CONFRONTING MAJOR AND EVERYDAY DISCRIMINATION

ROMANI EXPERIENCES IN CANADA'S GREATER TORONTO-HAMILTON AREA

Canadian Romani Alliance

FXB Center
for Health & Human Rights
at Harvard University

STUDY CONTRIBUTORS

FXB Center for Health and Human Rights: Stephanie Martinez-Fernandez, Edita Rigova, Margareta Matache, Aqil Arif Merchant, Keisha Bush, Jacqueline Bhabha

Canadian Romani Alliance: Gina Csanyi-Robah, Shayna Plaut

Cover Design: Mary Deleware

Photography: Laszlo Sarkozi, Gina Csanyi-Robah

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for Health & Human Rights
at Harvard University

"In this long-overdue study, the authors document the experience of Romani people living in the Greater Toronto area, as well as how they are perceived by non-Roma. While the presence of this group is largely invisible in the Canadian context, the research reveals that many feel misunderstood and face ethnic insults. The most readily available response is to aim to remain silent about their Roma identity, even in the Canadian context, which celebrates multiculturalism. I recommend this informative study for anyone interested in broadening their understanding of stigmatization and discrimination of this racialized group in North America."

Michèle Lamont, Professor of Sociology and African
and African American Studies Robert I. Goldman
Professor of European Studies, Harvard University

Toronto, Canada - April 23, 2013
Demonstration in front of the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE

In 2012, the François Bagnoud Center (FXB) for Health and Human Rights established the Roma Program to highlight the exclusion and discrimination faced by the global Roma diaspora. Since then, it has become a leading forum for Roma scholarship, mentorship, and convening in North America and beyond. As one of the few Roma-led and Roma-focused academic initiatives in the United States, the program addresses the needs of a historically oppressed and neglected population. Before joining the FXB Center, I knew little about the Roma people, and I am proud that FXB has supported this work for more than 12 years.

The Romani people are dispersed, with the most significant population amounting to some 12 million individuals in Europe. There are Romani people in both North and South America. This report focuses on Roma in Canada, which number approximately 110,000 Romani people.

Much of FXB Center's previous work has focused on anti-Roma racism in Europe. We have examined the barriers to educational attainment that Roma children and youth face in Europe, particularly institutional and everyday racism, long built into institutions that program children for failure. The Roma program has also examined structural and social determinants of health and disparities in mortality and illness.

We have also extended our research work in the Americas. In 2019, in partnership with Voice of Roma, a Roma-led non-profit based in California, we published a mixed-method study titled Romani Realities in the U.S, which analyzed demographic, social, and economic variables. And in the past few years, we have collaborated with the Canadian Romani Alliance in designing, collecting data, and analyzing major and every day discrimination in Canada's Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area.

The Confronting Major and Everyday Discrimination study shows that in Canada, Romani people are subjected to patterns of treatment that mirror the treatment of other racialized groups that experience discrimination based on race/ethnicity. These include damaging cultural tropes and personal prejudice, but importantly, extend to government systems that conceive, weaponize, amplify, and reinforce stereotypes and individual beliefs.

This study is especially important because it explores, in their own words, the personal experience of Roma individuals with major and everyday discrimination. These accounts portray, often in wrenching terms, the impact of a daily life surrounded by relentlessly negative stereotypes of Romani people's capability and culture.

This work would not have been possible without the direct engagement and participation of the Romani Canadian Alliance and Romani leaders which extended the Roma Program's commitment to research with Roma. This partnership improved the research process and, it is our hope, increased the likelihood that this research will support action to dismantle the decades, indeed centuries, of major and everyday discrimination faced by Roma people.

Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH

Director, FXB Center for Health and Human Rights

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Romani people hold a long and meaningful historical legacy in Canada. Estimates suggest that approximately 110,000 Romani people live in Canada today, with many residing in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton area (GTHA). Yet, the existence of Romani Canadians, their history, culture, and contributions, as well as the contextual and cultural diversity and nuances that comprise the collective Romani identity, are either unknown or misunderstood in Canadian society.

Confronting Major and Everyday Discrimination. Romani Experiences in Canada's Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area focuses primarily on the experiences and responses to everyday and major discrimination among individuals of Romani heritage in GTHA, Canada, emphasizing the urgency for greater awareness and action to address discrimination. This study also underscores the multilayered and intertwined nature of different levels and manifestations of anti-Roma racism. Policies at all levels of government and one-on-one interactions at the individual level are interlocked—they can either worsen societal discrimination and inequities or help move the needle toward justice and redress.

Racism operates on various levels of scale—visibility and intensity, profoundly affecting individuals' and families' opportunities to thrive in society. A group cannot prosper if its members experience injustices and inequities, as they lead to ill health, limited career opportunities, and hindered financial stability and wealth. Furthermore, ethno-racial insults, jokes, and other expressions of everyday discrimination reinforce human hierarchies, isolation, and the internalization of false, negative beliefs about oneself that also have the potential to impact health, education, and financial opportunities.

In this study, we measured everyday discrimination by assessing instances of assaults on worth, such as the daily experience of feeling misunderstood, ethno-racial insults and jokes, active and passive distancing, and being underestimated, discredited, overlooked, and ignored. We also examined major discrimination, including the denial of resources, differential treatment, and ethno-racial profiling in institutional and social settings.

The analysis includes 87 participants (64 Romani adults and 23 non-Romani adults), with the majority of Roma being migrants or refugees from Eastern Europe. Key findings reveal widespread incidents of everyday discrimination, often leading to identity repression as a coping mechanism. More than two-thirds of Romani respondents also reported personal experiences of major discrimination, including denial of resources and differential treatment in various settings.

The findings also indicate a partial level of awareness of Romani identity in GTHA and a broader societally ingrained portrayal of Europeans as phenotypically white. In this context, physical and cultural traits, as well as racializing tropes, have been used to identify/misidentify, classify, or misrepresent Romani people.

A key strength of this study is its role as an inaugural examination of the subjective experiences of Romani people with everyday discrimination in Canada. Another strength is its inclusion of Romani organizations, interlocutors, and researchers, creating relatability and vulnerability and allowing for deeper insights. Thus, while contributing to a scarce

body of Romani-led and Romani-related literature in Canada, this study also highlights the importance of Romani-led initiatives and collaborative research efforts to address community needs effectively.

The study reveals systemic gaps in understanding and addressing the experiences of Romani people. It stresses the necessity of moving beyond diversity statements and investing in substantive culturally sensitive approaches and Roma-led initiatives to combat major and everyday discrimination and achieve equity and justice. The findings highlight the urgency of investing in anti-racism education, policies, and tools to protect and ensure Romani Canadians' rights, equal opportunities, and a life of quality and dignity.

INTRODUCTION

Across time and space, rulers and societies have subjected Romani people to oppression and disdain. Romani families and communities have been pushed to the very periphery of legal protection, compromising their opportunity to access rights and a sense of social inclusion, justice, and cultural recognition. Even today, wherever Romani people seek refuge or establish communities, stigma and discrimination follow. This phenomenon traverses geographies, languages, and cultural and national identities, jeopardizing the elements necessary for a life of quality and dignity.

Romani people migrated from India centuries ago and have experienced rich and diverse histories and developed a complex range of local identities ever since. Those acquainted with the plight of the Romani people are likely to recognize this population not just as one portrayed and often misrepresented in works of literature, music, and art over the centuries but also as one of the largest and most consistently oppressed racialized groups in Europe. Yet, while most Romani people are citizens of or reside in various European countries today, Romani populations live all over the world, including in the Americas, the Middle East, Australia, and Africa. The global Romani diaspora consists of more than 15 million people. Up to 12 million Romani people live in Europe (Council of Europe, 2012; Ed Holt, 2021), yet Turkey alone is estimated to be the home of between 500,000 and 5 million Romani people (Council of Europe, 2012). In addition, over 1.5 million Romani people live in Latin America and over one million in North America. Furthermore, Romani or Romani-related groups can also be found in regions like Central Asia and the Middle East (United Nations, 2015).

While Romani people live worldwide, much of the Romani and Critical Romani Studies have centered on Romani people in Europe. The literature from these fields of study thoroughly documents the social and economic conditions of the Romani people and delves into the history of anti-Romani injustices and present-day discrimination and inequities within the European continent. However, there is a lacuna in the global reach of Romani Studies, including the recognition and exploration of the complex history and contemporary context of Romani people in North America. To help address this gap, the FXB Roma Program has engaged in research with and about Romani people in the Americas since 2019. In 2020, the FXB Center and the Voice of Roma, a Roma-led non-profit based in California, researched the realities of Romani people in the United States (Matache et. al. 2020). In 2021, we embarked on a similar research agenda in Canada.

Canada has a smaller Romani population than the US. While the 2021 Canadian census reported 6,545 Canadian Roma (Statistics Canada, 2021), unofficial estimates, including a 2016 report by the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, suggest the figure may be closer to 110,000 (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2016). The largest number of Romani people known to live in Canada are settled in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton area (Levine-Rasky, 2016).

Romani people have been Canadian nationals for generations. Historical records trace the presence of Romani people in Canada back to the early 1900s, with some reports suggesting their presence as early as the 1860s (Levine-Rasky, 2016). Another report also asserts the

presence of Romani people in Canada in the 1800s, serving as horse trainers for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (Beaudoin, 2014). Despite a long-standing historical presence in Canada, the existence of Romani Canadians, their history, heritage, culture, and contributions, as well as the contextual and cultural diversity and nuances that comprise the collective Romani identity, remain widely unknown in Canadian society (Lee, 2000).

