she looks back with great pride at the careers of both her two brothers and two sisters. Bilal too stated that both his mother and father worked for a living.

The availability of work across the interview panel was quite rare however, and the need to generate revenue of any kind under very difficult social conditions may be a contributing factor to the relatively indiscriminate views on gender contribution. Hassan acknowledged this, commenting on the scarcity of work he added that if he could not find work he would sometimes help his wife if she could find a job working as a cleaner. In several cases interviewees would talk of earning some kind of modest income by trawling public waste bins to recycle plastic bottles or other discarded items. Again, this followed no set pattern. Ergin for example draws the distinction that he and his younger brothers (rather than his sisters) would go and recycle, Alana and Enis on the other hand would share this practice with their partners.

A much more telling insight into the gendered roles and positions within the community can be seen in the discourse surrounding marriage. Hassan, who perhaps more than any other interviewee held family at the heart of his dialogue, offers his thoughts on this. The importance of having his children close to him was clearly apparent and his affection came across both warmly and overtly. Nevertheless, an important distinction was drawn between the different expectations he holds for his sons and his daughters:

"Many of my sons live with me, the place of a son is with his father.... it's very important for the family to stay together." (Hassan)

Gender roles were clearly a central part of the family structure, and building on this point he proceeds to talk about becoming a grandfather again:

"I want a boy, he stays at home. For a girl it's difficult because you don't know what destiny she'll have, with which family. It's more difficult for a girl." (Hassan)

This telling view was a theme that would emerge a number of times in different forms, and identifies a subject that clearly occupies an important social debate in the family lives of the Roma community. Of particular social importance is not so much how a girl will contribute to society, but the *destiny* she will take. How and when a girl will marry, and the family with which she will ultimately live were consuming subjects that were talked about relatively openly, and with opposing views.

The theme of juvenile brides emerged on several occasions. Both Ergin and Django mentioned or indicated that their wives were very young, at thirteen and fourteen years old respectively. Selina also spoke of this, explaining how she was married as a virgin, also at the age of thirteen. Whilst pointing out that some mothers had been given a talk about how this is illegal and were now reluctant to do this, she nevertheless claimed that this is still a relatively common practice in Shuto Orizari today. Alana, too was married at the same age and explains how there was no problem in her case, speaking with fondness on the issue as she described her late husband. She did express concern about this practice for her own young daughter however, saying:

"I understand the problem, when you love someone and you want to be with him, but it is much better for young girls to get married at the age of eighteen or nineteen years because they will have the chance to go out and see life from a different perspective....nearby (where she lives) the girls get married pretty early at the age of thirteen, but maybe in other areas of Shuto Orizari the girls don't get married so early. When I bring my daughter here I sometimes see some of the girls at the age of thirteen or fourteen, not at

school but they come by here with their boyfriends. They are very young to have boyfriends, because they don't know how to take care of them."
(Alana)

Although married at seventeen years old, Olovina articulated her own views on this, acknowledging that girls within the community often get married at a young age. Speaking in very negative terms about the practice, she states:

"I want a good education for my children because I don't want them to get married too early like many of the children that live here, I want the best for them and not to get married now, but later on.....Fourteen or fifteen years old they get married. My daughter that goes to school is in fifth grade now and I want her to finish primary and then go to high school... If she gets married at fourteen or fifteen years old, she'll have a baby and have bad life conditions. Everything depends on the parents. If the parents raise their child properly, they'll act properly, but if not they'll be in bad company and do bad things and maybe get married earlier." (Olovina)

Given the age at which these marriages take place, a logical, if unstated conclusion would be that these are conducted via informal institutions. Hassan indirectly supports this view by describing in relative transactional terms his son's first and second marriages:

"He was married once and we had problems with the wife's family because he didn't have a job and her parents came to the house. They came to the house and said they're going to take their daughter home because he doesn't have a job. Then we heard about this girl, went there and talked to the girl's family, and then they were married for a second time....It was quite a quick process, her (the first wife's) parents came to our house and took her home. After a while we found out that she had got married again, and that's why we got a second wife, because we found out that she had got married."
(Hassan)

He also identifies another social theme surrounding marriages, when stating how the wife of another of his sons 'escaped' from her family in Kosovo. The concept of 'escaping' involves a girl leaving home to marry without the consent of her family, with a socially-important emphasis on the girl's virginity. Bilal explains this through personal family experience:

"My sister also escaped..... to a family that isn't very rich. She fell in love with him and was with him for two years in a relationship and my father didn't want them to get married.... he said 'please don't go there, they're not good for you, they don't have education, don't have a job, you can't live there'. She was also working, my sister, and he'd say 'you're different from them, don't go there, go somewhere else where you'll have a better life'.... and she still wanted to go to live with him and my father didn't allow it. That's why we say 'escaped'. She left our home without saying she's going to live with him, she took her stuff without us even knowing and went there to him. She lost her virginity, they called us and said 'your daughter lost her virginity, now she's living with us'. So, she escaped." (Bilal)

Along similar lines, Alana states that all her daughters escaped, describing one particular case:

"My daughter escaped. I was thinking that she went to sleep at a friend of hers, but at midnight her (now) husband's parents came to our house and told us that my daughter escaped. So I went there to ask if she would come home, but she wouldn't so I left her there." (Alana)

The subject of marrying young was generally discussed without taboo, or expressed with generally moderate negative views. In the cases where the notion of 'escaping' was discussed however, the dialogue assumed much more personal, negative tones. Luca explained this point. Despite having a non-Roma girlfriend and being generally unconcerned about the ethnicity of his partner, he describes the importance of a girl's virginity within the Roma community:

“We as Roma don’t have a problem that she’s Macedonian or some other religion, but the problem is whether the girl is a virgin or not. It’s a tradition and it’s a custom so we respect that. During the wedding, on one of the days the groom is supposed to sleep with the bride, there are cases when some of the guys don’t take a girl that is a virgin, but if you don’t take a girl that is a virgin, it’s shameful and bad for the pride of your family.” (Luca)

Finally, Bilal provides a useful end-point to this theme. As the most outspoken critic of Roma traditions, he frequently expressed negative opinions of these practices and talked about how he feels they’re gradually dying out:

“Roma people have their traditions for everything. The woman needs to be a virgin, if she isn’t a virgin you can’t take her to be your wife. The family won’t accept it.... It does happen, but not in the past. Like I said, Roma people are now educated more....a few years back, like ten years back, parents married their children at fifteen years old or even twelve or thirteen years. And now because they’re educating themselves they don’t get married before eighteen years.” (Bilal)

These patriarchal issues surrounding marriage and gender-related social roles appear stark when held against the general values widely held within a contemporary Western culture. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) in particular offers an internationally recognised baseline for the acceptable treatment of children and includes extremely important aspects of life that are infringed through juvenile marriage, such as the protection of a child’s identity, respect of a child’s views and sexual abuse. This review however acknowledges the social complexity surrounding these points, their inclusion is not aimed at identifying right or wrong, or striking a comparative judgement between social values. Oetting and Donnermeyer’s (1998) theories on socialization focus on ‘prosocial’ and ‘deviant’ choices, something that can be boiled down in general terms to acceptable and unacceptable social practices. It is important to make a distinction here that this view is at odds with the nature of this study, in which the purpose of social representation is to provide a judgement-free voice for the participants. The inclusion of such potentially

emotive themes however is important for other reasons. In seeking to understand the individual and collective identities created within the community, it is essential to understand where the social issues sit in relation to a broadly-understood reference point. By seeing the relative distance between these themes that are important to the Roma, and the different themes that fill the space within the lives of the wider Macedonian population, we can start to understand the relative distance that could exist between the different social identities of the two ethnic groups.

Of course this is not just a simple case of 'them-and-us', and Barth's view on differences, or rather *relative differences* once again becomes important. The boundaries of an individual's ethnic identity are not homogenous, and we see this in the diversity of opinions. Selina was married at thirteen, Olovina however frowns on this. Bilal decries the practice of juvenile brides, but at the same time speaks of the importance he places on virginity. As with languages, the definition of these ethnic boundaries also shift over time and where Alana was happily married at thirteen years old, the thought of this practice with her own daughter now worries her.

These themes are consequential; they are very important in the structure of a society. The consequences of an individual's opinions can be far-reaching, they carry society-wide values of acceptance or rejection, approval or shame. How a person views these, lives these, and internalises these will have a profound impact on who they are. They are however, considered to be largely Roma activities, generally not practiced by wider society. Whether these are embraced or discarded, they nevertheless carry a dimension of collective association. Bilal makes it very clear he does not agree with the practice of juvenile brides, yet when he explains this his distain is aimed at the way these activities represent the Roma, 'his people'. He may personally reject the practice itself, but he cannot fully distance himself from this. Selina's experience also has collective elements. Rather than describe how she was told about the legal implications of young marriages, she explains how 'we', the similar, collective group of Roma mothers, were given a talk. These points are acknowledged rather than contested, there is an acceptance of their Roma association. These specific attitudes and practices towards gender appear to be an accepted component of the collective interactive identity order, both in terms of

those non-Roma on the outside looking in at the Roma as a category, and being Roma on the inside looking out at the world as a group.

5.4 Economic Hardship

A third aspect of the narratives that emerged with consistent regularity as a theme apart from the mainstream Macedonian society was that of economic hardship. Shuto Orizari, like many Roma communities across Europe, suffers from poor socio-economic conditions and it is impossible to ignore the substantial sections of society living in conditions of poverty. With this in mind, the subject of financial hardship volunteered itself many times during the interview process, proving itself to be an impossible obstacle to bypass. Several of the interview participants spoke of having to undertake 'antisocial work' at some point in their lives. This most typically took the form of collecting plastic bottles from the large communal waste bins found at the roadside on many street corners. Earning 6 denars (€0.10) per kilo of plastic collected, this very publically-visible work is both unhygienic and physically demanding, requiring collectors to walk with their makeshift trolleys many miles per day. One step below recycling is simply foraging through waste for odd items that can be sold or reused. Finally, begging is the most desperate form of income generation, and something in Macedonia that can result in prosecution and a jail sentence.

This is without question a particularly difficult subject in the lives of those interviewed, yet taking the time to explain this experience was clearly important to those involved. The theme was often raised in the early stages of the interview and spoken about in depth, yet never with emotional detachment. Heads would invariably drop, eye contact would be lost, and in many cases the interviewee would cry. Alana explains how her life deteriorated, and she was forced to beg. Whilst living in poverty in Yankovce, a small village on the edge of Skopje, life was difficult but manageable with the help of neighbours. Following the conflict between Macedonians and ethnic Albanians in 2001 however she was forced to move back to Shuto Orizari where her circumstances got worse:

"I was raised with good habits, and I also raised my children with good habits. For example, they shouldn't harm other people, they should keep

good company, nice friends... When I moved back to Shuto Orizari I started to beg because I needed to buy food for my children and also pay for the rented house. I was sent to jail for begging..... my smallest daughter, she was hit by everyone, they said 'go away from here, you are poor and we don't want you near us'." (Alana)

She continued that whilst she no-longer begs, she is forced to recycle bottles to earn a living:

"I go down one street with my daughter, and my husband goes down another street. Once an Albanian pulled a gun on my husband, because he was picking bottles from the trash.... When they see Roma people they treat them very badly because they go through the trash." (Alana)

Hassan lives in more comfortable relative circumstances, but acknowledges that if he is without work and has no income for a long time, he would also recycle bottles. Describing through tears how he feels when he has to go out and search through the waste, he states:

"I don't feel good going through the trash looking for things to sell. It's not good for me, for my family and relatives to see this and ask 'what are you doing here?'. I think in the future it will be worse. I feel really ashamed to go through the trash and get plastic bottles, but also it's very difficult for my sons because people see them and tell them 'what is your father doing? It's shameful to do that'. They don't feel comfortable at all." (Hassan)

Enis has a large family and together they sometimes beg, sometimes collect bottles. Olovina talks of the fears for her children as she shortly faces a jail term for begging. Meri dedicates a substantial part of her interview towards explaining her difficult personal circumstances, connecting with a similar theme to Alana:

"When I started to go through the trash to recycle plastic bottles I had problems with my husband. He was in jail for four or five months, and I had to raise my children alone. I'm ashamed, firstly to have to go begging, but

also because the police don't allow begging in the street. That's why I started to go through the trash." (Meri)

Poverty is not a trivial matter, nor is it a lifestyle choice. The consequences of this are all too real and this can be seen by the hard, personal choices facing interviewees: whether to buy medicine or feed your family meat, whether to buy shoes for your child or a coat, whether to pay a bill or live without electricity. As interviewees would cry, or produce pieces of paper to try and demonstrate their hopelessness, the subject would unfold with expressions of shame, sorrow or regret. Yet each personal circumstance was unique, and once again the depth of the meaning, interpretation and internal definition was different for everyone. The level and scope of extreme poverty however in Shuto Orizari is primarily a Roma concern. Like the specific attitudes to gender, the connection of poverty to this section of the community is undeniable. But poverty also differs to the other ethnic markers, in one specific way: it is universally undesirable. Individuals will try by all means to distance themselves from being poor and seek more comfortable conditions. Language and views on gender may be unconsciously transient, but poverty is the one ethnic trait that people seek to actively change over time, always for the better, although sometimes it results for the worst. The extent of the economic hardship in Shuto Orizari is what Cuthrell (2009) terms *absolute poverty*. It is deeply entrenched, all-consuming and long-term. Nevertheless, even to this degree, it can still be a temporal phenomenon and this connects closely to Barth's view that ethnic markers are never absolute, they vary over time and shape identity in different ways over the course of a person's life. Alana's situation was once manageable, but conditions following the conflict rapidly deteriorated. Ibrahim was very comfortable during his working life, but he now struggles to live on a state pension. Bilal's father was unemployed but the family's situation improved once he moved and found work.