There is widespread societal unfamiliarity with Romani history and culture in Canada (Walsh & Brigette, 2007). Some Canadians fail to even identify or recognize this population as an ethnic group with a rich history and language, with a common image of Romani people as mystic individuals with a distinctive "way of life." Consequently, there is considerable Canadian apathy towards Romani people's struggles and challenging realities. As Milosh, a Romani Canadian, underscored in a 2011 interview, "I think another reason for general apathy among non-Roma is that too many of them don't see us as a genuine ethnic group and see us more as 'hippies' or a collection of dropouts or misfits. The latest slew of Big Fat G*psy Time [sic] id*ot-box shows and other misinformation documentaries are not helping since it is obvious this variegated collection of people shows, from Irish Travellers to Vlach Roma, can't be one ethnic group" (Beaudoin, 2014).

Simultaneously, racialization is pervasive. Derogatory labels, such as "lazy," "wandering," "nomadic," "thieving," or "criminal," and more recently, "bogus refugees" who seek to take advantage of social welfare systems, are often weaponized to legitimize anti-Roma racism, including hostile behavior, discrimination, and stigmatization.

Within the past three decades, Canada has witnessed the rise of targeted manifestations of institutional racism, exemplified by its disproportionate political scrutiny of the inflow of Roma emigrants from Eastern and Central European countries. Human rights activists and scholars characterize anti-Roma Canadian government policy as a phenomenon dating back to the 1990s, which started with the imposition of a visa requirement for Hungarian and Czech nationals emigrating to Canada, of which the majority were Roma individuals (Eggenschwiler, 2013; Tóth, 2013). The year 2010 marked a high point in anti-Roma political rhetoric when the former Canadian Minister of Immigration, Jason Kenney, publicly denied the reality of anti-Roma persecution in Hungary and labeled Roma people as economic migrants and "bogus refugees" (Caparini, 2013; Tóth, 2013; Varju & Plaut, 2016; Csanyi-Robah, 2021).

> … an "assault on worth" … when one is and feels ignored, overlooked, or shunned, when dignity and honor are challenged, or when one is disrespected based on belonging to a certain nationality, phenotype, or ethnic group. [It] also includes shifts in facial expressions and body language, ethno-racial comments, or racially coded language.

In 2012, Canada changed the asylum determination system, designating many of the European

countries Roma individuals and families were fleeing from as "safe," thus increasing the legal and administrative hurdles facing Roma people seeking asylum. People seeking refuge from these Designated Countries of Origin (DCOs or "safe countries") were fast-tracked through the asylum process and denied the ability to appeal. Canada's 2012 reform of the asylum determination system is the most recent example of an administrative targeted process designed to dismiss the longstanding and still ongoing severity of anti-Roma racism and violence in Central Eastern European countries, undermining the right-based claims of Roma people (Eggenschwiler, 2013; Csanyi-Robah, 2021; Rehaag, 2015; Ciaschi, 2018). In fact, Diop argued that loaded terms commonly ascribed to Czech Roma refugees, such as "bogus" and "fraud," were intentionally and strategically employed by state representatives. After the designation of the European countries that the Roma came from as safe, support from the majority population was also mobilized. Roma people's so-called "invasion" was deemed unjustified and harmful to Canada's asylum system (Diop, 2014).

Though the designated list of safe countries was later retracted, its original intent to hinder the inflow of specific groups by exploiting racializing labels of fraudulent or bogus refugees was clearly and succinctly corroborated in a government statement, (elucidating), "The DCO policy did not fulfill its objective of discouraging misuse of the asylum system and of processing refugee claims from these countries faster." The procedural hoops placed in countries known to have high influxes of Roma emigrants, as well as the systematic deterrence and exclusion of Roma refugees, were in line with a "new" form of racism—one that avoided any direct language related to race yet still furthered the historical exclusion of marginalized groups (Levine-Rasky, Beudoin, & St Clair, 2014).

While scantily studied, available reports suggest that major discrimination remains a reality in many areas of life in Canada. Romani people face hate crimes, racial profiling, and discrimination in accessing education, health care, housing, and proof of legal identity. Scholars and activists have documented incidents when Romani children were excluded from Hungarian schools in Canada (Walsh et al., 2011). Healthcare workers have subjected Romani people to prejudicial attitudes when they revealed that Hungary or the Czech Republic were their countries of origin, both countries widely associated in recent years with Roma refugee influx to Canada. There have been testimonies of stereotypical and racist portrayals of Romani people by service providers, who claim that they do not want to work and exhaust the Canadian welfare system (Walsh, Este, Krieg, 2008).

Meanwhile, Roma refugee claimant families face challenges when attempting to access healthcare, education, and federal assistance programs. These include difficulties navigating financial, cultural, and language barriers when they seek services—obstacles that compromise the accessibility and quality of care (Ibid, 2008). The inadequate amount of social welfare provided to people in need, including refugees, highlights the dismal beacon of hope afforded to Roma refugee claimant families (Walsh et al., 2011; Walsh, Este, Krieg, 2008; Walsh & Krieg, 2007).

In addition, there were changes in healthcare coverage that directly affected refugee claimants. While the government covered the cost of their medicines and healthcare, after June 2012, this support stopped, resulting in refugee claimants being left in a situation where they did not have sufficient means to access their right to healthcare (CBC, 2013).

Little scholarly effort has been devoted to assessing and understanding the subjective experiences of everyday discrimination that Romani individuals experience in Canada—which we could define as day-to-day indignities, stigmatization, or "assaults on worth," such as ethno-racial insults, ethno-racial jokes, stereotype-based questioning, passive or active distancing, and incidents where Romani people are misunderstood, underestimated, overlooked, or ignored. In addition, Romani people's responses to incidents of everyday discrimination, including whether and how such experiences impact their sense of identity, health, well-being, or feelings of agency, are also under-researched. Yet, the varied manifestations of everyday discrimination can generate a plethora of responses and defense tactics, including denial of Romani heritage. According to a UN report, "it is believed that the lack of self-identification in the 2011 census was used by many Roma as a safety mechanism, due to their lack of trust in the system, and fear of discrimination or other negative repercussions linked to public disclosure of their identity" (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2015).

The scholarly deficit in addressing Romani people's personal and subjective experiences of everyday discrimination compromises our understanding of the heterogeneous realities and needs of Romani individuals in the GTHA and broadly in Canada. It also reduces our understanding of their needs, worries, and demands for political, cultural, and social participation—key elements for effective representation, agency, and voice. The lack of scholarly work on and with Romani Canadians also affects the interpretation of Romani people's place within societal structures, such as education, employment, or healthcare, and the analysis of how dominant actors reinforce Romani people's social and political exclusion. Without a comprehensive understanding of a racialized community's subjective pain and experience with everyday discrimination, any analysis of that community's responses, including critical and skeptical responses towards official offers of "integration," is likely to be partial at best.

To address these research limitations and needs, our research aimed to (i) explore the experiences of major and everyday discrimination of Romani people in Canada's Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA), the country's largest Romani community hub, and (ii) identify Canadians' perceptions and perspectives regarding Romani people and their experiences with major and everyday discrimination in the GTHA.

THEORECTICAL FRAMEWORK

This study sought to document the differential experiences and responses to everyday and major discrimination among individuals of Romani heritage in the GTHA, Canada. Building on other studies that have focused on social exclusion, discrimination, poverty, or vulnerability, this study focused "the attention to the experience of the stigmatized" and the subjective and personal harms they endure. In addition, we wanted to explore the perceptions and awareness of non-Romani/gadjo (non-Roma in the Romani language) Canadians about the existence of major and everyday discrimination against Romani people in the GTHA, Canada. This approach offers an opportunity to unlock a deeper understanding of the justifications and perpetuation of injustices and inequities, particularly hidden or unseen factors and related remedies.

As our study focuses particularly on the daily indignities faced by Romani individuals, we build on the work of Michèle Lamont and her colleagues, particularly their 2016 publication, Getting Respect: Responding to Stigma and Discrimination in the United States, Brazil, and Israel (hereinafter Getting Respect). Getting Respect studied the experiences with stigmatization and discrimination of African Americans, Black Brazilians, as well as Palestinians, Ethiopian Jews, and Mizrahi Jews in Israel. The analytic framework proposed by Lamont et al. lends itself to analyzing other historically marginalized and oppressed populations, including the Romani people.

Lamont et al. (2016) define stigmatization as an "assault on worth" or subjective experiences of facing stereotypes and microaggressions. Such experiences do not involve major discrimination—exclusion, restriction, unfair or preferential treatment, a violation of, or lack of access to human rights as defined by international human rights standards. Stigmatization includes cases when one is and feels ignored, overlooked, or shunned, when dignity and honor are challenged, or when one is disrespected based on belonging to a certain nationality, phenotype, or ethnic group. Stigmatization also includes shifts in facial expressions and body language, ethno-racial comments, or racially coded language.

This study also draws on David Williams' work on major and everyday discrimination, the latter including elements similar to those used by Lamont et al. in defining and measuring stigmatization. Williams defines major discrimination as unfair treatment that is observable and visible and occurs in several spheres of life, such as employment, education, housing, and interactions with the police. Williams's scale of major discrimination is composed of nine categories of experiences within the spheres mentioned above: (1) being unfairly fired, (2) not being hired for a job for unfair reasons, (3) being unfairly denied a promotion, (4) being unfairly stopped, searched, questioned, physically threatened or abused by the police, (5) being unfairly discouraged by a teacher from continuing in education, (6) being unfairly prevented from moving into a neighborhood because a landlord or a relator refused to sell or rent you a house, (7) neighbors make your life difficult, (8) being unfairly denied a bank loan, and (9)

receiving poorer service than others (Williams et al., 1997; Williams, 2016; Williams et al., 2008). These categories do not imply descending severity; they represent different manifestations of discrimination in different fields of life.