Poverty also supports Barth's views on the materiality of ethnic identity, a notion that material resources, or in the case a clear lack of, lead people towards a lifestyle that shapes and reinforces the boundaries and differences with the wider society. For the poorest of interviewees this is clear not only in their material possessions, but in the visible practices that they carry out to support an existence. Recycling bottles for waste bins or begging at traffic lights is again unique to the Roma. This work is hard, frequently

dangerous, demeaning and the sense of this was never lost in the discussions. People spoke of the wider community's view that this is 'Roma-work', and whilst it was absolutely clear no-one thought it was acceptable to earn a living this way, all who took part acknowledged in one way or another that it was only the Roma that undertook these activities.

Clearly some of the interviewees had never participated in this kind of work, nor do they live in poverty, and it would be misleading to suggest otherwise. Nevertheless, the prominence of this subject is pervasive and it was touched upon in some form or another in all the discussions. Matilda spoke of her displeasure when she hears people criticise the Roma for begging. Luca describes his sorrow at the negative stereotypes this situation creates. With relative financial stability compared to some of the interviewees, Marco would be unlikely to ever need to beg, but as a proud Roma he is nonetheless not detached from the process:

"When I see children begging I want to help them, maybe I'll give them money, but sometimes I think 'if I give him now, he will adapt to that and will say 'I got money today, so I'll also get money tomorrow' and it will become a habit.'" (Marco)

Prieto-Flores (2009) challenges a common view that the strength of Roma ethnic identity is associated with economic prosperity, and individuals are prone to distance themselves as they associate with traditionally 'non-Roma' facets such as formal education and work. One of the arguments that the writer challenges is the notion that Roma identity is a reactive ethnicity to poor conditions, something that softens through progressive social mobility. In Shuto Orizari this is certainly not the case, and Roma identity is strong at all levels. There is however a dimension to this identity that is impossible to decouple from economic hardship, and although this may weaken as an individual's status improves, is nevertheless impossible to overcome. Matilda, Luca and Marco may not live in poverty, but clearly they live *with* poverty. This addresses an important aspect of financial hardship that makes a collective connection an unavoidable part of being Roma: extreme poverty is very visible. Accommodation is low quality, clothes are visibly old and tatty, where access to water and sanitary products is

difficult, personal hygiene suffers. These indicators are labels to the wider world, offering a superficial aspect of what it means to people to be Roma. For the Roma themselves however, they also provide a common connection, a visible link to each other that people are unable to completely remove themselves from, whatever their circumstances.

5.5 Strength of Association

The strong Roma identity within the community of Shuto Orizari is pervasive, both on an individual level, and as a community. For some, practices and traditions that run counter to more broadly held views of a healthy society are a matter-of-fact way of life. Whilst neither excessively promoted nor overtly decried, they form part of an accepted way of living. For others, a different personal association with Roma culture is made, in which heritage is important, but so too is a balance with wider contemporary social values. Where all these views differ from individual to individual, the strength of connection to the Roma community is undeniable. Yet Shuto Orizari is not the only Roma community in Macedonia, and many of the interview participants spoke of having family living elsewhere. Does then this ethnic identity transcend the Roma of Skopje, or is this uniquely located within the community of Shuto Orizari?

Bilal opens an insightful window on this theme. Originally from a small town in Serbia, he moved to Skopje seven years ago for his father's work and has first-hand experiences in different communities:

“When I came here from Serbia, right? It was really, really difficult. I was like, ‘Oh my God, where am I?’ It’s like a jungle, people are, like, way different. It’s the other side of the world, like Africa, you know? (laughs) I couldn’t live, I mean I couldn’t live here. But you get used to it, I mean you get friends, you go to school, you meet people and you simply have to live here. It’s a better life, that’s enough.” (Bilal)

He talks about speaking Serbian as the primary language at home, but upon moving to Macedonia describes the need to learn Macedonian language, both for his studies but also to communicate with non-Roma friends. Once again however, this relatively

outward looking approach does not come at the expense of the strength of his Roma identity. He proceeds to identify the relative importance of marrying an ethnic Roma girl, and the importance to him of learning Romany.

“The Roma language in Serbia where I lived, where there were little communities of maybe 1,000 people and they spoke with each other wasn’t like here, it was like a different language.... And when I came here and spoke my Romany from Serbia they were laughing at me, but you learn here.”
(Bilal)

Luca also provides an outward-looking view on other Roma, talking about similarities and concerns with other Roma communities in the Macedonian towns of Prilep and Bitola:

“The weddings are the same in Prilep as here, the music is the same, they can understand the Roma songs but they don’t speak the language.” (Luca)

This point of linguistic differentiation is an important distinction to Luca, and he continues in disappointed tones:

“In Prilep the Roma speak only Macedonian. They don’t speak the Roma language, only Macedonian and Turkish. They are the same Roma but I don’t respect them much because they haven’t done their best to learn the Roma language. Here in Skopje the Roma people speak Romany. I’m not afraid (for the erosion of Roma culture) for the people who live in Skopje, but for the people who live elsewhere like Bitola and Prilep.” (Luca)

Marco doesn’t criticise other Roma living outside of Skopje, but he does draw a distinction between their relative vulnerability compared to those living in Shuto Orizari, stating:

“It helps a lot (living in Shuto Orizari), it is really helpful because we are settled which is not the case with the Roma that live in Prilip, in Veles or in Bitola, because they are Roma but the government and the municipality can

say 'OK, they're Roma, we'll move them to some other part of the town'."
(Marco)

Other Roma outside Macedonia are also acknowledged, and Marco continues with a point about his 'less-Roma' cousin that left Macedonia to live in Germany:

"My cousin lives in Berlin, and now he gets a pension from there but he speaks Macedonian. When you see him you can't tell he's Roma." (Marco)

Foreign family members living abroad fed into the theme of overseas Roma communities from time to time, but this was never engaged as a theme of any great interest or connection. Dika, whose son now lives in Germany spoke about this, giving a view on the dilution of Roma culture in Europe, something less of a problem in Shuto Orizari due to the concentration of the Roma population:

"It's a bit scary, as generations go by and move to other countries the traditions can be forgotten. Not many things are the same (with German Roma), also in other countries. It's not like here..... here Shuto Orizari is the biggest Roma municipality in Europe, in other European towns it's more widespread." (Dika)

Timbo has no direct connections with Roma from other countries, but explains his thoughts on other Roma living overseas:

"We (the Roma) are widespread all over the world. I think that generally we are similar, but when it comes to the traditions, customs and language, there are differences. I don't know that for certain, but I can feel it." (Timbo)

Luca too is based in Skopje and has no family or relatives living abroad. He touches on the same theme, articulating a distance between his own community and the Roma of France and Germany he states:

"If they were born there, and also their parents, they would have the mentality of the French people. But if they were born here and moved there for a better life they would have the mentality from here. In Romania it's

different (to here), there are many Roma people but the culture's not the same.” (Luca)

These views go some way to indicate a strength of commonality between the residents of Shuto Orizari. ‘Being Roma’ is clearly not a definitive state, it means something different to everyone. ‘Being Roma from Shuto Orizari’ however suggests a particular sense of authenticity that residents perhaps feel transcends other Roma communities, an application of Jenkin’s self-association with a group rather than a category, whose boundaries do not necessarily extend beyond their own people. From time to time there was mention of lack of a homeland, and an acknowledgement of a wider European Roma diaspora, but this was fleeting and lacked the sense of engagement of other subject matter. The anchor within the community of Shuto Orizari was clear however, and it was with great pride that Vano explained the history of the Roma and their contribution to local society spanning five centuries. Fifka too talked with warmth about the historical role of Roma trades in the community, and their relevance during the Holocaust. Marco spoke with pride about the Roma contribution to the city and the growth of Shuto Orizari. The combination of the visible and the virtual, the tangible and internal, has created a sense of connection to a heritage culture that residents acknowledge, both directly and implicitly, as something they believe offers a dimension to their ethnic identity that surpasses others. It creates a unique, stronger Roma-ness.

5.6 Summary: Roma Identity

Walking through the main streets of Shuto Orizari there are relatively few, striking distinctions that make the Roma stand out from the rest of the population in day-to-day life. Cafés may sometimes play traditional Roma music, yet youths wear the same jeans and T-shirts, adults smoke the same brands of cigarettes as people the length and breadth of the country. There are certainly visible ethnic lines that can be drawn – a natural darker skin being perhaps the most obvious – but there are few consciously overt statements, or declarations of ‘Roma-ness’. The need to create the public image, to outwardly connect with a superficiality of being Roma seems weak. The dialogue surrounding deeper themes of ethnicity however was very insightful. Despite the potentially difficult subject matter, views were shared openly and frankly and the

valuable situated view that each individual brought to the discussion emphasises the complexity and uniqueness of each identity construct. Three predominant themes were identified that emerged time and again during the interviews, important subjects that the participants wanted to discuss in one way or another to help articulate their lives. These were language, attitudes towards gender, and economic hardship, strong ethnic markers that helped define how each person experienced being Roma day-by-day, week-by-week. These are all clearly social processes, they touch the lives of the individual, but cannot happen without interaction. How a person internalises their association to these themes is not simply through their own direct connection, but their connection through others: the individual and interactive orders of social identity.

On an intimate level, some specific views on these three themes were frequently similar but never identical. As each one theme was layered on top of each other however the diversity of the individual identities started to show. A certain leaning towards one marker would not guarantee a similar leaning towards another, locating the important barriers to the mainstream that shape a person's ethnicity. Both Bilal and Luca, for example, spoke Macedonian interchangeably with Romany on a daily basis, yet described different views on the importance of a girl's virginity. Both Olovina and Selina's staple language was Romany, yet one spoke openly against the patriarchal views of marriage where the other was accepting.

All three of these ethnic traits are located quite some distance from the accepted protocols and norms of the wider Macedonian society. The language is not mutually intelligible with Macedonian, it is distinct and unique. The practice of juvenile brides, the value of a girl's virginity and the process of informal marriages may not be endemic, but for those within the Roma community they are clearly accessible themes. They are also starkly incompatible with the wider-held views of a healthy Macedonian society. That these practices are wholly unacceptable to a broader, international community of which Macedonia is part, is not a contentious point, but the research not only identifies a difference in attitudes to these themes across the participants, it acknowledges a time-based shift in views. These practices may still be relatively common, but where they were once widely accepted, there is now a burgeoning dialogue from within the Roma community about reasons for change, and of young women no longer being the

property of the community. Views on a woman's passage to adulthood have changed at different paces the world over the last century, and the perspective from the within the Roma community may be different and incompatible, but appear to be moving in a similar direction of travel, albeit at a different pace. Barth states that ethnic boundaries are not absolute and in a process of constant revision, but there are boundaries nevertheless. This difference with the out-group may be stark, but for this reason it is an important marker of Roma ethnicity.

Poverty, too, is a blunt ethnic identifier, something that is not accepted and it is fought by all. It may not be exclusive to the Roma, but it is ubiquitous on a scale that sets them apart. However unique each set of views may be on these subjects, they are clearly located within a different reference frame to the wider community. These avenues along which people live their lives give rise to a particularly strong, distinct, embedded identity seen in all participants. These three markers are also not superficial. Each holds a degree of consequence; they are not something a person lightly dips into. Finding a job can clearly change someone's economic situation overnight, but the likelihood of this in an economy such as Shuto Orizari is very slim and poverty is a very long-term phenomenon. By the same token, a person does not simply change their language overnight and family values evolve slowly. Where one's ethnicity and social identity may be transient, the definitions do not appear to be short-term or unstable. The Roma identities in Shuto Orizari are enduring and committed.

Finally, the Roma population in Shuto Orizari is unique in its size and concentration and coming into contact with these strong ethnic themes in everyday life is unavoidable. If someone does not experience poverty, they certainly witness it. If someone chooses not to speak Romany, they still hear it. This may not always be overt, but it is nevertheless palpable. On a societal level these markers garner a clear sense of belonging and connection between people. The size and strength of the community means people can afford a degree of introversion, a lack of awareness or interest in Roma matters within the wider world. Local opinions and practices differ, but they are *our* local opinions and practices: strongly rooted and comfortable in their Roma heritage. To that end there is also a potential view, whether overt or subconscious, that

the identity shaped within Shuto Orizari results in a stronger, or 'more-Roma', society than those in other communities, whether located in Macedonia or further afield.

Chapter 6. Research Findings: Acculturation of the Roma in Shuto Orizari

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter the question that the findings seek to address is '*What are the different acculturation orientations of the Roma, how are these influenced, and does the nature of social participation have a bearing on opportunities and prosperity?*' and to do this, different aspects of the acculturation process within the Roma community will be considered. A requirement of Berry's model of four orientations is that the choice of how to participate within the wider society is made freely by the minority community, and accepted without obstruction or interference by the dominant group. Literature on the Roma suggests that social compatibility with other societies is difficult, generally marred by discrimination and negative ascriptions imposed by the majority. Evidence also suggests that social cohesion is often difficult in plural societies such as Macedonia, in which the presence of the sizeable ethnic Albanian minority is of particular note. The findings in this study suggest that although there are substantial concerns from the Roma community directed towards the ethnic Albanian minority, this appears to inadvertently develop a degree of solidarity with the ethnic Macedonian population and as such, the perception of threat from Macedonians is relatively low. This view is further supported by the unique size and prevalence of the Roma community in Shuto Orizari in which a person's Roma identity seems more comfortable and unthreatened than in other Roma communities. To that end, Berry's acculturation model is considered appropriate and applied to this work.