Williams conceptualizes everyday discrimination as daily experiences of unfair treatment, such as being treated with less courtesy and respect, and facing microaggressions, such as misguided comments. Williams argues that such experiences occur chronically in everyday life (Williams et al., 1997). Williams uses a scale of ten items to measure everyday discrimination that monitors the frequency of their occurrence in everyday life. Everyday discrimination includes cases when one is treated with (1) less courtesy than others and (2) less respect than others, instances (3) when one receives poorer services than others, (4) when one is treated as if they are not smart, (5) as if they are to be afraid of, (6) as if they are dishonest, (7) as if they are not as good as the others, (8) cases when one is called names or insulted, (9) incidents when one is threatened or harassed, and (10) cases when one is followed in stores (Williams, 2016; Williams at al., 1997; Williams et al., 2008).

The concepts of stigmatization and major and everyday discrimination have been used in specific geographic, political, cultural, and social contexts. However, in a much more extensive range of contexts—either unstudied or understudied—hierarchies of lives and inequalities of status or caste have long been embedded in the societal and political machinery, with no or limited expectations of equal treatment. The normalization or internalization of an imposed social status, along with other factors, can influence the subjective experiences of assaults on worth. Thus, we acknowledge such limitations, and while we drew inspiration from both Lamont et al. and Williams' scales, we have also unpacked and measured everyday discrimination based on the Romani Canadians' personal experiences and circumstances.

> Romani visibility, identifiability, and racialization have influenced the negative experiences Romani respondents face either in Canada or in their countries of origin…Romani identity repression was commonplace in our study.

In analyzing the experiences of Romani Canadians, while building on the measures developed by Lamont and Williams, we develop a thematic coding system inclusive of the specific experiences of Romani Canadians to measure everyday discrimination. To mitigate potential bias, several team members independently confirmed thematic coding decision-making processes. We use the terms "everyday discrimination," "everyday racism," and "assault on worth" interchangeably.

METHODS

In this study, we explored the experiences of Romani people with both major and everyday discrimination and non-Romani Canadians' perceptions and awareness of that reality in the GTHA, Canada. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health approved this study on November 15, 2021. The study team complied with the COVID-19 pandemic regulations established by the authorities in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area. Because we aimed to conduct mainly in-person interviews, data collection started in 2023 when the Canadian health institutions asserted the COVID-19-related risks were minimal.

This study is based on a qualitative research project that involved Romani and non-Romani individuals in the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA), Canada. This region is home to Canada's largest and most diverse Romani population (Levine-Rasky, 2016). Our findings cannot be generalized to the Canadian or global Romani population.

Semi-structured interviews constituted the primary source of our research findings. From May 2022 to September 2023, the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights at Harvard University and the Canadian Romani Alliance (CRA) worked together to develop the interview guides, collect in-depth semi-structured interviews, and code and analyze the data.

A literature review of available books, peer-reviewed journal articles, and civil society reports related to the experience of Romani people in Canada informed the research questions and objectives. The review focused particularly on major and everyday discrimination, social exclusion, and societal perceptions about Romani Canadians.

We developed two interview guides, which were created collaboratively with the Canadian Romani Alliance and modified as field work informed the practice. One guide focused on Romani respondents and the other on non-Romani respondents with "proximate knowledge" of Romani people in their community.

The interview guide designed for the Romani respondents included questions related to opinions about the inclusion of the Romani population in Canada; major discrimination in different spheres of life, including access to various public services; and stigmatization/ everyday discrimination, including feeling disrespected, underestimated, over scrutinized, misunderstood, overlooked, or shunned while in Canada.

Similarly, the interviews with non-Romani individuals aimed to investigate non-Romani Canadians' perception and awareness of major and everyday discrimination against Romani people in Canada and to explore their attitudes towards and beliefs about Romani people. Therefore, the interview guide included questions related to non-Roma Canadians' knowledge of Roma inclusion, characteristics of the Romani population, interactions with Romani individuals, and opinions about the Romani population in regard to criminal justice and employment.

Given the nature of semi-structured interviews, the field researchers also asked follow-up questions, probed for additional information, and returned to key questions based on the

participants' responses. The follow-up questions were similar to those already included in the interview guides.

The study population consisted of Romani and non-Romani people in the GTHA, Canada. Romani individuals were considered eligible if they (i) were above the age of 18, (ii) resided in the GTHA, Canada, and (iii) self-identified as Romani individuals or with Romani heritage. Non-Romani individuals were considered eligible if they (i) were above the age of 18, (ii) resided in the GTHA, Canada, and (iii) self-reported having some knowledge or opinions about Romani people. Non-Romani individuals were excluded if they had never heard about Roma or "G*psy."

The Canadian Romani Alliance led and coordinated data collection and translation of interviews. While the FXB Center facilitated the Protection of Human Subjects training and the consultations about the interview guides, the CRA Project Director, Gina Csanyi-Robah, organized project orientation sessions and training for the field researchers.

A total of nine people were hired as field researchers. Seven field researchers were Roma: four Hungarian Roma (Toronto / Hamilton), one Romanian Roma (Toronto), one Czech Roma (Hamilton), and one Ukrainian Roma (Toronto / Hamilton). We intentionally selected a diverse team of Romani field researchers to reach out and build trust and solidarity within various Romani communities in the GTHA.

Two field researchers were non-Roma. It is important to note that non-Romani field researchers conducted most of the non-Romani interviews, along with some Romani interviews, including with participants who reported no perception of discrimination. However, participants who reported no perception of discrimination occurred across six different interviewers.

Weekly debriefing sessions among interviewers and the project director assigned by the Canadian Romani Alliance were held throughout the project duration. In addition, in May 2022, the Canadian Romani Alliance established a Community Board to guide the field research. The Community Board consisted of CRA members with experience in qualitative academic and community-based research. The Board reviewed and modified the interview guides to ensure they were appropriate and useful in the Canadian (especially the GTHA) context. They also advised on the recruitment and training of field researchers and brainstormed ways to increase the recruitment of participants.

The Canadian Romani Alliance conducted 95 interviews, of which we assessed and analyzed a total of 87 interviews: 64 interviews with Romani adults and 23 interviews with non-Romani adults. The study included Roma individuals with Russian, Polish, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Ukrainian, Welsh, and Romanichal (from England) backgrounds. Some participants had family histories connected to the Holocaust. Several interviews were conducted in the native language of the study participant and translated into English by the field researcher. As a result, language oversights, subjectivity, and omissions may have impacted some aspects of those interviews. Furthermore, 50 of our 64 Romani participants were foreign-born—emigrants and refugees—from Central and Eastern European nations.

Thus, our findings are inevitably partial and should not be taken to represent the overall experiences of Romani Canadians.

Romani respondents were identified through the snowball sampling method. A variety of methods were employed to facilitate Romani respondent recruitment. The Canadian Romani Alliance approached various Romani-related entities (NGOs, churches, youth workers, and community leaders) and their own Romani contacts for interviews and suggestions about the names of other Romani individuals who might be interested in participating. The CRA also posted a public announcement to recruit respondents and to identify Romani neighborhoods and families in the GTHA.

The CRA randomly selected non-Romani participants by approaching individuals from pre-selected neighborhoods in the GTHA.

Most interviews were conducted in person. Each respondent participated in one virtual or in-person interview for 60 to 90 minutes. All study participants were compensated for the time spent participating in the study with Canadian $25 in a prepaid Amazon gift card.

Before the interview, the respondents were provided with a consent form (with project information included), which was also summarized verbally at the beginning. We deidentified the interviews when citing or quoting participants in the study.

The Harvard University FXB research team led the transcription of the interviews and data coding and analysis with the help of 3Play Media, a transcribing company. We used Atlas.ti software to code and analyze the anonymized qualitative data. The Harvard team developed a coding system based on Lamont's theoretical framework on stigmatization and Williams' framework on everyday and major discrimination as well as recurring concepts from our interviews in Canada.

Dundas Square, Toronto, Canada - April 28, 2012
Rally for Roma NOT Bill C-31

KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Theme 1. Descriptive Characteristics

The analysis consists of 87 participants from the GTHA who self-identified as Roma (n=64) or non-Roma (n=23). Most participants in the study were 36-55 years old, followed by 26-35 years old. Most Romani participants were emigrants or refugees from Central and Eastern European nations (n=50).

Hungarian Roma comprised the largest percentage of Romani study participants, followed by Slovak Roma, Czech Roma, and Romanian Roma. In contrast, most non-Romani participants were Canadian-born (n=18), and emigrants or refugees (n=5) tended to be from Latin American, East Asian, and European nations. Regarding the educational levels reflected in the study, there were some notable differences between groups: around 50% of Roma reported secondary school or lower compared to non-Roma, where 74% reported a bachelor's degree or higher.

More female participants than male or gender-diverse people participated in our study. One participant identified as agender, and another one as LGBTQ (see Table 1. Characteristics of 87 Roma and non-Roma Respondents in the Greater Hamilton-Toronto Area).

Romani participants were also asked to report their preferred ethnonym or ethno-racial identity terminology. Most Romani participants preferred to be identified as Roma or Romani (n=39), followed by some participants who chose to be identified as G*psy (n=9), fewer who listed other preferences (n=6), and those who reported an indifference toward either terminology (n=5). As a result, to honor the prevailing preference toward Roma or Romani identifiers and consistent with our views, we continue to use Roma or Romani throughout this study.

It is important to note that the term G*psy (and its equivalents in different languages) is an exonym that has been historically used by non-Romani people and is still prevalent in many contexts today. We also acknowledge that particular Romani communities, such as UK Gypsies, self-identify as such.

In this study, the exonym G*psy is mostly marked with an asterisk to highlight its predominant interpretation as a derogatory ethno-racial slur by both Romani people and researchers within this study and among those represented in a growing body of literature. We use this form of the pejorative word in cases where its use could not be avoided: typically, in cases where respondents used quotes when they referred to insults that they experienced, in cases when they choose to refer to themselves as G*psies, or when non-Roma respondents only knew of Roma as G*psy.

Table 1. Characteristics of 87 Roma and non-Roma Respondents in the Greater Hamilton-Toronto Area

Characteristics	Overall (n=87) N (%)	Roma (n=64) N (%)	Non-Roma (n=23) N (%)
Age Category			
18-25	8 (9.2)	7 (10.9)	1 (4.3)
26-35	17 (19.5)	13 (20.3)	4 (17.4)
36-55	40 (46.0)	27 (42.2)	13 (56.5)
56-65	12 (13.8)	10 (15.6)	2 (8.7)
66-75	4 (4.6)	3 (4.7)	1 (4.3)
75+	4 (4.6)	4 (6.3)	0 (0.0)
Missing	2 (2.3)	0 (0.0)	2 (8.7)
Gender			
Female	52 (59.8)	37 (57.8)	15 (65.2)
Male	28 (32.2)	23 (35.9)	5 (21.7)
LGBTQ	1 (1.1)	1 (1.6)	0 (0.0)
Agender	1 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	1 (4.3)
Missing	5 (5.7)	3 (4.7)	2 (8.7)
Highest Educational Level			
Primary	14 (16.1)	14 (21.9)	0 (0.0)
Secondary	20 (23.0)	18 (28.1)	2 (8.7)
Bachelor's Degree	33 (37.9)	22 (34.4)	11 (47.8)
Graduate Degree	13 (14.9)	7 (10.9)	6 (26.1)
Missing	7 (8.0)	3 (4.7)	4 (17.4)
Preferred Terminology			
Roma or Romani	48 (55.2)	39 (60.9)	9 (39.1)
G*psy	11 (12.6)	9 (14.1)	2 (8.7)
Indifferent	7 (8.0)	5 (7.8)	2 (8.7)
Other	13 (15.0)	6 (9.4)	7 (30.4)
Missing	8 (9.2)	5 (7.8)	3 (13.0)
Citizenship Status			
Emigrant or Refugee	55 (63.2)	50 (78.1)	5 (21.7)
First Generation Canadian	10 (11.5)	6 (9.4)	4 (17.4)
Second Generation Canadian	6 (6.8)	5 (7.8)	1 (4.3)
Third Generation Canadian+	4 (4.6)	3 (4.7)	1 (4.3)
Missing	12 (13.8)	0 (0.0)	12 (52.2)
Canadian Born			
Yes	32 (36.8)	14 (21.9)	18 (78.3)
No	55 (63.2)	50 (78.1)	5 (21.7)

Theme 2. Visibility, Identifiability, and Racialization

Romani people, like any other ethnic identity, display a wide-ranging spectrum of phenotypes and cultural, linguistic, and individual characteristics. However, at a global level, the Romani identity's external visibility, identifiability, and racialization have been shaped by hegemonic forces across varied political, cultural, historical, and interactional contexts. In particular, physical and cultural traits, as well as socially constructed racializing tropes.

In Canada, at the societal level, there is a partial level of Canadian awareness of Romani identity and a broader societally ingrained portrayal of Europeans as phenotypically white. Specifically, in the GTHA, most non-Romani Canadians we interviewed have likely never had any contact with or exposure to Romani people (that they know of).

Canadians attempt to determine or guess Romani identity based on visible or stereotypical markers that indicate a certain level of understanding of the culture, whether biased, flawed, or not. Speaking the Romani language in public, having a surname typically associated with Romani individuals, having an occupation related to the arts (painting, music, craftsmanship), wearing traditional Romani clothes, or appearing racially non-white are all components that, isolated or in combination, enable racialization, racial profiling, visibility, and external identifiability as Romani people.

A Romani individual's culture and identity can become identifiable and visible by wearing traditional Romani clothing. Although wearing traditional clothes is not a uniform custom and applies to a minority of the global and Canadian Romani population, Romani identifiability and visibility may extend to whether Romani individuals actively wear traditional clothes.

However, in our study, several Romani respondents believed that ethnic identifiability and visibility would not be determined as much in Canada by wearing traditional clothes, unlike in Europe. As one of the respondents mentioned, "Nothing would happen [if someone is dressed in traditional Romani clothes] because here people go out in different clothing, and no one tries to judge them." She explained that the diversity of Canadian society makes it hard to recognize some characteristics related to the culture of certain groups. However, a few Romani respondents mentioned wearing traditional clothes and being recognized as Roma based on that. One woman recalled wearing traditional clothes to work one day and was told by a customer, "You look like a Roma now." Other Romani respondents indicated that if they were wearing traditional Romani clothes, they believed they would have received varied forms of unwanted attention or assaults on worth.

Speaking the Romani language is another identity feature that influences Romani identifiability and visibility, as well as racial profiling, particularly by the police. Yet, fluency in the Romani language was limited in our study. Among the few who did speak Romanes, a 41-year-old woman who emigrated from Hungary responded that she avoids speaking the Romani language publicly in front of non-Roma individuals. She explained: "In Hungary, it was better if no one knew if we were Roma or different. So that's why. It's just stuck. Here in Canada, there are a few Hungarian people who are not Roma, and they are racist. You have to be careful." Another respondent, a 47-year-old female who also

emigrated from Hungary and has lived in Canada for 11 years, when asked whether she avoided speaking Romani in front of non-Roma, stated: "Originally, we speak Romanes; practically, we don't. […] So, we learned to speak Romanes, but somehow, it 'got into our genes' that we should not talk in Romanes publicly. I haven't talked to my kids, for example, which is a big mistake […]. But this is how it is. So, we are not speaking in Romanes at home or publicly."

Another respondent who was raised with her siblings in Canada described a traumatic experience caused by foster parents who did not allow them to speak Hungarian because the family from which the children came was known to be Romani Hungarians. The respondent exclaimed, "They punished us […] I think because [we were] G*ypsy. They didn't allow us to speak our language, for one thing. They didn't like us talking about our mother and father or our G*psy family, none of our family. They hated it. […] They used to beat us up when we tried to talk, especially [my older sister]. They would beat her [saying] 'Stop talking to the younger ones,' which was me and [my younger sister]. 'You shouldn't speak Hungarian then.'And as she [my sister] got older, I don't know, they traumatized her to the point that she didn't want to speak Hungarian anymore." Although this experience does not involve the use of the Romani language but rather Hungarian, it suggests that individuals who speak a Central or Eastern European language but do not resemble typical white Europeans may be easily identified as Romani. This experience showcases how the erasure or oppression of any form of expression remotely related to the Romani identity was imposed—even through violent means. Thus, some Romani individuals have been compelled to learn how to avoid identifiability and visibility in such circumstances.

When visible identity markers were missing, Romani people have often been misidentified in the GTHA. Many Romani respondents attributed the difficulty in recognizing characteristics related to Romani identity markers to the diversity of Canadian society. In some cases, individuals stated that their identity remains ambiguous for other Canadians. Due to phenotype and other attributes, some Romani people are often mistaken for having other national backgrounds, such as Morocco, Syria, Italy, India, and other countries. For instance, after being asked about being a visible Romani individual in Canada, one of our respondents replied: "[…] everybody always guesses that I'm a First Nations person. Even First Nations people speak to me in their language, thinking that I'm going to be able to answer back to them. So, my whole family looks like First Nations in the Canadian context."

The limited clarity and awareness regarding the Romani ethnic group and multicultural diversity in Canada has also led or allowed some Romani individuals in Canada to opt for concentrating on their individuality and, in some cases, to self-identify and/or successfully pass as non-Romani either in general matters or in specific social contexts.

Marcia Alesan Dawkins argues that successful "passing capitalizes on the absence of reliable evidence of difference […]" (2014). Indeed, aware of the social constructions of ethnicity and race and the stereotypes associating Romani people with non-white phenotypes, some Romani people, particularly white-presenting, have been able to and sometimes chose to pass as either white Canadians or non-Romani from their countries of origin. Moreover,

other Romani people have self-ascribed as belonging to other racial or ethnic groups, particularly when some of their identity markers, including skin tone, resemble characteristics similar to those groups. Thus, they have neutralized their Romani identity in any given circumstance to blend in with the white majority or other minority groups in Canadian society.

A segment of Romani respondents from the GTHA have occasionally hidden their Romani identities particularly in public to protect themselves and their families from being discriminated against, stigmatized, and/or stereotyped. This behavior allows them to stay under the radar while maintaining a sense of Romani consciousness. As one respondent, a 57-year-old woman and third-generation Canadian, shared in her testimony,"[…] if we tried to express ourselves, like if we played music, wore Roma clothing or whatever, then there would be discrimination. So, we just learned to pass, dress like everybody else, act like everybody else […]." However, while passing, "the fact of being accepted, or representing oneself successfully as a member of a different group" (Dawkins, 2014, p. 1; Oxford University Press, n.d., Definition 8) may help Romani individuals feel safer in the moment, it often happens at the expense of their own Romani identity and well-being and may lead to a cultural loss or erasure of identity, compounded with the feeling of profound isolation and humiliation.