Two clear acculturation orientations are then identified from the interview content: separatism for those who retain an inward focus towards their own Roma community, and integrationism for those who reach out to the wider Macedonian group as part of their daily lives. Whereas this conclusion in itself is relatively straightforward, it also becomes apparent that the primary socialisation agent for the separatists is the family unit, whereas integrationists have other agents in their lives such as work or educational institutes. The psychological and sociocultural outcomes for this are stark, and lead to polar differences in the quality of life for the Roma inhabitants of Shuto Orizari. Those that retain an inward focus within the Roma community have substantially lower

expectations, poorer living standards and witness much greater daily stress, uncertainty and trauma. Importantly however, they also have very little understanding of the interaction mechanisms needed to navigate the wider society. This poses a significant disadvantage and makes it substantially harder to improve their overall life outlook.

6.2 Acculturation within a Plural Society

A persistent theme in literature regarding Roma communities is the pervasive negative attitude that members face from the broader society. In some cases the Roma are tolerated, in other cases they are victimised, in others they are openly subject to hate and discrimination. This has an important implication when considering the way in which the Roma residents of Shuto Orizari participate in society. The two dimensions on which Berry's acculturation model is based – cultural maintenance of the heritage culture and contact participation with the dominant group – are founded on an important premise, namely that the decision of how to participate is made freely and without obstruction. Berry himself acknowledges that this is frequently not the case in ethnically plural societies, and this needs to be carefully considered. The uniqueness of Shuto Orizari is the prevalence of its Roma community, but like the rest of Macedonia there is also a sizeable ethnic Albanian minority population. Ethnic tension between the Macedonian and Albanian community is well noted. As with many problems surrounding social cohesion, these issues are complex and the detail extends far beyond the scope of this study. Of importance when considering the acculturation orientations in this work however is an understanding of the relative position that the Roma have in this largely fractious relationship, something that is rarely considered in academic work.

Views on the ethnic Albanian community, not only within Shuto Orizari but across the wider city of Skopje, were shared in many different contexts during the interviews. Sometimes this was fleetingly, sometimes this was in detail, but each time the theme was raised there was a negative sentiment. Ergin, for example, mentions almost in passing how he left school due to "*problems with the Albanians*", Hassan too gives a similar reason for stopping his daughter's education. In other instances, however the rhetoric was more direct. Ibrahim picks up a more vocal tone when speaking of life in

the past, before the existence of Shuto Orizari. Describing how the Roma had once occupied a section of town in the central area of Skopje known as Bit Pazaar, he states:

“Nowadays it’s mostly Albanians, before that it was mostly Roma living there.... Most of the Roma lived there, but then the Albanians came and forced them to leave their houses. One woman I know, they went to her flat and told her if she doesn’t leave they’ll kill her.” (Ibrahim)

Bilal also expresses his views towards the Albanian community in equally negative terms, stating:

“They want to conquer the whole state. Even if they have a wedding or anything they do, they have their flag waving. They burn our flag, the Macedonian flag.... That’s why no-one likes them. They have their own traditions, they stick together, they don’t have Roma people or Macedonian people in their homes.” (Bilal)

This interesting view carries a substantial distinction to the previous comments from Ibrahim. Rather than simply describe a wrong inflicted by the Albanians towards the Roma, Bilal expresses a statement of solidarity with the wider ethnic Macedonian community. It is not only the Roma, but both the Roma and the Macedonians that he claims are not welcome in Albanian homes. He refers to “our flag” not as the Roma flag, but that of Macedonia. As a staunchly proud Roma he offered a degree of empathy and leaning towards the Macedonian heritage. This is particularly insightful as discourse surrounding the Roma in society frequently connects themes of marginalisation and the Roma as a social ‘other’, incompatible outsiders who are set apart from the mainstream. In these exchanges, the connection with *them* and *us* is important. The *them* in question here are another minority group, the ethnic Albanians, and the *us* extends to include the broader Macedonia community, equal victims to a wider, common threat. Selina too draws a similar distinction between the Albanians and Macedonians, reflecting on her past as a young girl living away from Shuto Orizari:

“When I was with my mother and I started to work, I went to Macedonian women and cleaned for them... just Macedonians. My mother was scared to

let me go and help Albanians.... at that time when the conflict was on, many of the Albanians abused the Roma girls.” (Selina)

In explaining this situation, Selina falls short of expressing solidarity with the Macedonian community. She nevertheless offers a view that although there is an acknowledged difference between us, the Roma, and the Macedonians, it is acceptable and non-threatening. A much stronger, unacceptable difference exists however with the Albanian community, something that disrupts the fabric of society and is a threat to the Roma. Luca too strikes a similar balance, stating:

“The Albanians that live in Albania are different to the Albanians that live in Macedonia. They cause problems with the Macedonians and with the Roma and they live separately. They don’t have a good social life and coexistence.” (Luca)

Another comparable articulation is offered by Vano, who starts by explaining why he feels there are such concerns between the Roma and the Albanians:

“The Albanians are better situated in society, they know their rights and they know the political system compared to the Roma who don’t know rights and politics. We just want to have a proper life, we don’t ask much.” (Vano)

He proceeds to punctuate this point with a polarising distinction that once again leads with a similar conclusion:

“It’s not a big problem with the Macedonians, it’s a problem with the Albanians.” (Vano)

Time and again this view emerged in one form or another. The outputs were expressed differently, whether better opportunities for work, favouring their own, or threats of violence, but a clear sense of solidarity emerged – one of common victims – in which we may not be the same as the Macedonians, but we all feel this threat together. The reciprocal tension between the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic groups is the subject of attention to the wider world. As a small minority group however, the views of the Roma on this complex issue may be largely invisible, but they represent an important

standpoint. The general emphasis in literature regarding the social exclusion of the Roma by the majority is hard to overlook. In Shuto Orizari however, this appears to be less intense. The strength of Roma identity is very strong, but it is also relatively comfortable and unthreatened. This is not simply supported by the weight of numbers, but also by relative positioning within society. Certainly not all the opinions from the interviewees regarding the Macedonian population were favourable, but negative views were infrequent and much less targeted than the views offered towards the Albanians. Acculturation orientations require a relative freedom of choice and the tense relationship that the Roma have with the Albanian community should not be overlooked. The Albanian minority is not small; it represents around twenty percent of the overall population of Skopje. It is still nevertheless a minority, and although Albanian customs, traditions and language are formally recognised by the state, they are far from dominant in the mainstream. Dimensions of acculturation such as assimilation or integration are not referenced with aspirations towards Albanian ethnicity, but rather that of the Macedonian group. In terms of relative influences and freedoms, it is unquestionably the Macedonian community, almost seventy percent of the city's population, that is dominant.

The Albanian minority however does appear to make a specific, indirect, contribution towards Roma freedom of acculturation. The Roma-Macedonian relationship is far from perfect, but for the residents of Shuto Orizari this is not the main social threat. Instead it is views on the Albanian group that offer a common, consuming worry. This may not necessarily galvanise the Roma with the Macedonians but it offers a common bond, a feeling of mutual threat and negativity towards the Albanian community. This may well detract from other social concerns that, in different circumstances, could potentially be more prominent. To that end, the acculturation options of the Roma toward the dominant Macedonian society are generally much freer than other Roma communities and Berry's model of four acculturation orientations is considered appropriate for this study.

6.3 Family as the Primary Socialization Agent

The source and nature of the influences that shape how the Roma residents of Shuto Orizari participate in society is very important. Relatively outward facing factors such as schools or local institutions may encourage a wider horizon of experiences to form people's perspectives. Other factors, such as intimate family, neighbours or peer groups may take a different direction, promoting an inwardness that emphasises Roma-specific values and practices in communal participation. Of the three primary socialisation agents described by Oettinger and Donnermeyer (1998) – family, school and peer groups – it was the family unit that emerged from the interviews as the most substantial influence in shaping how people participate in society. Two notable aspects quickly arose from the dialogue, namely the size of the interviewees' families, and the spatial proximity in which they live. The importance of this can be seen in the lives of Alana, a mother of seven, or Vano who was raised with nine other siblings. Hassan has twenty relatives living in his house, Enis and Selina too share their homes with fourteen and sixteen other family members respectively. By European standards these figures are substantial, and instinctively lead to a conclusion that the day-to-day influence of having such large numbers cohabiting in such proximity is great. Enis lives with his large family, but they also work together during the day, picking bottles or begging. Ergin has ten immediate family members and confirms the relative introversion that result from his domestic circumstances. Beyond living together in a confined space, he also spends his whole day with three brothers recycling waste. Returning each evening to a home that has been prepared by his mother and sister-in-laws, Ergin admits that this lifestyle affords him few friends, and indeed, the primary outlet for any social activity is with his family. Although not discussed in quite as much detail, a similar family-centric scenario is presented by Django, a twenty-two year-old who lives with seven brothers and sisters along with numerous extended family members. The influence of his family is apparent as he talks at length about brothers and sisters, how family members are honoured through the naming conventions of children, explaining how his father controls and distributes all the family earnings as necessary. Like Ergin, Django's social life is also oriented around his family, although this also extends to include Roma neighbours too. Nevertheless, the emphasis on living space and intimacy arises once again as he jokingly

describes the proximity of these neighbours, explaining how the houses are almost on top of each other in what he describes as an uncomfortably narrow, compact street, barely wide enough for a horse to pass through let alone a car. Dika also picks up this tone of geographic intimacy, suggesting how her similarly large, cohabiting family unit evolved by telling us that her parents, six siblings and husband that shared the same house still all still live closely with their own families, meeting twice per month for family celebrations, or more frequently just as sisters.

Not all interviewees however came from particularly large families. Marco, for example had one of the smallest families with three children and in spatial terms lives in a larger property than some of the other cases. Bilal has only one sister, Timbo one brother, Luca is an only child. In each of these cases, the family unit was clearly important, but there was a substantially different level of exposure to other avenues of society – Roma but also Macedonian – that was missing in other cases. Through his work, for example, Marco spends his days almost exclusively with Macedonians. Timbo describes his time at high school, speaking of the importance of being taught in Macedonian rather than Romany or any other language. Luca studies with Macedonians at university, and this is reflected in his social circle, a mix of both Roma and Macedonians. Bilal too has mix of friends, but also spends time with his Macedonian girlfriend and her family.

A number of links can clearly be seen from these relationships. The role of family was important in all cases, it was never skipped over in any of the interviews and all participants were comfortable spending time discussing their parents, brothers and sisters. For those from particularly large families the influence was consuming and dominant. Domestic life, working life, and social life were all discussed with intermittent references to family members, or to an intimate Roma community upon which this is built. From the interviews however, people from smaller families appear much more likely to foster other channels of social interaction, particularly within the Macedonian community. This is not at the expense of the Roma identity, which remains incredibly strong, but these routes should ultimately help develop different views, attitudes and understanding of the world to one degree or another. This starts to become apparent when considering the ethnic markers that help shape an individual's Roma identity and particularly the relative distance between these and the practices of the Macedonian

community. Those who used Romany language most extensively were from large, intimate families. Those who generally held views on gender roles that differed most starkly from the ethnic Macedonian views tended to be from larger families. Similarly, those who experienced the most severe poverty were from large families. Where the location of these similarities and differences – once again the relative barriers that define Barth's ethnic identities – are found to be closer to Macedonian values and norms, other socialization agents such as universities and workplaces appear to be at play. A particularly strong emphasis on the family dynamic correlates closely with the family size. This dominant socialization practice emerges at the expense of other avenues that lean much less to the Roma community and this is compensated for with a much heavier dependence on Roma-specific traits, attitudes, and social practices. Families appear to be less dominant when they are smaller, and the socialization processes are influenced from other, non-Roma sources. This results in much less introversion. Whereas there are still strong Roma markers, there is also a place in the lives of these people for a more integrated daily existence in the community at large. The significance of these acculturation orientations and, importantly, the resultant socio-economic conditions will be the focus in the following section.

6.4 Acculturation Orientations within Shuto Orizari

Roma ethnicity is very important to people in Shuto Orizari, this has emerged without question. For this reason, two of the four acculturation orientations in Berry's model can be dismissed in this study. Assimilation into society assumes social participation based on the Roma rejecting their own ethnic traits and values over those of the Macedonian community. Marginalisation also assumes the Roma reject their ethnicity, although in this scenario the Macedonian ethnicity is also not embraced. Clearly neither of these cases hold true. Of interest in this section then is how the Roma interact beyond their ethnic circle, the extent to which they embrace Macedonian culture, and the nature of the contribution they make to the wider society. Some participants in this work had particularly large families, frequently living in the same dwelling through a lack of resources and financial freedom. In the previous section it was shown that this in turn increased the family reliance on each other, both socially and economically, resulting in a much greater degree of introversion towards the immediate community.

This group showed a very strong *separatist* orientation, leading with a dominant Roma influence in all aspects of their lives, with very little leaning towards the Macedonian group. In other cases a different scenario emerged, one in which different influences – specifically *non-Roma* influences – entered their lives. The ethnic Roma association was still very strong, but this was not at the expense of interaction with the dominant ethnic Macedonian community. This group, comfortable with a partly-inward, partly-outward approach shows a strong *integrationist* orientation.

This conclusion in itself is relatively straightforward, and may be clear without any detailed analysis. Berry's views on acculturation however are not simply a nod towards the way people interact, but rather they offer a value in understanding the outputs that this generates in terms of wellbeing and life satisfaction. The importance of acculturation choices can be seen by realising how they enable or constrain psychological and sociocultural adaptations and a good starting point is how people themselves considered their social location. Throughout the research process there was very little overt reference to 'being Macedonian', or what their relationship with their country meant to the individual. Having lived in Macedonia all her life, Fifka addressed the connection between her ethnicity and national affiliation by framing this in a relatively straightforward, almost ideological manner:

*"I'm a Macedonian, I live in Macedonia, I'm Roma, from Skopje.... all of us are the same. Nation or ethnicity is not as important as respect, communication between each other... that's the most important thing."
(Fifka)*

Being identified as a Macedonian was also not particularly relevant for Bilal, who spoke of a lack of importance towards badges of nationality, albeit in much slightly more ambivalent terms than Fifka. Having grown up in Serbia and only moved to Macedonia several years ago, he explained his roots jokingly:

"Yeah, I have double citizenship, Macedonian and Serbian passports. Especially when I moved here they were asking me if I went somewhere else in Europe 'where are you from?' and I'd think 'what should I say now? I have two passports so I can choose!'. I'd say from the Balkans, Yugoslavia...a lot

of the time in Europe a lot of people don't know about Macedonia, or Serbia, or Kosovo and if you say the Balkans, or Yugoslavia they know where it is."
(Bilal)

The associations Fifka and Bilal draw with the wider nation state may contrast in their reasoning, but both ultimately lean towards a similar indifference towards nationality. To understand this though, it is helpful to consider both their backgrounds. Having witnessed eight decades of change, Fifka now lives in relatively comfortable surroundings with her family. She describes her experiences spanning the Second World War, the lifetime of Socialist Yugoslavia, and the birth of Macedonia sometimes ruefully, but often anchored with a warm sense of nostalgia. Bilal, again from a relatively comfortable home, was one of the younger interviewees and he spoke as a young man with the excitement of his university life ahead of him. Whether Fifka's ideological reflections or Bilal's jocular indifference, these came across as views from two people for whom national identity *can* be expressed in relatively indifferent, philosophical terms. This can be contrasted with a number of other participants for whom discussions on nationality and citizenship assumed a much harder tone. In Bilal's case, the legacy of the porous boundaries and close links between the states of the former Yugoslavia is clearly still evident today, and other interviewees also talked of such connections. Dika was born in Kosovo to a Serbian father, Timbo has a Croatian mother. Marco explained the ease with which his parents moved to Skopje from Kosovo, as too did Hassan when talking about his son's wife. In each case, movement between Balkan states was described relatively matter-of-factly, almost as one would talk about moving between towns within the same country. Hassan however offered an insight to a problem that this has caused by explaining the difficult situation his son faces. Having married a girl from Kosovo who is now living unregistered in Macedonia, they are reluctant to register their baby with the authorities through fear that the mother's identity may prevent the baby being offered Macedonian citizenship, something that could negate the rights to receive any benefits. They are aware that this situation is unsustainable, but do not know how to go about rectifying this.

Like Bilal, Selina was also born and raised in Serbia. In contrast however, she explains her need to be recognised by the state as a Macedonian. Having lived in the country

with her five children for eleven years, she described the complications and disadvantages that informal migration can lead to, explaining:

"I'm from Serbia and me and my children don't have documents, that's why I can't get healthcare.... I have issues with my identification documents and healthcare. I can't get the documents and that's why everything stops, not just for me, but for my children... I just have an ID card but it's in Serbian."
(Selina)

Selina cried as she explained her circumstances, telling of the need for help but acknowledging that she has no idea how to get this. Meri too describes a strikingly similar plight and a longing for formal recognition by the state. Although in this case she was born in Macedonia and has lived there all her life, a lack of formal documents means that she is unable to access basic welfare provisions:

"I need to get help and I don't mind if it's from someone Roma, Macedonian or anything else. I need to get documents for me and my children because they're not registered. I don't get the support I need (for the documents) so I'm doing it myself. If I work my children will eat and go to school, and if not they won't, but the biggest problem I have is with my documents." (Meri)

Meri, like Selina and Hassan, lives in extremely poor conditions and struggles to raise her family on the absolute margins of society. Each also live with a large immediate family and demonstrated a much stronger degree of introversion towards the Roma community. None spoke explicitly about feelings of disconnection with the wider society, and there was little anger directed at individuals or specific groups within Macedonian community. Nevertheless, there was also no sense of association or connection to the broader group, and this became increasingly clear as each explained in their own desperate terms how they fail on a daily basis to navigate society's administrative processes. Employment of any kind is exceptionally rare, and the potential for work was generally not discussed in any meaningful way. Other foundation stones of society – basic channels of support needed to live life – were referenced such as access to medical care or income support. Rather than form part of life's infrastructure however, these were discussed in unreachable, aspirational terms.

For those registered, there is government support available such as unemployment benefit and healthcare, but there are also a number of NGOs within the community working in different formats with the remit of helping the most vulnerable. These channels can be particularly important in providing immediate material relief such as food and clothing, also direction to help people establish themselves in the systems of society. Both Olovina and Alana spoke about their reliance on charitable donations, with the hope that more people would try to help them. Enis too, explained his family's reliance on charity in wishful terms. This can be contrasted however with Fifka, who had recently benefited from a foreign aid program – the same charitable source as a recent handout Enis had received – yet explained the full benefits that she'd enjoyed with a sense of engagement and connection:

"I'm very grateful that some of the foreign countries provide donations, they want to help. There's a project over the last two years from Switzerland in cooperation with the organisation for immigration within Macedonia and also the World Bank. It's for the Roma elderly people that survived the Holocaust. Those born before 9th May 1945 get help, to different levels. We can have health care, they come with doctors, dentists, they take blood and look for diabetes, they measure blood pressure, they give us glasses, they provide dental care, we also receive a package with food and another with hygienic products. Now we'll get firewood starting this Thursday. This project is all over Macedonia." (Fifka)

Where Enis had received a donation package from the program, Fifka had *participated* in the program, clearly aware of how, when and who this initiative reaches out to. This effectively mirrors the differences that emerged in their life outlooks over the course of the interview process. Enis largely addressed the subjects through the immediacy of his large family, a lack of hope and a persistent emphasis on poverty and hardship. Fifka on the other hand talked about her family along completely different lines. Where none of her brothers and sisters had been particularly affluent, their experiences and achievements within the community were explained with a sense of pride and importance.

Like Enis, Meri and Selina, donations were also important to Ergin who stated that he received no government support or benefit, and without any work he often relied on food handouts from a charity. He too was from a large, very close family that heavily relied on each other and struggled materially. Where Meri and Selina however craved recognition by the authorities, Ergin was fully registered and yet was unaware of how to claim any entitled benefits. His primary engagement with wider society was recycling plastic bottles with his family, who also formed the centre of his social life. He had no connection to society's infrastructure, and this has no place in the fabric of his life. Just as Enis and Fifka contrasted in their understanding of what engagement with an NGO could bring, there are counter-examples to Ergin's case in which an understanding of society's administration can serve as a life-enabler. At similar age to Ergin, Bilal and Luca both describe experiences with Macedonian friends, but also an understanding of life that reached beyond the confines of Shuto Orizari. Attending university was beyond the financial means of their families, yet a university education was clearly something an important expectation to both. Bilal explained why the financial aspect wasn't necessarily an impediment:

"It's expensive, thankfully we have Roma organisations helping us, giving us a lot of money to educate ourselves, paying the bills for college..... they're really supporting you. They're going to help you because you're Roma..... there are a lot of organisations that are going to help you get into college, because they have faith in you, they want to help you, and that's a really good thing here..... they're supporting a lot with financial help, advice and want to help you. That really means something. Here you have someone behind you, to push you up and give you some advice and its really encouraging." (Bilal)

Luca too, talked about a very similar situation in which he claimed funds are available and within reach of people who try to access these:

"They (the Government) have some projects for improving Roma lives in Macedonia, part of the budget of the Republic of Macedonia is for financing the municipality of Shuto Orizari, but it's not a lot of support. There are many

Roma organisations that work with the issue of Roma people in order to improve life and the things connected with Roma issues, scholarships help a lot, they motivate people. (In order to study) I asked about the Roma education fund that started from 2005. I had the opportunity to apply for that scholarship. I don't know why other people don't apply, they have the opportunity.” (Luca)

Neither Bilal nor Luca's families have the financial means to send their children to university, yet their ambitions in life were shaped by their understanding of how to access the funds. Clearly Ergin is not a university candidate and his case does not compare directly, but there are some important parallels that can be drawn nonetheless. Ergin, Bilal and Luca are all proud to be Roma. They do not hide this; it is central to their identity. They do however, have completely different expectations from life. Having the means to participate more fully in society requires an understanding of how to access those means, or at least how to reach out and obtain help. Where there is no understanding of society's mechanisms and processes, there is inevitably very little chance of navigating these. By the same token, having no understanding at all of the potential avenues within society ultimately, means there is no possibility of growing aspirations, however great or modest that may be.

6.5 Summary: Acculturation

The examples that have been considered are not intended to demonstrate that many Roma rely on charitable donations, or that they are unable to afford university fees. The underlying phenomena that they demonstrate lead towards a fundamental problem for a number of the research participants. For 'knowing how to participate in a foreign aid program', one could similarly read 'knowing how to register your children with the authorities'. For 'accessing university funding', one could similarly read 'applying for state benefits'. The quality of the experience from a particular acculturation orientation are not prescriptive, but Sam and Berry (2010) state that for a given community the outcomes for those that integrate are largely more positive. This clearly emerges in the case of the Roma in Shuto Orizari, where it can be concluded that a disengagement with the wider community leads to an inability to understand and participate with its

systems. The stronger this effect, the poorer the psychological and sociocultural adaptations that the participants experience. Speaking Macedonian language, mixing with Macedonian friends, or simply taking an interest in affairs outside of Shuto Orizari is not in itself a guarantee of a successful life trajectory. Evidence from the research however suggests that these are requirements not only to access basic administrative processes such as welfare provisions, but to be able to simply understand the rules and interact at a fundamental level within the mechanisms of society.

The research is also not intended to point to a large Roma family as a precursor to hardship and poor life conditions. Nevertheless, the introverted orientations that such a close immediate community may offer is a factor that is hard to overlook. This however is tempered with a number of important considerations. In terms of size, the Roma population of Shuto Orizari is substantial, the largest of its kind. There are many intimate groups that do not look beyond the boundaries of their immediate circle, both small families and large, because their Roma identity is comfortable and shielded. In such a pervasive culture, doing so is a path of relatively little resistance.

Finally, in general terms a separationist view of acculturation need not lead to hardship either, but in this specific scenario there are a number of particular, complementary aspects that suggest why this would be the case. Where Shuto Orizari is recognised as a municipality of Skopje within its own right, it is nevertheless a sub-community within a much more expansive capital city. In one context it is large and independent, in another context it is small and reliant. It does not have autonomy, it follows the same institutional rules and structures as the rest of society. Shuto Orizari however is also poor. Informal channels and networks are extremely strong, but they are not privileged and offer very little in terms of access to material benefits. Like many Roma communities, it became clear over the interviews that the residents in Shuto Orizari have a very weak sense of association, or even a particular interest in any broader Roma movement or people, there is no membership to a wider 'club'. This can be contrasted to the ethnic Albanian community, who may be formally recognised as a dominant minority, but they also share a particularly strong kinsmanship with the majority populations in neighbouring Albania and Kosovo.

In some ways the findings on the acculturation aspects appear to be refreshing and positive. Where many writers have articulated an endemic rejection of the Roma across Europe, this is not the case in Shuto Orizari. It is possible to be Roma, to feel Roma, and live a Roma life. There are certainly social threats to this and these should not be passed over, but in relative terms there is a much greater freedom than elsewhere. The potential psychological and sociocultural benefits of this freedom however hang in a very fine balance. People who are willing or able to find a degree of equilibrium with society understand their relative position and ultimately enjoy much better life outcomes. There are substantial parts of the community however that live with a degree of extreme introversion towards their heritage, in which aspects of Roma ethnicity dominate and the expense of any real kind of broader social participation. This reinforces itself through strong, inward-facing socialization agents, most notably the family unit, and leads to individuals being unable to engage and connect with basic administrative processes, to participate in the community and access the benefits that this can afford. At its most fundamental level this can be ultimately debilitating.

One particularly important dimension of this is the way in which these phenomena shape the labour market in Shuto Orizari, and carries many different consequences. At a community level there are implications for the economy, cohesion and social policy. On a more intimate basis, the connotations are profound in terms of both material and psychological wellbeing. In the following chapter these aspects are all considered in more detail.

Chapter 7. Research Findings: Labour Market Participation in Shuto Orizari

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter the question '*What are the labour market outcomes for the Roma in Shuto Orizari, and how does ethnic identity and acculturation shape these?*' is addressed by considering the way the Roma participate in different labour market practices. The manner in which interviewees earn a living is reviewed and, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, this is greatly shaped by the way in which they integrate within both their own Roma circles and the wider non-Roma community. Money is without doubt of absolute primacy in the lives of many of the participants, particularly for those living in abject poverty, but the reflection extends beyond this to understand the wider perceptions of work and its relative position in the lives of the interviewees. This is approached in three sections. Firstly, the day-to-day experiences of working in contemporary Shuto Orizari are viewed through the eyes of those of a working age. These are then juxtaposed with the reflections of the older participants who, now at the end of their working lives, are able to look back and recollect a lifetime of experiences. In both cases there are marked similarities that echo the findings in the previous section, namely the acculturation separatists – those who live uniquely in the relative introversion of a purely Roma society – experience substantially poorer social outcomes. For this group, work holds no positive connotations of any kind, it is seen purely as a source of income, an informal institution that carries cause-and-effect associations of extreme hardship, social injustice and hopelessness. The acculturation integrationists however – those who took a more outwards-facing, active participation in the broader, cosmopolitan community – viewed work very differently. For this group, the associations with work were more enriching and extended further than a means of pure revenue, following themes of self-esteem and pride in one's contribution to society.