Romani respondents emphasized that passing, understood here as an interrelational dynamic between the passer and their audience, is more likely to concretize in environments with first-generation Canadians of European descent, and those who recently emigrated from Europe who can more easily recognize visible Romani identity markers. As one respondent, a 56-year-old female who emigrated from Scotland to Canada 50 years ago, noted, "We have a better chance of passing if they don't come from the countries we came from." Imposed external identification, visibility, and racialization are often based on some visible signs and cultural or physical characteristics.

Thus, in this context, we further classified Romani passing into two components: concealing, which takes on a proactive nature, or repressing, which takes on a reactive nature. Recent literature has investigated the differential motivations behind concealing (proactive) or repressing (reactive) one's ethnic identity, finding that, at times, the act can be seen as an adaptive, empowering tool as opposed to purely a maladaptive, assimilatory action that conveys a lack of acceptance of one's identity (Dobai & Hopkins, 2022). In light of this context, although we did not assess whether the lack of Romani identity disclosure was attributed to proactive or reactive measures, we adopted the word identity repression in this study. This term honors not only the historical causes of passing among the Romani people but also the fact that external Romani visibility is complicated by the fact that many individuals with Romani heritage can inadvertently and unassumingly pass solely based on a limited awareness of Romani people in Canada.

While in this research project, we did not aim to measure Romani respondents' ability or willingness to pass; we still learned that those who cannot pass experienced major discrimination and/or acts of assault of worth more often. One Romani respondent, a 57-year-old female who identified as ethnically non-visible, provided such a testimony:

"I need just to say one thing. I'm a light-skinned G*psy woman [...]. I see stuff happen to other people that are identifiable as dark [...]. I understand what they're going through. [...] I know the darker-skinned Romani people are not having the same experiences that I had. And again, I believe that we're fortunate, my family. We're fortunate in the sense that we can pass very easily. We're not necessarily visible minorities. So, this is why I think it's always been something that's just there, but we don't talk about. I think we'd have to confront a little bit more if we were visible minorities. But we aren't."

There is a nexus between identity visibility and the feeling of security. As Jusionyte and Goldstein (2016) point out, for certain population segments, being invisible constitutes a daily form of security. Although Jusionyte and Goldstein focus on individuals with undocumented status, parallels from this concept can be extended to encompass the situation of the Romani population, who often hold onto intergenerationally ingrained fears and traumas about being at risk of harm only because they could be identified as Roma. Thus, the daily lives of Romani people are intricately tied to external ethnic visibility and identifiability, a circumstance that is often subject to negative perceptions. A 25-year-old female respondent who immigrated to Canada from Croatia 8 years prior noted differential treatment regarding her and her family's racial phenotype:

"My sister went through way more because she's so much more visibly Roma than myself. I think that's where [...] my non-patience comes from because I'm the older sister, and I was always so protective of her. And my mother, also being darker skinned, [...] back home it's a small city, everybody knows everybody. So, they knew what I was, yeah. That was never hidden, but I think that's where my power comes from when it comes to talking to white people [...] I'm visibly white. I feel like, sometimes, they'll take you more seriously because you're white."

External ethnic visibility plays a significant role in the severity of experiences of everyday and major discrimination for Romani people in the GTHA. However, some Romani individuals who indicated a higher likelihood of being perceived as white-passing have also been impacted by assaults on worth. The experiences of assault on worth persisted across gradients of Romani visibility through the possibility of encountering or passively witnessing ethno-racial insults, racial slurs, ethno-racial jokes, racist comments about Romani people, and other acts of assault on worth.

Romani visibility, identifiability, and racialization have influenced the negative experiences Romani respondents face either in Canada or in their countries of origin. Therefore, many Romani individuals have taken on a path of hiding and masking visible or identifiable identity markers, hereinafter, referred to as Romani identity repression. Romani identity repression was commonplace in our study.

Theme 3. Everyday Discrimination or Assaults on Worth

The concept of an assault on worth, coined by Michele Lamont et al., encompasses different manifestations of stigmatization, ranging from subtle to overt acts that can impact one's dignity, self-esteem, sense of self, and worth.

Our study assessed assaults on worth, also referred to as everyday discrimination or everyday racism in this study, through nine distinct codes adjusted to Romani Canadian realities. These independent but interrelated codes can provide methodological and categorical insights into the broad field of Romani Studies, particularly in Europe, where studies often measure perceived discrimination against the Roma people as a legal or open-ended category, potentially resulting in under or miss-reporting. Perceived discrimination is often understood or unpacked generally as major discrimination rather than split into major discrimination and everyday discrimination, discrimination and everyday racism, or stigmatization and discrimination. Yet, as Lamont et al. showed in studying stigmatization and discrimination against racialized groups across Brazil, Israel, and the USA, "incidents of stigmatization are more frequently mentioned compared to those of discrimination" (Lamont et al., 2016).

Table 2. Participants Reporting Assaults on Worth & Coping Mechanisms

Characteristics	Roma (n=64) N (%)
Assaults on Worth	
Ethno-racial insults	31
Ethno-racial joke	14
Stereotype-based questioning	17
Passive Distancing	19
Active Distancing	14
Misunderstood	40
Underestimated	19
Overlooked	4
Ignored	8
Adaptive & Maladaptive Coping Mechanisms	
Anticipating Harm	23
Memory Repression	6
Preemptive Self-presentation	6
Preemptive Self-isolation	11
Identity Repression	35

Thus, further research in Romani Studies should investigate the full range of manifestations of stigmatization or everyday racism targeting European Roma people and Romani groups in other parts of the world, too.

We examined how Romani Canadians in the GTHA experience, perceive, describe, cope with, and respond to subjective encounters of assault on worth. Analyzing micro-level experiences, we learned that nearly all Romani Canadians we interviewed experienced one or more incidents of assault on worth. The most frequently reported acts of assault on their worth were feeling misunderstood (n=40) and being subjected to ethno-racial insults (n=31), followed by passive distancing (n=19) and stereotype-based questioning (n=17). Nevertheless, the Romani individuals we interviewed also reported experiences when they felt underestimated (n=19), ignored (n=8), and overlooked (n=4) due to perceived ethno-racial characteristics. They also recounted experiences of enduring ethno-racial jokes (n=14) and deliberate distancing (n=14), especially when disclosing their ethnic identity. The primary adaptive and maladaptive coping mechanism reported by our respondents was repressing their Romani identity (n=35), followed by anticipating harm (n=23), preemptive self-isolation (n=11), memory repression (n=6), and preemptive self-presentation (n=6). (See Table 2. Participants Reporting Assaults on Worth & Coping Mechanisms).

Identity Misconceptions. Experiences of Feeling Misunderstood.

Romani Canadian respondents linked the experience of being and feeling misunderstood with the belief that a majority of Canadians lack or have biased or limited awareness of Romani people as a distinct yet heterogeneous ethnic group. Consequently, the existence of biased or limited awareness led to interpretations of actual behaviors, experiences, stories, or actions of Romani individuals in their social environments in ways that were inaccurate, stereotypical, generalizing, essentializing, or lacking in empathy; it also informed non-Romani individuals' negative language, attitudes, or reactions in micro-interactions with Romani Canadians and reinforced social and symbolic boundaries and distance.

Some Romani participants in the study described incidents where they were stereotyped and homogenized as a collective and negative 'G*psy,' and consequently, misunderstood as individual human beings, as Romani individuals, and members of an ethnic group with a diverse and complex history, heritage, and culture. They expressed both a sense of discomfort and a need to use the term "G*psy" despite its largely derogatory connotation and the contentious responses it elicits. As one respondent, a 20-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Croatia eight years ago, explained, "When I talk to someone [...], I have to say, I'm a G*psy. And then I explain to them it's a slur and it's not a nice thing to say, just to use Roma. I repeat myself. But they don't listen. And then they just keep using [the term] G*psy, G*psy—'Oh, cool. You're so G*psy. Well, that is so cool. I've never met a G*psy before. Wow! G*psy, G*psy.' And it's the ugliest word to me. I hate saying it. [...]. They just drop it like it's nothing. To me, it's—I'd rather throw up, but to them, it's nothing."

Respondents perceived the term G*psy as an obstacle and anticipated it as an indicator of potential stereotyping or aggressions in their social contexts and micro-interactions. Furthermore, some respondents found the repetitive push to explain the racial slur emotionally violent, draining, or dishonoring—a concrete consequence of the assault on worth and being misunderstood. "All of that stuff challenges your sense of dignity and honor. Every time you have to tell somebody that you are G*psy because they don't know who Roma are, it challenges your sense of self. And then when you have to educate them, that also makes you feel like you're challenging your dignity because you have to unpack all these stereotypes [...]," one study participant, a 25-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Croatia, said.

Romani Canadians rationalize the choice of and preference for the term G*psy primarily due to its familiarity among Canadians. Yet, some respondents expressed their frustration at "people's inability even to recognize that the word 'G*psy' is a derogatory word to many Roma people," and thus, to recognize and understand their humanity and individuality beyond the collective racialized labels assigned to the Romani population. They highlighted slow progress in adopting the respectful endonyms used by Romani people to name their communities, particularly when contrasted with the progress made in awareness about the preferred endonyms of other racialized groups in Canada.