Finally, the aspirations for the future are also considered. Once again, in a parallel to the findings of the previous section, the ability to navigate society's administration proved to be key in how people shaped their expectations, and this was a direct consequence of the type of acculturation within society. Here, having the financial

means to progress was not important, but rather those who understood the education system, how this sits in the requirements for qualified work, and importantly how to access the means to complete this, had substantially higher aspirations of what a lifetime of work could offer. This was also mirrored in the way people viewed overseas opportunities. Those that were involved in a mixed, multi-faceted society understood that larger, more prosperous economies offered education and career prospects, building blocks to longer-term social mobility both abroad and at home in Macedonia. Conversely, those that lived in a purely Roma frame of reference appeared equally as likely to consider experiences abroad, but with an emphasis on seeking charity, short-term asylum benefits and an inevitable forced repatriation back to Macedonia.

Where Imai and You (2014) view even the deepest-rooted forms of poverty as being a temporal phenomenon, it is clear that the type of participation within the labour market is so important in the difficult process of escaping from this, not purely the financial recompense, but the much broader individual and social implications. These findings support the views of writers such as Sheeran *et al.*, (1995) and Fang and Gunderson (2015), that labour market participation has an impact that extends far beyond material gains to themes such as social identity and self-worth. The research also reinforces the earlier conclusion that those with a strong Roma ethnic identity are relatively free and unthreatened to choose to either integrate or separate from the mainstream, but the nature and quality of their acculturation differs greatly. Shuto Orizari is not a privileged community and can offer few work-related opportunities for those that are particularly introverted. In order to maximise the many dimensions of benefits that work can offer, is it essential to understand the options available and the ways in which to access these. To that end, integrating into non-Roma aspects of society is important in order for an individual to have both the opportunities and the capability to participate more fully in the labour market.

7.2 Working Life Now

The importance of work emerges time and again as a dominant contributor to the psychological and sociocultural wellbeing of social participation. The primacy of this subject in the lives of the interviewees was clear throughout the research, yet their

relationships with work, their experiences and reference points were varied and held a different place in each person's life. For understandable reasons, the need for money was at the fore of the discussions with those from the poorest backgrounds, and the revenues and purchasing power of income from work was frequently the mainstay of the dialogue. Alana, for example, explained in monetary terms the role of recycling waste in her life, stating:

"I need to go through the trash every day, from the morning to the evening to save 3,000 denars in order to pay the rent for my accommodation. I earn 300-400 denars per day, and put 200 denars for food and the rest to pay for the rent. Because my daughter doesn't have proper clothes, I take the money for food and use it to buy her clothes.... (the government provides) just 650 denars, I used to receive 3,000 denars from help, but now it's only 650. Earlier with the 3,000 denars I could pay for rent but now need to go through the trash in order to get enough money." (Alana)

The importance of money is clear, and this was rarely referenced in generic terms. Income was explained in figures, how basic day-to-day needs compared against basic day-to-day revenues. This was not explained in 'more-or-less' terms, but rather the readiness and availability of specific figures presented actual hardships and scenarios that are clearly played out intimately by Alana every day. Yet although numbers were quoted to make the point, the emphasis was never really on the actual figure itself, but rather on the shortfall of money compared to the requirements to live a basic life. Like Alana, Meri demonstrates this when talking about her income:

"We use candles. If I go to live in a rented place they'll ask for 150 Euros for electricity and the use of the space but I don't have that money, and if I go through the trash I won't make enough.... I don't get any help from the government, I can't do anything with 600 denars." (Meri)

She continues by explaining:

"Even though I don't have money I need to pay 1,000 to 2,000 denars for my husband's medicine but because I don't have money I can't buy medicine so

I go through the trash and just buy what I can.... I go through the trash because when my children ask me for 10 denars I want to be able to give them this.” (Meri)

The view of work for Meri, like a number of the participants, was of a completely informal social institution. A home-made trolley and small chits of paper were the only tangible aspects of a life of work, something lived each day at a time with working hours determined by the amount of usable refuse that can be found, and health and safety metered by the risks an individual is simply prepared to take. There were no positive associations of any kind from the outputs of these experiences, and feelings of shame, persistent failure, hardship and being demeaned were only displaced by the fundamental need to survive. For those living in a purely Roma world, the degree of these feelings inevitably varied, but a complete departure from these themes proved impossible even in the rare instances where there had been some limited experience of more structured or formal work. Explaining, for example, how he had once spent some time learning how to plaster walls, the thoughts that Ergin recalled were the derisory sum of money he was paid and a feeling of injustice at being released when his colleagues perceived him to be a threat, rather than the experience or the opportunity this may have presented:

“I was working with some of my friends for three months, that’s how I learnt. They were paying me just 100 denars per day but when they saw that I was getting good they stopped asking me to come.” (Ergin)

Hassan too explains circumstances along strikingly similar lines, focusing on apparent failures or injustices of the experience rather than any kind of enabling aspects that the activity may have offered:

“I used to go to the bazar and collect money for the space people were renting and then I was told I wouldn’t be paid any more. I was also working for 4,000 denars with a cleaning job, cleaning the streets.” (Hassan)

Django spoke of how almost no-one in his family had held a real job, except his brother who worked in a hotel. References to this are short and when asked about this only point of the experience is stated:

“He quit because the boss didn’t pay him... he worked in a hotel and he was helping with the bags from the tourists, with their luggage. They spoke to my brother and said they weren’t paying him, so he quit.” (Django)

The personal situations of Ergin, Hassan and Django were not as desperate as, say, Alana and Meri, and in other parts of the interviews the conversations could be relatively light-hearted. Whenever discussions leant towards themes of either social hardship or of work however, the tone would become more serious, harder and more focused. Two seemingly inseparable aspects of life, each consumed by the present, and each as desperate as each other. One of the only people to currently have formal employment was Marco, who worked as a Production Operator for a large foreign company. For him the perception of work was clearly much different and there were no direct references to finance, or to what he could or couldn’t afford though his salary. He did however draw a distinction between formal and informal work, saying:

“One of my colleagues, a cleaner, he had an education and now he’s registered at the agency for employment and will get a retirement with a pension. If I had the opportunity to have a proper education I would also have had 15 years of pension, but at least now I’ve been registered for a year.” (Marco)

These comments go a long way to highlight the difference in the perception of work. Like Ergin and Hassan, Marco was speaking about the material side of work, but rather than the direct monetary aspects, he was emphasising the importance of a pension, a *de-facto* acknowledgement of the benefit of a formal job that allows fuller participation in a formal economy. Like Ergin and Hassan he also acknowledged a perception of injustice in the fact that by not being able to find work for so long, he had missed the pensionable benefit of this large period of his life. Unlike Ergin and Hassan however, the emphasis was not on the missed benefit, but rather the positive interpretation that this process had now started. In some ways, Marco could have been explaining this from a

comparable viewpoint to Ergin and Hassan. He was raised in the Roma heart of Shuto Orizari and was far from being well-educated, describing how he dropped out of school as a child once his father died. He was, however, more engaged in the processes of wider society, and acknowledging a contrast in his attitude compared some other parts of the community. Marco spoke about his colleagues, and of the daily politics with the company where he worked. These had no bearing on his personal welfare, but clearly occupied a space in his life.

7.3 Working Life Then

Although there were few interviewees of a working age that actually had regular work, there were some that had completed their working lives and their reflections proved to be both rich and insightful. At 67 years old, Vano looked back with great pride and affection at his experiences working as a plumber. Having learnt his trade at school, he was employed by a state-owned company and through his work he travelled not only the length and breadth of Yugoslavia, but also the countries of North Africa. He described how these overseas trips enabled him to afford to build his own home, but this reference to the financial reward is only fleeting. Instead the discussion is consumed with recollections of friendly colleagues from Bosnia, his pride in installing the first tap in Shuto Orizari, how he would lie in bed at night and think about plumbing projects. Echoes of working life for Ibrahim follow similar themes. Also retired, he talked of the travel opportunities and the people he encountered over the course of his career. The benefits of his employment were not just salary-based, it gave him access to an apartment and subsidised his motorcycle expenses, but once again the reflections extended much further than material reward and he describes this time in his life with great satisfaction:

“I was actually doing three jobs: courier, facilities supervisor, and import-export agent. Whenever someone needed to send something, I’d pack it and send it to that place. No-one could compare to me, I was really good at mathematics, the best. The director knew it too, no-one could do it like me..... he appreciated me so much that he used to take me to meetings with the

sales guys and say “here’s Ibrahim, I’ll leave him with you so you can compare your mathematics skills.” (Ibrahim)

In the cases of both Vano and Ibrahim, working life did not follow a simple, linear path from start to finish. When Vano lost his job, he continued to work as a private plumber, buying his materials from Greece. Towards the end of his working life he also volunteered on a part-time basis for the local Commission for Fire and Ecology to support his community. Although clearly deriving great satisfaction with his job, Ibrahim explained how, under a new law that was passed in 1978, he was able to set up his own company. This was done with the blessing of his previous employer’s director, something that was clearly important to him and reinforces the sense of value he received from his superior’s praise. Whether through necessity or desire, both were willing and able to find new opportunities and challenges. When one door closed in their professional lives, they had the means to overcome this and were able to open another. Over the course of the interviews, both Vano and Ibrahim explained how life had become difficult, and in retirement they were struggling financially with frequently barely enough money to eat properly. Despite the substantial misfortunes in their lives now however, these subjects were very much kept at arm’s length, never interfering with their enthusiasm to use the interview as a platform to explain their pasts. At 75 years-old Fifka had never worked, but described with a great sense of satisfaction the jobs that had been held within her family. One brother worked as a manager in the field of journalism, the other brother made pillows but sought a different direction and became an actor. Her sister had studied at medical school and, having been a teacher, moved to Jordan with her husband and now works for the Red Cross. In the absence of having her own professional experiences, she clearly found the professional paths of her siblings to be a source of great pride. Like Vano and Ibrahim, these roles were not located in Shuto Orizari, but a product of the wider community in which Fifka and her family were clearly integrated. Once again, this integration into life beyond the intimacies of the immediate Roma circle was an enabler to broader opportunities, something that was clear as she described her brother not as an actor, but an actor *at a Turkish drama centre*, her sister not as a teacher, but a teacher *at the Saudi Arabian Embassy*.

At 76 years old, Enis is at a similar point in his life to Vano, Ibrahim and Fifka, yet his views on work could not be more different. Having worked as an employee at a tobacco factory during the years of Yugoslavia, his recollections were short and contained no reflections of enriching experiences or relationships with colleagues. Rather his views were succinct and functional, explaining simply how he was able to provide for his family during this time. Since losing his job 20 years ago, life has been extremely difficult for Enis and his large family, with no-one having formal, steady work over this period. Rather than dwell on experiences from work in the past, for Enis, the interview process was an opportunity to explain the present, and along very similar lines to Ergin and Hassan he contextualised his difficulties through the gulf in finances and the helplessness that this led to:

“There are 14 people in one room, we receive 1,500 denars from social benefits... (we) all go begging as we only get 1,500 denars from social help... Because we are a big family we firstly pick bottles, then we go and beg because from one bag of bottles we get 150 denars, and because it’s not enough we then go and beg afterwards. We get maybe 100 denars for begging, the children are between 8 and 14 years old, so they also look for food in the trash.” (Enis)

Like Ergin and Hassan, Enis’s difficult circumstances are experienced almost entirely from within the dimensions of a purely Roma world, with no social experiences beyond his immediate, insular community. Very much like Ergin and Hassan, the sense of helplessness at not having proper work is articulated as a collective phenomenon, a shared experience for the whole family. Where Marco, Vano, and Ibrahim have also spent the majority of their lives living in the heart of the Roma community, through work they reached further afield, sometimes within Skopje, other times much further, but always into a more mixed sphere of life. The opportunities that this presented held a certain value – self-esteem, pride or a sense of contribution – and were experienced at a much more individual level that would not translate to the wider group.

The findings in these two sections considers how individuals interpret the meaning of work in their lives and confirms two important points. Firstly, this supports the widely-

acknowledged view that work is a multi-dimensional social process and is extremely important in the structure of a community. At its most fundamental level it provides the material means to live, but it also offers much more beyond this. How people experience day-to-day life, both in the present but also as past memories is shaped by the quality of their working lives. An individual's relationship with work also provides shape and a sense of reality for their hopes and dreams for the future. Secondly, the findings support the conclusion that the nature of integration and participation in society is important for the Roma, it determines options and this is particularly the case for the important social dimension of work. In the previous chapter it was determined that those from the Roma community who live in a purely introverted, or separatist frame of reference are unable to participate fully in a wider society they do not understand. This is particularly important here, as informal Roma networks in Shuto Orizari offer few privileged channels for work. For many of this group, the type of work available is amongst the most basic, informal and largely demeaning type within society. It holds no positive connotations and purely serves as a means of material survival. There are other residents however who also live within the heart of the community that are either willing or able to integrate in the ethnic mainstream. For these people, this channel offers a much richer experience, it offers choices in which work becomes an accompaniment to a fuller life that extends far beyond financial income as a source of pride and self-esteem.

7.4 Working Life in the Future

Earlier in this thesis, poverty was presented as a transient process, and although absolute poverty is a deep-rooted, complex phenomenon, even this can be a temporal, albeit over particularly long cycles (Cuthrell *et al.*, 2009). With this in mind, it is of interest to understand the nature of the hopes and aspirations of the interviewees in terms of work, whether they perceive opportunities in the future for upwards social mobility, or a simple resignation to life's lot. Here, two themes were often approached in one form or another: education as a tool for better employment, and overseas opportunities providing a chance to improve one's outlook.