Several respondents noted that their interlocutors frequently assume they are from Rome (Italy) or Romania when they identify solely as Roma or Romani people. As one participant, a 42-year-old female, a second-generation Canadian, explained, "Very few people I encounter say, 'Oh, yeah, I know about the Roma community,' right? And then sometimes I feel like I still need to confirm that we're not talking about Italians or Romanians." Hence, when a Romani individual shared an incident of discrimination they faced, their dialogue partners could not always recognize that the incident carried social, cultural, and historical significance different from that experienced by a white Italian or Romanian individual. Such misconceptions contribute to the misunderstanding of Romani individuals, culture, origins, history, and personal experiences, as well as a feeling of being misjudged instead of understood and seen.

The term G*psy has commonly been misunderstood, ranging from a romanticized portrayal to a negative villainous depiction of Romani people. According to a Romani respondent, a 77-year-old female in Canada for 46 years, in relation to the slur, the misrepresentation of the Romani people is constructed as a binary: "We are either exotic or we are vilified. And that, I mean, everywhere I have read anything about us, that's always the dichotomy that comes up." Nonetheless, both romanticization and villainization feed racialization and negatively impact Romani individuals and their well-being.

Canadians, and more broadly North Americans, tend to romanticize the slur G*psy, as well as the Romani people and culture, by assuming an idealized and idyllic life of traveling, dancing, and fortune-telling, embellished with flowing and colorful outfits and a sense of magic. In that context, Canadians associate the terms G*psy and Bohemians with representations of free-spirited individuals. As a respondent, a 40-year-old female, who

is a second-generation Canadian, described, "There is a lot of confusion around the word G*psy or the word Bohemian because that's become something people have embraced to mean a free spirit [...] they don't even see us as a separate ethnic group. We are more of a subculture you can enter freely as you wish based on your attributes [...]." Such perceptions imply that it is possible to enter this externally framed social subculture, which, along with many other negative consequences, can lead to the assumption that departing from it is also possible. At the same time, other participants recounted instances when Canadians commented on their ethnic heritage by saying, "It must be fun to be a G*psy" or by inquiring whether they could read fortunes. However, such indignities adversely affect Romani individuals and families, causing many to feel stereotyped, hurt, identity-less, and not understood or respected.

The external romanticization of attributes linked to Romani culture often involves actions that unintentionally yet steadily contribute to dehumanizing Romani people and erasing their identity, history, and culture. Notably, one respondent, a 76-year-old female and first-generation Canadian, recalled that a family in a neighborhood, "very progressive, aware people, got a dog, and they were very excited. They called their dog G*psy because the dog loved to travel, loved to travel in cars." Such decisions may be inoffensive and harmless in intent, but nevertheless, they equate an animal's behavior to actual or fictionalized elements of Romani identity and/or perpetuate a racial slur. Historically, many Romani individuals, families, and subgroups have been forced, by social and structural factors, to be on the move, a situation that should be acknowledged as a constraint and, frequently, a source of hardship, not simple evidence that all Romani people love to travel and have historically moved freely (Levine-Rasky, 2018). Today, the majority of Romani people, particularly in post-communist countries, no longer practice nomadism, and many don't and can't consider nomadism to be a defining element of what it means to be Roma nowadays. Signaling a lack of understanding and sensitivity to nomadism's historical, economic, structural, and cultural determinants is another way of assigning generalization and racialization to Romani identity while undermining historical Romani oppression, rejection, and forced assimilation.

Several Romani respondents referred to experiences where the misinterpretation of Romani identity and culture in false romanticized archetypes was a "positive form of discrimination." Yet, such misrepresentations can be equally damaging, undignifying, or harmful. For instance, a Romani emigrant from Hungary, living in Canada for eleven years, noted that some Canadian peers perceived her through the lens of stereotypes, portraying her with a crystal ball and tarot cards, which she interpreted as a mockery and caricaturization of Romani people, particularly women. She emphasized that labeling stereotypes and biases as positive discrimination is "so weird." The gendered racialization of Romani people, particularly women, through romanticization erases individuality and an intricate history of heritage and oppression and obscures the severity of intergenerational trauma and the value of Romani contributions both locally and globally.

In our study, the most common villainization of Romani people was to link the community with thievery, deception, and other forms of criminality. As one respondent, a 43-year-old

female, emphasized, a response Romani Canadians frequently receive when disclosing or admitting their ethnic heritage is, "Oh, if you're a G*psy, you must steal, or you move around a lot and stuff." That social and cultural imagery reinforces the long-standing historical racialization of the Romani people as a criminal group or race across the globe, a phenomenon acutely evident and damaging in Nazi Europe (Matache et al., 2022).

Such narratives constitute not only indignities but also potential threats for Romani individuals, as they constitute forms of verbal abuse and emotional aggression. One of the Romani participants in the study, a 32-year-old female who emigrated from Romania and owns a cleaning business, was accused by a customer of stealing simply because of her Romani identity. The police did not conduct a proper and fair investigation, and "people automatically believed her [the customer]." Another participant, a 76-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Italy seventy-three years ago, underscored, "I have been to jobs where I've been accused of stealing erroneously once they found out I was Roma. And I had to open my backpack several times and say, here, look through this thing. And then after, I'd say, don't dare even try to talk to me."

Several other respondents encountered stereotypical associations between Romani identity and criminality, experiencing them as indignities or aggressions that caused them to feel misunderstood or dehumanized and to suffer harm. As one stated, "All the time. Repeat yourself, repeat yourself, repeat yourself, or you're not going to be seen as human. You are just another G*psy, another thieving G*psy."

The villainization mechanisms also entailed linking the derogatory term G*psy to the racialization of the Romani people as intellectually "inferior and deficient," an old legacy, including from eugenic and race science. For example, a Romani respondent, a 32-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary twenty-three years ago, recalled his early school experiences in Canada, noting, "Yeah, I've been called a stupid G*psy before [...] they said it jokingly, right, but at the end of the day, now that I think about it, it's still in my head. So, it definitely did impact me in a way. I didn't take it serious[ly], but I still remember."

"I have been to jobs where I've been accused of stealing erroneously once they found out I was Roma. And I had to open my backpack several times and say, here, look through this thing. And then after, I'd say, don't dare even try to talk to me."

Such indignities, particularly in the school environment, impact not only teachers' expectations and behaviors but also children's health, attainment, sense of worth and belonging, and likelihood of feeling understood and accepted. Existing studies suggest a significant link between anti-Roma racism in educational settings and educational trajectory, where children experiencing biases and bullying are less likely to enroll in higher education (Bhabha et al., 2017). The interviews also revealed repeated instances of the "I did not take it [the indignity] seriously" response amongst Romani Canadians. However, we

were not able to measure the emotional and well-being cost of such responses.

Several respondents shared experiences when they felt misunderstood by their non-Romani spouses' families due to collective understandings of individual behaviors as well as racialized perceptions of Romani traditions, history, and culture. Some Romani respondents reported hiding their Romani identity from their proximate family. One participant, a 52-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Romania twenty-five years ago, described a member of his wife's family "was surprised and couldn't believe; 'how come those types of G*psies are so different than the bad G*psies which were in our city?' It was really like she couldn't believe it. [She didn't understand] how come the clothes or everything is different." The power of such offenses and responses is highlighted by the fact that many other Romani respondents noted that respect for their identity by the immediate family was a crucial factor enabling them to develop positive ties to their Romani identity.

Some Canadians also sexualized the slur G*psy, a legacy of gendered racialization and objectifying portrayals of Romani women in arts, literature, or movies as well as sexual violence. Some female respondents emphasized how their bodily features or hobbies were attributed to their G*psyness. "Oh, well, that's why I'm so wild, or that's why I'm so sexy, or that's why I'm such a good dancer [...]," a 42-year-old female, second-generation Canadian, shared. The essentializing and offensive nature of such comments led Romani women, in particular, to feel misunderstood, disrespected, unsafe, and over-scrutinized by gadjo males linking romantic pursuits with the fulfillment of an objectifying fetish.

In the study, Romani Canadians linked the feeling of being misunderstood to feelings of harm, sadness, anger, and invisibility. As one participant, a 21-year-old female, first-generation Canadian, put it, people "immediately think of someone in a scarf and with a crystal ball, and who's driving around in a trailer, [...] trailers are a big part of our history. But that is not who I am. Yeah, it definitely affects that just because it makes me sad that no one is educated on who we are, and that part of myself is like invisible to a lot of people." Similar sentiments were expressed in many other instances rooted in being misunderstood. We found that such sentiments often informed patterns of identity repression.

For some respondents, identity repression resulted directly from being misunderstood on some level, more explicitly, due to the considerable lack of awareness of Romani identity. In some cases, identity repression was a tool for preventing or evading the discomfort, effort, and exhaustion of constantly needing to educate others. For instance, one respondent, a 55-year-old female, a second-generation Canadian, told us she revealed her Romani identity "As little as possible unless it's necessary," further attributing her Romani identity repression to the fact that "the questions are just too painful. I've gotten to the point where unless you're going to pay me $50 an hour, I'm not going to educate you for free." Another respondent, a 57-year-old female who refrains from sharing her identity as much as possible and has a French, English, and Romani heritage, stated, "If somebody I know well, like a very close friend, I would tell them, my dad is Roma. [...] It takes a lot of explaining. You can't

just say [...] it's not like you can just say, well, I'm French, and everybody goes, oh, OK. It takes a lot of explaining. And it's a longer conversation than just, what is your nationality or your ethnic background?" Another Romani respondent, a 41-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Slovakia, further explained, "It's not a conversation I want to have because they're starting from a place of complete ignorance [...] I'll just sort of play down who I am. It doesn't really matter. I'm just a brown guy. I'm here to help out," as his way of rationalizing his Romani identity repression.