7.4.1 Opportunities Through Education

One might assume that the recollections of Ibrahim and Enis belong to a different era, one in which economic opportunities in the former Yugoslavia were abundant, society was more integrated and benefits were presented differently. By looking at the younger interview participants at the start of their professional lives however, it can be seen that the meanings and value of work are as relevant and equally polarising today. Three of the interviewees talked about their expectations to study at University and follow a professional career, a set of discussions along themes of opportunity, self-worth, and role models. Timbo provides a lead-in to this by explaining the academic system, laughing-off his first subject choice, Law, as being too long to complete at eight years, choosing the shorter five-year option to study a degree in Management instead. Luca too demonstrated a clear understanding of the study options available to him, telling how he originally registered to study Sports Management but decided on Public Relations instead when the original course was cancelled. Talking about the way he was able to take advantage of the potential opportunity, he explains:

“(I was able to go to University because) I asked about the Roma education fund that started in 2005 and I was able to apply for a scholarship..... I can give you a quote from Bill Gates: “you’re not guilty if you’re born poor, but you’re guilty if you die poor”. It depends on you, you pick your own life.”
(Timbo)

Each of the University applicants confirmed that they would be unable to continue their studies if they didn’t have access to financial support. They spoke however of access to this ‘charity’ funding in expectant, matter-of-fact tones giving the impression that receiving this was a greater likelihood than not. Importantly, all three also knew how to access the support networks that facilitate the scholarships, something Bilal explained as he spoke of enrolling on an Informatics degree:

“They (Roma charities) are supporting a lot with financial help, advice and want to help you. That really means something, especially for the Roma... here you have someone behind you, to push you up and give you some advice and it’s really encouraging.” (Bilal)

He continued by explaining how he was experiencing other means of gratification in his career choice that extended beyond material rewards:

"I fix computers all day for Roma people, I'm reinstalling Windows and stuff and I'm still doing it and I'm getting paid, it's not a big thing but I'm appreciated... and its encouraging. You know that not everyone can do that, and they say "this guy is educated, he knows how to work with PCs" they're respecting you more for your profession. Even if you're not an IT Manager, if you're a mechanic or any other profession they're going to respect you because you're good at this or you're good at that, it's a good thing and they want to learn from you." (Bilal)

The parallels here to previous chapter are clear, namely that by being integrated into a wider community, one is aware and understanding of society's administrative channels and able to manoeuvre through these to ultimately reap their benefits. What is different here however is that in the previous chapter the need to fit into society's administrative process was a precursor to be able to access the basic means in life: accommodation, welfare payments, medical care, basic recognition by the state. Here the benefits are for a different purpose in life; a building block for a family, an investment in human capital, a direction for the future. Just as in the previous chapter however, there is another end to this scale, those who are either unaware or unable to access these benefits, existing in an all-consuming world of informal channels, in which aspirations are tailored to the prevalent hardships. This position can be captured most markedly through comments from Ergin. Also at a similar young age and with his working life ahead of him, his views could not contrast more starkly to the optimism channelled in Luca's reference to Bill Gates, as he stated:

"I think nothing will change here in Macedonia. Maybe for some people it could be different, but personally I will be the same. I'm poor and I'll die poor, you can never be rich." (Ergin)

One particular facet of life that Ergin carried as a burden was a lack of education, something that he clearly felt was a missed chance to help him emerge from poverty.

Although still a young man, he explained how this opportunity had now passed him as he said:

"If I had gone to school I would have had many opportunities, now I've forgotten almost everything... reading, writing..... Now because I'm married it wouldn't be the same at my age to try to learn again." (Ergin)

Despite this, he still held hopes that the same scenario would not play out with his own children, stating:

"I want first of all the best for my children, for them to finish school and then for whatever they want to be theirs. Not to be like me, unable to read or write." (Ergin)

This value on education was a very common point, a repeated theme that was touched on many times, most notably by the poorest people when explaining their hopes for tomorrow. The commonality however was not in what was outwardly stated – the importance of education, or in a conviction that missed opportunities will not be repeated with the next generation – but rather in the underlying shape of the discussion, a lack of understanding and insight into quite *how* or *why* schooling would help future generations. Enis, for example, talks about how schooling might improve the future outlook for members of his extended family. His point however is unconvincing, as he states:

"Maybe when they finish they will have a better life. My nieces are in high school, they're in different grades but when they've finished maybe they'll find a job." (Enis)

Alana, makes this point too, explaining how she hopes going to school will help her daughter break the reliance on recycling waste:

"If my daughter goes to school, maybe things will change..... I want the best for her, maybe to learn some foreign languages in order to speak with foreigners and have better life conditions." (Alana)

It is apparent that education is important, it *feels* like it should be a ticket to better opportunities, but this is nondescript and unconvincing, spoken without any real belief. Ergin, Enis and Alana would like their children to receive some schooling – any schooling – as it *should* offer better job prospects. What level of schooling this is, and what these prospects look like is not the point, but rather that this offers some hope, and any hope is better than none. In other cases there was a role-specific connection. Django spoke of how he and his wife wish for a better future for their baby son, yet their aspirations for him to possibly finish elementary school or even high school is at odds with their hope that he may one day become a doctor. Olovina's desire that her daughter might one day be a lawyer seem thin and fragile when mapped against her desperately difficult, daily struggles to ensure her children have the basic means to attend elementary school. Whether the true value of education was really understood seemed almost unimportant, but the idea of education clearly was. Alana explained how she aspired to one day find work, saying:

"I go through the trash and pick plastic bottles, but I would be glad if someone would call me to do some work so that I could buy clothes for my daughter." (Alana)

This comment makes no reference to education, but draws many parallels to the way the poorest interviewees located hope in their lives. Alana has never known any work other than recycling waste, she is poorly connected within society and her comments that someone unknown may one day call her with an offer of work is escapism, it has no real likelihood and offers no practical hope. By the same token, the chances of Alana's youngest child completing school where six previous children have all failed to do so would appear to be remote. For those living in extreme poverty, children accompanying parents on daily recycling work was common, a process largely incompatible with school attendance. The one way in which people seemed able to express any kind of hope of a better future however was by articulating a dream that children would be educated, in which 'education' assumes the mantle of a panacea to somehow escape poverty and live a better life. Structured education clearly has a value in most labour markets, both formal and informal. What is vital however is understanding the enabling context of this education, and this is lost. In the poorest

communities where people exist on the absolute fringes of the labour market, lives are preoccupied with so many immediate daily problems. Without being able to connect how much school with how much future opportunity, and what this opportunity could look like, the resource, dedication and ultimately the real-world reasons to complete an education appears to be lost.

7.4.2 Opportunities Through Travel

Education was not the only place where people placed their aspirations, real or otherwise, and similarities can be drawn in the way people discussed opportunities in other countries. Picking up the dialogue once again with Ergin, he spoke of being prepared to move abroad to improve his work prospects. Very much like his thoughts on education, this was offered without any real sense of conviction, or specific understanding of what a move abroad could actually achieve:

“So if I find a job in the city or even another country I’ll go, we’d leave in order to find a job.... I don’t know what, maybe I’ll manage to find something.” (Ergin)

Alana too, described this notion in similarly ideological yet undirected tones, saying:

“In a foreign country it’s easier than here. I don’t have money to go to a foreign country, but one day if I succeed it will be better because with that money (that I earn) I’ll maybe buy a small house. Some of my neighbours did that, and when they came back they bought big houses... I don’t know what work they do, but most of them go to Germany.” (Alana)

Like education, travel to another country was, for the poorest interviewees, sometimes expressed in this way, an unknown quantity, somewhere that must surely be better than here. Unlike education however, there were people who had actually been abroad, or lived in the immediacy of those that had. Where education was something that lacked belief, for some, travelling abroad was more real, as Django, who himself was born whilst his parents sought asylum in Germany explained:

“They (my friends) got asylum, they have like a period for one year and then when that period of one year is finished they go and they ask if they’re going to prolong the time or not, so it depends. Sometimes you get more than one year, sometimes you get one year and then you come back.” (Django)

This was not a mythical concept to Django – he understood asylum, it was around him in his daily life through friends and acquaintances. *“And then you come back”* however is the telling point of his narrative. The view of asylum here is not one-way, it is a short-term process with an end point, a temporary means to an income very much with the view of returning once the application has been rejected. Hassan in particular spoke about this with authority, having been through the asylum process in the past in Germany, he was actively seeking to return with his wife and smallest child in the coming weeks. He talked step-by-step through the procedure, describing the benefits offered whilst the application is processed: food vouchers, accommodation and 300 Euros per adult, 150 Euros per child, per month. His first trip to Germany was during the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia, something that he was able to use as a justification with the authorities for being allowed to leave the country. He remained in Germany for a year and a half and over this time he supplemented his asylum benefits with unregistered work laying paving stones. This time he believes the border authorities will prevent him from leaving Macedonia if they understand he and his family will seek asylum, and instead he will use the pretence of visiting sick relatives in Serbia as his justification. Once in Germany, he described how the process works:

“The first time you ask for asylum you have a meeting with the authorities and they ask you different questions. Why do you want to stay? What are the reasons?... things like that. Then you stay for 7 days in a shelter, in a room with your family. There are boards, and if your name is written on the board... there is a bus that comes and takes you to a flat.... They give you a flat, then a housekeeper comes and repairs the flat and sorts out the electricity and water. Then people from the state come and give you money... and if you are clever enough and willing to save some of the money, it is good when you come back here. “ (Hassan)

In the context of the desperate conditions for some, in which even basic amenities such as electricity and running water are unaffordable, the benefits of simply going through the asylum application process are understandable. These benefits however are short-term, a temporary process that ultimately ends with a return to the same place and the same conditions. Bilal, explained the overseas experiences of the Roma that move abroad, with a clear understanding of the difficulties seeking asylum and the reality in how this was approached for those that are desperate:

“(You receive) 300 Euros per person and you have to give a statement, why you are going there and what do you want from the State, why you left your country, for example Macedonia, and after a few months you get an answer whether you’re accepted or not. Ninety percent of the cases are denied so the people that are there, especially Roma people, they go to the doctors and pay to get some results to say they’re sick, just to stay there for longer and collect some more money. They’re mostly asylum seekers, they’re going there to collect money. They’re going there to collect money because they have five or ten people, a huge family and you can collect a lot of money and that’s their point. They want to get money and nothing else. They’re buying a lot of things, to prove they’re sick and they don’t want to go home, you know, it’s a sad thing.” (Bilal)

Bilal himself was uncertain whether he would move to another country, but the premise of doing so was different, to seek opportunities in a larger, more prosperous economy. In this theme of constant contrasts, this alternative view of life abroad was inevitably shared by others, something that Timbo helped to explain. Talking about the idea of moving to another country, he approached the subject from an angle in which opportunities would be presented in a pre-planned scenario with shape and structure. On face value, Timbo was reluctant to move abroad, indicating that in the eventuality that this would happen it would also follow a temporary path. Unlike, for example, Hassan however, he was clear in his rationale of the benefits and opportunities that a specific, larger economy can present. Talking about existing family and ties that could be used as a base, he was convincing in his reasoning as he explained:

“After I finish university I definitely want to stay here if he can find a job, but I have opportunities as I have relatives living in Spain and America. I also have Croatian citizenship. This could offer better life opportunities and standards, but if I can choose, I’ll stay here.” (Timbo)

These polar views – short term or long term, revenue or experience, expectation or resignation – very much mirror the way individuals interpreted the labour market, for some people a part of a longer-term process to facilitate a better life, for others a hope of short-term payment. This understanding of an overseas experience however is not uniquely situated in the present and emerged in the experiences of the older generation, once again closely reflecting their views on work. Where, for example, Vano had enthused about his career as a plumber, his time working abroad was clearly a period of excitement in his life with an abundance of experiences that are still held dear today. Just as Enis, on the other hand, drew no positive recollections about his years working in a factory, his experience abroad was approached from the same position of poor esteem and low expectations. Rather than a life-enabling time in his life, he spoke of applying for asylum in Germany during the Yugoslav years as a process living in a large asylum centre, receiving food but not money, and ultimately being expelled to return to Skopje. To this end, the chance to travel abroad, and the opportunities that this may present are viewed through the same lens, with similar expectations, and ultimately similar outcomes as the way individuals participate in the labour market.

7.5 Summary: Labour Market Participation

Academic literature emphasises the social importance of work at many different levels and this is clear in this research. Through one set of eyes, work is seen as an opportunity, a potential career, a means to live a fuller life with different experiences. It reaches out to other social groups, it ultimately offers aspirations, but in one way or another it has structure, shape and rules. Like so many other aspects of society in Shuto Orizari, opportunities for work – whether formal or informal – need to be understood to be accessed, they need to be planned, prepared and navigated. For those that have no understanding of the social mechanisms outside of their immediate community, the

chances of better work prospects become much more limited, they are restricted to that particular group which may, in some instances, simply be a family unit.