Broadly, when Canadians use ethno-racial slurs or disclose varied collective stereotypes in interactions with Romani people, it leaves Romani individuals feeling misunderstood, which can be further unpacked as feeling devalued as individuals and stripped of their unique individuality, culture, humanity, and personal experiences.

Words that Wound. Experiences and Responses to Ethno-Racial Insults.

Romani Canadians shared wide-ranging incidents when they were directly exposed to ethno-racial insults. In Michele Lamont et al.'s study, a majority of the respondents from across the three countries investigated—Brazil, Israel, and the USA—mentioned ethno-racial insults as a primary manifestation of assault on worth. In our study, the majority of insults directed at Romani Canadians were associated either with the racial slur "G*psy" or tropes long attributed to the Romani people at a global level, particularly in Europe.

When asked about ethno-racial insults, many respondents shared how the term G*psy was displayed and weaponized as a powerful one-word insult directed at them in various public spaces or within their social circles—racial slurs are intrinsically violent. As one participant, a 32-year-old female, a first-generation Canadian, recounted, several members of their family experienced such humiliating indignities: "I've been called the Z (Z*ngari) word [Italian equivalent of G*psy]. [...] And one time, I went to a cultural event, dinner with my dad. It was an Italian dinner for his Union. And one of the men there called my dad the Z word." Another respondent recounted being called the slur while walking on the street.

Furthermore, Canadians linked the derogatory term G*psy with the entrenched racist label of Romani criminality not only for collective vilification, as we have already shown, but also as a means to directly insult individual Romani people and deny them service or social proximity. In our study, one participant, a 43-year-old female, recounted an incident at a store where, after being misidentified as Indigenous and clarifying her Hungarian Roma roots, the store employee asked her to leave because he thought the Roma client would steal something from the store. The store representative went on to remark, "You are not going to be able to buy anything because G*psies don't buy anything. They just put stuff in their pocket." The study participant left the store and never returned there. She recalled feeling furious at the moment and concluded the story with a burst of uneasy laughter.

Ethno-racial insults involving the trope of G*psy criminality took other forms, with some insults being more overt. One such example was narrated by a participant, a 42-year-old female, a second-generation Canadian, who mentioned how a friend's mother would frequently "tell the story about how a G*psy stole her doll on the boat ride from Italy to Canada when she emigrated." Such narratives emerged whenever a topic related to the Romani people arose. Another instance involved a teacher telling her students, in a class that included Romani Canadians, that they should not trust Roma people because they are thieves and evil.

Ethno-racial insults originating from, and further perpetuating, the trope of G*psy criminality manifested not only in verbal communication but also in actions. As exemplified by another female participant's experience at her workplace, a co-worker suspected her of stealing a staff-purchased gift card for their boss. Driven by suspicion, the non-Roma employee searched the Romani individual's backpack without consent. Although the gift card was not in the purse of the Romani woman, the employee left the purse in the break room to signal suspicion and distrust.

Throughout our study, several participants discussed instances where Canadians referred to them as "dirty G*psies." Globally, in anti-Roma narratives, the racialization of dirtiness has been laid out at least through two interconnected but distinct meanings. The first aspect encompasses racialized labeling of Romani individuals' bodies, communities, and culture, particularly those impoverished, as unclean, unhygienic, contagious, and diseased, set against an implied portrayal of non-Roma Europeans as clean, healthy, and civilized. The second element involves a more implicit association, linking the notion of dirtiness to a veiled belief in biological and/or cultural determinism, deeming Romani people inherently biologically and/or culturally unclean.

Participants in our study faced assaults on worth that involved the trope of "G*psy dirtiness" particularly during face-to-face interactions with first-generation Europeans or individuals of European or European neighborhood descent, which some explained as an extension of anti-Roma tropes from Europe and countries with significant Roma populations. For instance, one participant, a 40-year-old female and second-generation Canadian, shared an incident she experienced in a taxi. The cab driver, a man of Turkish origin, who learned she was Romani, pulled his car over to drop off the respondent and her family and insisted on showing them a video of Turkish Romani individuals dancing only to express his disgust towards this population. "Look at them. Look how dirty they are. Look how ridiculous they are. Look at how gross they are," he exclaimed. The Romani respondent felt that such experiences make Romani people more cautious and alert in interactions with non-Roma and more reluctant to disclose their ethnic identity. "Those experiences [...] stay with us," she added.

Romani women faced distinct gendered and racialized indignities. A Romani Albanian Canadian woman, a 25-year-old, shared an incident during an Albanian Canadian community party. An Albanian Canadian man wanted to hug the Romani woman, but after she refused, he told her, "You are not Albanian. You are G*psy, and you are disgusting, [...] dirty."

Another Romani woman shared a similar experience when interacting with a man of Balkan heritage. "I've noticed with younger Balkan men when they would meet me. Now, I'm not around the community anymore. I'm a pretty lady, they would want my attention, and then you don't give it to them, or you don't want to give it to them, and they would get so offended and right off the bat, [say] 'Oh, you're a dirty C*gan' [Albanian equivalent of G*psy]." The tie between racialized and gendered violence and its justification through stereotypes has been known for some time. Romani women and Romani LGBTIQ+ are not exempt from such experiences and are at risk of compromised safety.

The violence of the "dirty G*psy" trope also extended to children, including in settings involving their own friends and school circles. Non-Romani parents not only used that phrase but also prohibited their children from social proximity to Romani children, including by not allowing them to bring Romani children home. In response, Romani parents would advise their children to play with their relatives instead. School peers, too, used the same insulting and racist phrase to bully Romani children. Responses to ethno-racial insults in school settings that involved confrontation often ended with the punishment of the Romani individual. A 65-year-old female participant, a first-generation Canadian, recalled how, in her school years, children would "call us dirty G*psies on the bus on the way to school [...]. We would walk out of the classroom because they'd be calling us dirty G*psies. When we'd stick up for ourselves, we would get punished." In addition, Romani Canadian children also encountered direct, physically cruel, and aggressive behaviors. When one respondent was 14 years old, a man of Romanian origin asked if the respondent was Roma. Upon receiving an affirmative response, the man spat at the child and walked away. Following the incident, the respondent's father stayed home to be by the child's side for the rest of the day to ensure her safety, and offer emotional support.

Other ethno-racial insults equated Romani people with irresponsible parenting. One incident shared by Romani participants involved an IKEA employee telling a Romani mother who left her child in the IKEA playroom that "G*psies sometimes don't show back up for their children."

Ethno-racial insults were also used against Romani family members. An incident involved a wife of Bosnian origin arguing about "stupid or dirty G*psies" to her Romani husband. Such experiences can impact the dignity, safety, and/or emotional well-being of Romani individuals. As one participant recalled, "I just ignored it. But I felt like crap. And I still remember it. There have been a few unprovoked incidents like that. And I think those are the worst because they make you feel unsafe. They make you feel you're at the mercy of whoever decides you or whatever they hate."

Several Romani participants conveyed feelings of shock, pain, maltreatment, bewilderment, and a sense of feeling frozen when confronted with abrupt ethno-racial insults. One respondent, a 61-year-old female, told us, "I was a little shocked. I wondered what was going on in that person's mind. I mean, I felt hurt. I felt like he didn't know me. What a stupid thing to summarize my entire being as I walk across to get a Tim Hortons coffee. Where does the anger come from? Where does that hate come from? What did I do to incite that? I didn't say anything."

One of the consequences of being on the receiving end of ethno-racial slurs or insults is feeling isolated in one's pain and confusion. A respondent, a 23-year-old male who emigrated from Hungary, untangled his experience with confronting ethno-racial insults by describing it as "in one word, isolated. It certainly didn't help my social skills [...] it was safe to assume that people in general just didn't like me there, they were just kind of tolerating me. But that I wasn't actually welcomed." Other respondents shared similar experiences of perplexity and pain, which speaks to the lack of safety that is instilled in these moments and other threats. Thus, ethno-racial insults often stir feelings of compromised safety, isolation, and confusion.

Jokes that Wound. Experiences and Responses to Ethno-Racial Jokes.

As in the United States (Lamont et al., 2016), so too in Canada, racial humor is commonly used as a means that can reinforce stereotypes and racial hierarchies. Romani Canadians reported ethno-racial jokes less frequently compared to ethno-racial insults. Still, ethno-racial jokes were central examples of assaults on worth.

Similar to the experiences of being misunderstood and enduring ethno-racial insults, ethno-racial jokes frequently centered on or featured the term G*psy. Ethno-racial jokes often referenced narratives of cultural or inherent Romani criminality, cursing or magic powers, nomadism, disinterest in education, or dirtiness, particularly from individuals with European heritage or first-generation European Canadians. This segment of the non-Romani Canadian population is more prone to use ethno-racial jokes than their non-European counterparts, a difference that highlights divergence in historical oppression, embedded human hierarchies, sociability norms, school curricula, and levels of tolerance for racism.