As discussed in previous chapters, the size of the Roma community in Shuto Orizari allows people to be comfortable and relatively unthreatened in their ethnicity. For this reason, Berry's model of acculturation orientations can be applied, and choosing to integrate with, or separate from the mainstream are both viable options in life. Work, more than any other social institution however is where the outcomes of these options articulate themselves most profoundly. The Roma community is not a privileged community, there are few opportunities to work purely from within this group and those that exist are modest. Instead, those with no understanding, means or outreach beyond this society survive through the most basic, limited means of revenue and this negatively impacts every sociocultural and psychological aspect of life. The material quality of life is amongst the lowest in Europe, but the impact extends much further than this. Sheeran *et al.* (1995) state that self-esteem and psychological wellbeing suffer through poor labour market outcomes, and this is clearly the case. In Shuto-Orizari those that conduct the most desperate type of work feel demeaned on a daily basis and carry the daily burden of worry without any real hope of their lives improving. This is helplessness grounded in the present, but also articulated in a vision of the future in which people don't understand the options to move from poverty, nor the ways in which they can access the means to pursue this. In the most inward looking groups, many aspects of life are largely contained within the family, and these negative outputs are experienced collectively. Higuchi (2014) describes a progressive sphere of self-perpetuating introversion and marginalisation that can stem from poor labour market participation. In Shuto Orizari those that live as accultural separatists appear content with their direction at a social level, it appears to carry little consequence. The direct connection that individuals draw with such poor labour market, something that people are so desperate to avoid, is very weak. But there is another group, the integrationists that experience both worlds, comfortable in their Roma heritage but also happy to be part of a bigger city or possibly even an international community. Opportunities here are not necessarily seen as short-term, but rather a journey with a destination in mind. The means to achieving goals lie outside of the Roma community,

but the ways in which this can be addressed are understood, and they are not only accessible, but expected.

Much of the research into labour markets and ethnic groups speaks of 'forces of exclusion', or negative experiences that reinforce ethnic stereotypes to the detriment of outward participation (Salway, (2006), Çelik (2015)). This is largely not the case here and makes Shuto Orizari, with its particularly large Roma population unique. Other research describes how separationist ethnic groups rely on informal networks for their work opportunities. At one level this can be true in Shuto Orizari, but the lack of means and the relative scale of poverty within the Roma community largely disqualifies this view. There are frequently no opportunities within the group, and the informal work processes or recycling waste or begging are simply organised around the enterprise of an individual or family. It has already been established that living in Shuto Orizari can be – and frequently is – experienced from a purely Roma reference frame without the ethnic pressures prevalent in other European communities. Perhaps the highest cost for this privilege however is seen in the integration of the labour market and these particularly poor outputs.

Chapter 8. Conclusions

8.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the findings from the project are pulled together and reflected upon in order to conclude the study. The research question that this work sought to address was *“How do ethnic identity and acculturation orientations affect labour market participation within the Roma community of Shuto Orizari?”* and this was approached in three steps, each of which is revisited below. The implications of these findings are then explored against existing academic theory and in terms of real-world application to provide the bridge between original knowledge and practice necessary for the DSocSci qualification. Finally, there are concluding remarks that offer a summary view of the work as a whole.

8.2 Summary of the Findings: Revisiting the Research Questions

8.2.1 Ethnicity

In order to answer the research question, the study firstly approached the theme of ethnicity, and considered the question *‘How important is ethnic identity to the Roma of Shuto Orizari, and how is this constructed?’*. The findings concluded that ‘being Roma’ was extremely important to social identity of the Roma residents in Shuto Orizari and these outcomes were compatible with Jenkins’ views of identity construct, namely that ‘being Roma’ was both an individual and group process, experienced at a nominal and a virtual level (Jenkins, 2005). Barth’s definition of ethnicity through the formation and maintenance of moveable boundaries was also applied to this work, with language, family size, attitudes to gender and an association with economic hardship emerging as the most common markers to define these boundaries (Barth, 1969). Expressions of Roma ethnicity were often at odds with the established practices and norms of the majority ethnic Macedonian population, but interview participants all experienced a relative degree of tolerance and ethnic freedom to express themselves within society as they wish. This particular point represents a departure from widely-held views in which feelings of marginalisation are common, leading to either a suppression of Roma ethnicity, or reinforcing a stronger, reactive sense of Roma-ness with severed ties to the

mainstream. Moreover, the ethnic identity of being Roma in Shuto Orizari was often a source of pride, offering a strength in identity, or possibly even superiority, that transcended other Roma groups.

The differences to observations within other Roma communities however was only partial. On one level, the associations people demonstrated towards their ethnic heritage were proud, positive and desirable. Nevertheless, many of the Roma in Shuto Orizari live in substantially poorer conditions than the rest of society and this constant theme could not be decoupled from 'being Roma'. In Shuto Orizari social hardship is widespread, often extreme and impossible to avoid. Importantly too, it is the Roma that are visibly the poorest and poverty serves as one of the strongest ethnic markers. At a nominal level it is transparent and clear to see, and at a virtual level its consequences are far-reaching, internal and deep. It directly affects those who live in the most disadvantaged conditions, but it is ubiquitous in nature and inevitably touches the collective group through association. The structures that support ethnic identity may be different to other Roma communities, but the social outcomes are very familiar.

There is also an important point of note on this in this conclusion. The fundamental relationship between social outputs and structural conditions within a society is acknowledged in the literature review. There is a reciprocal influence, and in Shuto Orizari this structure-agency effect is no different. Nevertheless, the position that this work has assumed is that it is predominantly the capacity of the individual participants that shapes their perceptions and outcomes in social institutions such as the labour market. This is based on the emphasis and structure of the interview flow. Specifically, themes around ethnic identity provided a universal anchor in the discussions, it appeared at the core of each participant's being and always anchored the narrative, whatever the ultimate outcomes. For this reason, a certain direction is assumed in which social identity and acculturation are largely the starting points of a journey. In its most straightforward form, the way participants view their world and choose to interact with it is the driving force behind their perception of work and their mechanism of participation. For those that are poor, work is simply a means for revenue, something lived out day-by-day with no perception of its life-enabling aspects.

An alternative conclusion can be drawn however from these observations, one in which the causal effects flow the other way; those that are poor live in the present because there is simply no opportunity to not do so. Poverty is all-consuming – the need to heat a house or feed a family is an immediate problem – and the ability to think ahead and plan for the future is simply an inconceivable luxury. This alternative position, that the views of life and personal outcomes are ultimately shaped by structure and not the other way round, is acknowledged.

8.2.2 Acculturation

The study also looked at acculturation, considering the questions *‘What are the different acculturation orientations of the Roma, how are these influenced, and does the nature of social participation have a bearing on opportunities and prosperity?’*. The particularly large size of the Roma community in Shuto Orizari, its long history, and its contribution to the city of Skopje appear to be important factors in the relative comfort the Roma feel in their ethnic choices, and this freedom of choice is significant as it validates the use of Berry’s model of acculturation orientations which considers social participation through two axes: the degree in which individuals retain their heritage identity, and the degree to which they participate with the dominant society (Berry, 1999). Another influence also emerged consistently over the course of the study, namely a fractious relationship between the Roma and the ethnic Albanian community. The tensions between the ethnic Macedonian and Albanian groups are relatively well documented, but literature on the poor relationship between the Roma and ethnic Albanians is rare. It is unclear whether this contributes to the ethnic freedom that the Roma experience with the Macedonian group through a solidarity, tolerance, or simple indifference, yet this theme emerged repeatedly and was clearly important in the daily psyche of the interview participants.

Of acculturation itself, only two of Berry’s orientations applied in largely equal measure across the interview panel; either to separate and remain almost exclusively within Roma circles, or to integrate and balance life between Roma and ethnic Macedonia groups. This orientation was heavily influenced from within an individual’s intimate social group, with family quite clearly acting as the dominant socialization agent. Those

from much larger families all followed a separatist path, taking a more inwards-facing view on society and engaging almost uniquely on a day-to-day basis with other Roma from their immediate group. These insular levels of social participation ultimately come at a cost, with the most introverted lacking the basic skills to navigate society and participate in important administrative practices. They lived with much worse material and psychological outcomes, had a poorer understanding of what society had to offer or how to access this, and adjusted their expectations about life accordingly. Conversely, those from smaller families typically followed a much stronger integrationist orientation, taking part in activities outside of the Roma community in a way that was complementary to, rather than at the expense of their Roma identity. As a result, they understood the advantages to be gained from active participation in wider society. They not only lived in better conditions, but understood the context and relevance of social institutions, and held much higher social aspirations.

8.2.3 Labour Market Participation

Finally, the research sought to understand participation within the labour market by considering the question '*what are the labour market outcomes for the Roma of Shuto Orizari, and how does ethnic identity and acculturation shape these?*'. The findings here were effectively a more focused iteration of the previous section. Where it has already been shown that those who integrate within society experience more positive sociocultural and psychological outcomes, nowhere was this more evident, and potentially consequential, than within the labour market. For those that understand societies' wider mechanisms, the connotations of work extended beyond a pure means of income, it was a source of reflective pride, a means to social mobility, or offered aspirations for the future. Conversely, those that separated from the broader community rarely saw the life-enabling qualities of work. The introverted social networks within Shuto Orizari are particularly informal and by no means privileged, something that was emphasised in the desperate nature of economic activity that this section of the community undertake. The association with work for this group was purely a material means of financial survival, leaving people feeling emotionally degraded, threatened and permanently vulnerable. Work is experienced one day at a time, with no real aspirations for the future. Importantly, the inability to understand

and integrate into the wider administrative structures of society means this group have no understanding how to improve their circumstances. Basic society-wide institutions such as education are accepted notionally as being important at a very fundamental level. Without any contextual understanding of why this is the case however, there is effectively no real means, desire or ability to fully engage in these, severely diminishing any real hope of breaking out of poverty.

8.3 Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings from this research are consistent with much of the theory surrounding ethnicity, acculturation, and labour market studies. The established views on social identity from Jenkins were found to hold true; how people identified themselves within the Roma community, for example, was clearly a construct of individual and collective dimensions, a process experienced at both nominal and virtual levels. In terms of ethnicity, Barth's work on defining ethnic groups through the formation and interpretation of moveable boundaries is also consistent with the way participants expressed their views. Where the outcomes of this research may not challenge accepted theory in this regard, simply being able to conclude this by providing a voice to such an under-researched and misrepresented community is in itself important.

The results, however, are particularly insightful for other reasons. Research in this area is rare, particularly within Macedonia, and a number of common observations seen from other Roma communities were not experienced in this work. On face value, the Roma residents of Shuto Orizari generally live in very poor economic conditions but it is important that lazy conclusions are not drawn from this. Where this end point may be similar to other European Roma, the journey is substantially different. Themes of discrimination, victimisation and social exclusion that appear constantly in other writings were certainly not as strong with the participants in this work. Nor too was the discomfort in articulating one's Roma ethnicity, a subject that frequently appears in Roma research. This comfort of choice in expressing oneself is ultimately so important, it allows people to retain their ethnic heritage, and the benefit of the psychological wellbeing this offers should not be overlooked.

Cultivating this ethnicity and allowing it to breathe should be balanced however with the need for much wider social participation, where the emphasis on the *need* for wider social participation is an important detail that warrants further explanation. Prescriptive diagnoses of why the Roma are poor are commonplace in literature, and recommendations of how they ‘must’ behave to improve their outcomes are not helpful, they can erode the important freedom of acculturation choice, and run counter to the standpoint methodology that is fundamental to this body of work. Over the course of the interviews, none of the poorest participants explicitly stated a desire to be more integrated into wider society, yet this desire can be drawn as a confident conclusion. The most disadvantaged interviewees do not know what to do to improve their lives, on this point they are clear. But whereas they may not know what they want, they qualify this by clearly knowing what they so desperately don’t want. The daily fear of not having food, the humiliation of climbing into a roadside bin to look for plastic bottles, or the yearning to provide one’s children with warm clothes and heating were all so real, present, and consuming in people’s daily lives that the desire to move away from this was encompassing. But the direction of this movement is also important, it cannot simply be *any* direction, it needs to be compatible with identity, of which a strong Roma ethnicity is so fundamentally important. In this particular community though this is not necessarily at stake – it represents a light burden on life’s journey compared to other Roma groups. The relative lack of animosity towards the ethnic Macedonian group too would indicate that realigning acculturation orientations from separation to integration need not be coercive, and to be embraced by the Roma it simply needs to be understood. Shuto Orizari is unique; the Roma are poor, but their circumstances are particular. Work to improve the Roma’s social conditions often focuses on the labour market, emphasising the need to provide better employment opportunities. The findings from this study however indicate that what is ultimately important is the granular activity of day-to-day life, something that simply reinforces a level of confidence and security in existing in the same wider space as the dominant ethnic group. With this foundation, the context, mechanics and capability of social institutions such as the labour market are understood, and the Roma are ultimately more empowered to take advantage of this. The findings also indicate that Shuto Orizari is one particular community where there is a real possibility to achieve a sufficient level

of ethnic integration for this to be successful as a truly complementary dimension to a strong, thriving Roma culture.

8.4 Concluding Remarks

The over-arching themes of this thesis, namely ethnic identity, acculturation orientations, and labour market participation have been the focus of much previous research within the Social Sciences. There is relatively little work however on these collective aspects together, and where literature exists, its applicability is limited through the complex, context-bound nature of the subjects. Similarly, there is existing social research on Roma groups across Central and Eastern Europe, but the particularly consequential community in Shuto Orizari, Macedonia, has largely been overlooked. The value in this work is that it combines these important social themes to fill a gap in the existing knowledge of Roma groups, but also has practical considerations for policy makers to ultimately help improve the difficult conditions in which these people live.

The main outcome of the findings is that the ethnic identity of the Roma residents in Shuto Orizari is particularly important, but unlike other Roma communities it is also generally allowed to thrive. The resultant freedom to decide how to participate in society leads some to separate into a purely Roma environment, whilst others retain a balance between their ethnic Roma heritage and that of the dominant Macedonian society. This social direction is particularly consequential. The Roma community is not privileged, and those who remain within this reference frame experience particularly poor life outcomes, with very little understanding of the mechanisms of wider society. Conversely, those who integrate are comfortable with their Roma ethnicity, but experience substantially better outcomes as they are able to exploit broader social opportunities more fully. This extends across many aspects of administrative participation in society, but is particularly important both psychologically and socio-culturally in the labour market.

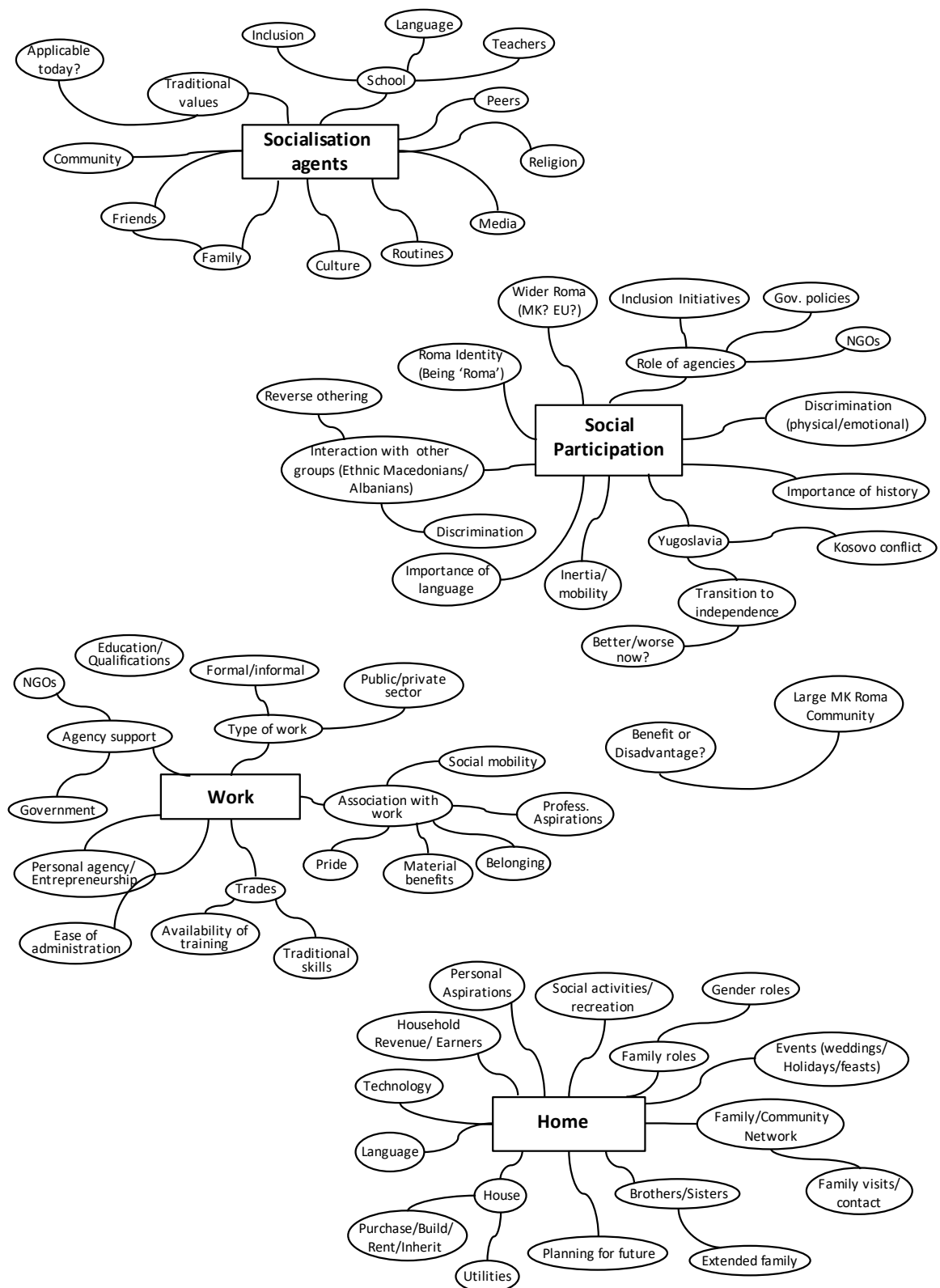
These findings are important, and can offer practical benefits in helping shape policy. Discussion within the European Union over recent years has focussed on the need for greater recognition, acceptance and representation of the Roma. Inclusion is a key theme to this; the involvement of Roma leaders at a supranational level, and

contribution from Roma groups to influence policies within a particular country. Research in this study has highlighted limitations in both these approaches for the Roma of Shuto Orizari. A pan-European Roma carries very little practical value to this group. Nor is ethnic acceptance important or threatened at a community level. Policies that emphasise and encourage the right to 'be Roma' are inadvertently unhelpful, they simply reinforce the divide between the poorest people and the wider mechanisms of society they so desperately wish to understand.

Instead, a move towards greater integration with the infrastructure of the Macedonian administration should be emphasised. To that end, policies that move these disadvantaged groups closer to the mainstream are of primacy, whether this be in education, employment, or any other social avenues. Greater leanings that nudge towards the dominant social infrastructure may stand counter to the views on a progressive, inclusive society, but accommodating this in a gentle but firm way would enable people to navigate the mechanics of wider society, a critical barrier to social mobility for many of the people in this community.

Finally, where the findings from this work are clearly exploratory, they nevertheless provide a new set of insights into the way in which the Roma of Central and Eastern Europe can experience life and help shape its outcomes. This has important implications for the Roma, but possibly also other minority groups living in complex, ethnically plural societies.

Appendix 1: Mind-map of the Core Literature Themes



Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form (English Language Version)

Consent Form

Life Experiences and Work with the Roma Community of Shuto Orizari

Background

This interview is part of some work being carried out at an English university to understand the lives of people within the Roma community in Skopje. The study will listen to people's experiences and their views on the world. In particular, it will look at people's thoughts on different kinds of work, the importance that this has in their lives, and the difficulties or opportunities they may face.

Following this interview, the things that are discussed will be written into a report that takes the information provided from many different people and sees if there are any similar or very different points of view. An important point with this work is that none of the information will be changed, and other non-Roma points of view won't be added. It will try to represent the views and thoughts from members of the Roma community as accurately as possible.

Taking Part

If you don't wish to take part in this interview, that's absolutely fine. If you also decide at any point during the discussions that you no longer want to take part, or that you don't want to answer any of the questions, that's also fine.

There will be at least one interview, but depending on the discussions we may also agree in the future to carry out another interview if you're happy to do this.

The interview will be voice recorded and then the discussions will be copied down in writing. This is so that the things we discuss won't be forgotten and can be assessed in detail after the interview. The voice recording will be deleted once it's been copied in writing. The written copy will be kept, although it won't contain any personal information and can't be traced back to you.

The information that you provide will be put together with information from other people that take part. If the information you provide needs to be highlighted in any way to compare with someone else's point of view it may be necessary to use your name. In these cases, rather than use your real details, I'll provide a fake name. This is to make sure that if anyone reads the report they won't be able to identify you and will not know who the comments have come from.

Using the Information

The information from this interview will be stored securely and will be accessible only to me and my university supervisors. Once the project is finished, the information that you provide will be kept in a store for 10 years and there is a chance that other people may want to read this as part of their own study into the Roma. At all times it won't be possible for people to find out your personal details and they won't be able to change any of the information that you've given.

At the end of the project a report will be also written to summarise the findings that will be made available to the public, this will always be confidential and there will be no way that the readers can trace this back to the people that took part.

If you want a written copy of this interview, I can provide this to you. Once the overall project is complete, I don't have any plans to give feedback to individual people that have taken part. If you'd really like to know what the findings are though, please let me know and I'll be happy to provide this to you.

Confirmation

I confirm that I've understood the above information, I've had the chance to ask questions and I'm happy to freely take part in this interview process.

I understand that I can withdraw from the participation at any stage.

I understand that none of my personal details will be made known to anyone, although a false name may be used when my opinions are expressed.

I also understand that the information I give may be used in future reports or presentations.

Name of participant:

Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 3: Translator-Researcher Code of Conduct Statement

Background

This work is part of a study being carried out at an English university to understand the lives of people within the Roma community in Skopje. Through a detailed interview process, the project will consider people's experiences and their views on the world. In particular, it will look at people's thoughts on different kinds of work, the importance that this has in their lives, and the difficulties or opportunities they may face.

Translation

The role of the translator is extremely important in this work. By channelling the views of the Roma participants into English language, the translator is ensuring not only that the words are translated accurately, but the context, spirit and intended meaning is also captured in the way the interview participants intend it to be.

The translation into English may need to be altered to reflect differences in language or culture between the researcher and the subject, but the content and spirit of the information being translated must not be changed in any way. If it is not possible to provide a faithful translation of any information covered in the interviews, this should be clearly stated rather than 'make it up'.

There may be times when the participant expresses views or opinions that you don't agree with. When this is the case, you should not challenge this information or let the participant know that you don't agree.

Research Ethics

We've spent a lot of time reviewing the subject of research ethics and have discussed a detailed pack of Powerpoint slides covering the background to the work and the expectations on all the participants. Central to this are the six ethical principles laid out by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) in the UK:

- Quality and integrity needs to be ensured at all stages
- Participants need to be fully informed about the process at all stages.
- The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants must be respected at all times by the translator
- Participation must always be in a voluntary way
- Harm to everyone – the participants, the translator and the researcher – must be avoided always
- The work must remain independent and free from influence at all times

All these points have been expanded on in much more detail in the translator training material, but for the role of translator it is worth re-emphasising the importance of confidentiality and anonymity one more time

Confidentiality and Anonymity

All information that is shared between the interview participants and the translator is confidential and should not be repeated outside of the interview. Similarly, the people taking part in this process are doing so in the knowledge that they do this anonymously and no-one will know that they participated, or what their views are. This applies even to the most basic information, including people's first names, or areas they live in, and should not be shared with anyone else.

Guarantees of confidentiality and anonymity are also extended to the translator. I've asked if you're happy to use your own name for the interview process or you'd rather use a pseudonym and we've agreed that you're (not) happy and will use (not use) a pseudonym (to be deleted as appropriate).

Participation

As we've discussed in the training, everyone takes part in this interview process on a voluntary basis and anyone can stop at any time, including the translator. If at any point you feel that you can't continue with the translation, you are completely free to ask to take a break or stop. This may be because you feel the subject is too difficult, you're not comfortable with the process, or perhaps you know one of the participants or they know you. Please feel free to raise any concerns you have at any time. It's much better to discuss these issues when they arise rather than to let them build up.

Confirmation

I confirm that I've understood the above information, I've had the chance to ask questions and I'm happy to freely take part in this interview process as a translator between Romany, Macedonian and English languages.

I understand that I can withdraw from the participation at any stage and that I should ask to stop and discuss anything at all that I'm not clear or comfortable with.

I understand all the training materials that we've covered in detail, and can ask any further questions on this at any stage in the process. I also accept that the six ethical principles are central to this work and must be respected at all time.

Name of translator:

Date:

Signature:

Name of researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Appendix 4: Field Research Risk Assessment

Identified Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact/Outcome	Risk Management/Mitigation
Risk of physical harm due to 'outsider' status in Roma community	Low	Researcher: Physical harm	Accompanied by the Gatekeeper Conduct interviews in a public location Drive to the interview location, park at the centre
Risk of physical harm to participants travelling to/from the interviews	Low	Participants and Translator: physical harm	Interview location selected in the centre of the community in which the participants live Interviews to take place during daytime hours
Sensitive topics being discussed cause distress or upset	Medium/High	Participant and Translator: discomfort, emotional upset or distress Researcher: anxiety from the situation, feelings of guilt	Pre-interview training with the translator to understand how to manage sensitive questions and identify distress with the participants Practice and pilot interviews to help develop an appropriately paced interview process to understand how to sensitively frame questions and answers Two-way post-interview debrief with translator to exchange views and learning points on the appropriateness and sensitivity of the process
Cultural insensitivity towards participants	Low/Medium	Participant: offence, upset, possible psychological distress Researcher: reputational damage, loss of credibility in the process	Detailed literature review on Roma culture, traditions and dominant social issues Extended time spent within the community before the interviews Use of an ethnic Roma translator, training and practice ahead of the interviews on how to feed this back to the researcher during the interview
Accusations of improper behaviour	Low	Researcher: loss of reputation, possibly formal allegations, legal repercussions	Interviews to take place within the transparent setting of a community centre Translator present at all times All interviews voice recorded
Indiscretion and disclosure of confidential information	Low	Participant: feelings of anger/betrayal or distress, possible retribution towards participants Researcher: loss of integrity in the research process, feelings of anxiety and guilt	Translator training in research ethics and protocols Informed consent process to clarify the methods and manage expectations Secure data storage, restricted access, post-projection data management

Identified Risk	Likelihood	Potential Impact/Outcome	Risk Management/Mitigation
Use of a gift introduces feelings of coercion or a dependency to complete the interview	Low	Participant: feelings of obligation to complete the interview in order to receive the gift	Informed consent/clarification before the interview that gift is a token of gratitude for time and effort, will be given irrespective of whether the interview is carried out/completed or not Gift to be of a nominal value
Misunderstandings about the research objectives and deliverables	Low	Participant: upset at the outcome of the process	Informed consent process to explain the process and objectives of the work
Intrusion during the interview process (people walk in during the discussions)	Medium	Participant: anger, frustration or mistrust that the privacy of the interview is compromised	Request appropriate privacy with the staff at the community centre
Translator and participant know each other	Low/ Medium	Translator and Participant: discomfort, suspicions that confidentiality or discretion may be compromised	Train translator ahead of the interviews to ensure they are aware and comfortable in raising this issue Informed consent process with the participants before the interviews

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