Some Canadians, particularly those with European heritage or first-generation European Canadians, used phrases like "you, G*psy," "you, fricking G*psies," or "all you freaking G*psies" to address Romani acquaintances, friends, or family members. The fact that such ethno-racial appellations occur in personal and intimate spaces is not unique to the Toronto case. As Michele Lamont et al. shows in Brazil's case, "Indeed, jokes were more commonly reported as occurring in personal relationships rather than anonymous interactions" (Lamont et al., 2016).

Some Romani respondents also recalled representatives of state institutions using ethno-racial jokes. One Romani respondent, a 58-year-old male, shared that a police officer jokingly addressed him as "Hey, you, G*psy guy. How are you?"

Study participants shared instances of assaults on worth through jokes insinuating inherent criminality within the Romani people, notably the joke about their wallets being at risk of being stolen by the Romani individual in front of them. Others used the expression "to be g*pped" as a joke around Romani acquaintances. In such circumstances, Romani respondents employed similar coping mechanisms, such as downplaying the harmful nature

of their experience, noting that they did not take things seriously or personally, or "laughing it off." That was also the case of individuals involved in previous research with other groups conducted by Sue and Golash-Boza (2013) in Mexico and Peru. However, some Romani respondents felt hurt or shunned by the jokes. As one participant shared, "They try to frame it as a joke, but you just get this uneasy feeling when you tell someone you are a G*psy." Such ethno-racial jokes regarding one's ethnic community convey a broader message that speaks to the societal racialized take on a whole community.

Whether exposed to numerous or limited instances of offensive jokes that informed stereotype threat, Romani respondents' understanding of the possible adverse reactions to their identity led to repression of joy or pride in their culture as well as their identity. As one participant, a 40-year-old female and a second-generation Canadian, shared, "Those things, even though they're used as humor and they're kind of an acceptable thing, I'm sure that it feeds an interest. [It pushes you to] hide your culture so that you can be socially embraced and accepted and not rejected based on your history and your heritage." These findings align with Sue and Golash Boza's conclusion that ethno-racial jokes perpetuate racial hierarchies. Racial humor is falsely portrayed and understood as harmless (2013). In fact, several Romani respondents utilized laughter to mitigate ethno-racial jokes.

Romani children were also exposed to ethno-racial jokes grounded in longstanding tropes, like the notion of Romani adults abducting non-Romani children. As one Romani parent, a 40-year-old female and second-generation Canadian, shared with us, during a Halloween trick-or-treat outing with her children and their cousins, a woman told the children, "Don't take more than one candy, or the G*psies will come and get you tonight and steal you." As the mother recalled, the children were shocked by the remark and ran to share the experience with their parents. The Romani mother, who was also a teacher, then took it upon herself to share her personal experience, explain to the person who had made the offensive comment how hurtful it was, and teach people about Roma people and culture in an effort to debunk stereotypes. In a meeting, she asked a room of fellow Canadian teachers if they had ever heard their "parents threaten that if you don't behave yourself, the G*psies will come and steal you" because of how much that interaction had haunted her. She found a quarter of the teachers in the room raising their hands, illustrating how salient anti-Roma views still are.

Children and their parents were also confronted with the trope of a collective Romani disinterest in education, which was also used in the context of ethno-racial jokes. As one parent shared, the teacher would be sarcastic when her kids missed a couple of days of school because "G*psies don't like going to school."

Racist myths regarding Romani people have been constructed and have persisted for ages. In many cases, those who choose to repeat these phrases have never grappled with their racialized origins, much less realized they were referring to an actual ethnic group. The early exposure of Romani children to racialized, overt, and monolithic generalizations, even in settings where they are disguised as jokes, still runs the risk of internalization of the message, both by Roma and non-Roma children, that Romani people are thieves or

unintelligent. In both of these instances, Romani mothers were forced to advocate and educate on behalf of their community and children.

Romani female participants in the study experienced gendered and racialized assaults on worth—several women shared incidents during which they experienced jokes that involved stereotypes related to fortune-telling or magical and evil powers. In other instances, people jokingly asked Romani women if they would put a spell on them or read palms, showing the intersecting occurrence of stereotype-based questioning and ethno-racial jokes. One Romani woman who never openly disclosed her Romani identity at work faced continuous mockery from her employer. The employer racially profiled two Romani customers based on their gold jewelry and long skirts. They also racially profiled the Romani employee who never self-identified as Romani and routinely assigned her to attend to customers of color. The employer would jest that "the G*psy will take care of the Asians—the foreign women."

In response to ethno-racial jokes, some Romani respondents in a position to make comments that would be listened to, particularly teachers, took it upon themselves to raise awareness of stereotypes pertaining to Roma people and use education to deconstruct these narratives. However, in line with responses to being misunderstood, repeatedly correcting misunderstandings can be experienced as a demeaning, demanding, or painful strategy worth pursuing. As a result, some Romani respondents just chose to brush off ethno-racial jokes as prejudiced perspectives regarding Romani people or culture that were normal and to be expected of Canadians. Humor was often used to hide one's discomfort and minimize the negative impact of stereotype-based perceptions.

When confronted or called out for ethno-racial humor, some Canadian individuals making ethno-racial jokes dismissed the concerns of the Romani individuals as overreactions, rudeness, or unfriendliness, given that they perceived racial jokes as non-damaging and trivial. However, those experiencing these jokes felt a loss of identity, respect, and dignity in that moment, along with offense, exclusion, sadness, and other similar feelings.

Stereotype-based Questions Faced by Romani Canadians.

Stereotype-based questioning ties Romani people, identity, culture, history, and experiences to collective and fixed offensive labels, often implying a hierarchy of lives and a distinction between "us" and "them." Specifically, stereotype-based questioning can convey elements of inherent nomadism, criminality, laziness, and profiling based on racial phenotypes. However, stereotype-based questioning is generally perceived and presented as harmless despite the negative, misguided, and misinformed concepts and effects it unveils.

Like the other categories of assault on worth addressed in this study, stereotype-based questioning often stemmed from a preexisting racialized belief in Romani criminality. During interactions with Romani individuals from the GTHA, some Canadians inquired whether the individuals had a history of incarceration or could be entrusted with financial matters. Others asked interviewees if they stole children. Notably, a Romani respondent who worked

with a bank was repeatedly questioned by clients about her reliability in managing their finances. Some clients would ask, "Are you trustworthy? Can I trust you? You're handling money… you [have] Roma background." These inquiries arose within a context where clients initially raised questions about her heritage due to her dark complexion and/or hair, and the respondent felt compelled to disclose or confirm her Romani origin.

Such experiences led study participants to anticipate implied accusations in other contexts, prompting them to repress their ethnic identity. One respondent, a 48-year-old female and a second-generation Canadian, shared that everything she heard about her people made her never want to disclose her ethnicity to anyone. That led to challenges regarding pride in herself and her identity: "But it took me until I was almost 30 years old to feel a sense of pride and ownership about my own culture and identity."

Stereotype-based questioning also recurrently emerged from a monolithic perception regarding Romani people's phenotype. Study participants were often questioned about the cause of their dark skin when their dialogue partners were unaware of their origins, or they were asked why they did not have dark skin when Romani individuals disclosed their origins but had a lighter complexion. Other study participants were asked if they were Moroccans, Syrians, Italians, or other nationalities, which the respondents felt was related to their skin complexion.

When asked about their origins, some study participants only disclosed their country of origin for various reasons, including feeling ashamed of their Romani heritage. Yet, confused by particular physical characteristics, such as skin or hair color, some Canadian individuals would add questions or comments, often related to non-whiteness. One study participant, a 34-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Serbia thirty years ago, shared, "I was trying to say I'm Serbian. And everybody would tell me, you don't look Serbian. So, I always had to lie and say, 'Well, some people have black hair.'" Another respondent, a 32-year-old female who emigrated from Romania, told us that people stare at her because she is not white. She added, "There's always a lot of questions, even when I got hired at McDonald's. I mean, they were really, really wondering what ethnicity I was." When the respondent identified as a Roma woman, she was met with further confusion as her coworkers "had no idea what [I] was talking about." While this example may attest to the lack of recognition of Roma as a people in Canada, it also highlights how Romani individuals, compounded with stereotype threat or daily anticipation of harm intertwined with the Romani identity, can translate confusion and lack of awareness of their identity as an assault on worth. Moreover, concealing a part of one's identity places pressure around the exact moment when a Romani individual decides whether to disclose their identity.

Sometimes, stereotype-based questioning was triggered by an association between stereotypical behaviors and physical characteristics. For instance, one study participant, a 67-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from North Macedonia, recounted meeting a Canadian neighbor who recognized his family's Romani origin and displayed an odd interest in unveiling their Romani identity. The man told our respondent: "Do you see these? They all look like you. And these are G*psy people." When asked how he could

recognize Romani people, he said it was based on their behavior and physical appearance. "I have a lot of experience knowing their faces. [...] I can tell by the skin. I can tell by the hair and the way they behave." In response, the Romani man sought to humanize himself, his family, and his community by confronting the man with the reality, "Between you, them, and me, there is no difference whatsoever. You eat food, and I eat food, and they eat food. You go to the washroom, and I go to the washroom, and they go to the washroom." He advised the man never to spread hatred in this manner again; however, the Romani respondent continued to hear the man express anti-Roma sentiments with fellow neighbors.

On other occasions, stereotype-based questioning emerged in more subtle forms rooted in Romani-related nomadism stereotypes. For instance, one individual commented to a study participant, "I'm going to travel. I bet you do that a lot," even though the participant did not. Such stereotype-based statements and questions were not always immediately apparent to Romani individuals. As one respondent, a 61-year-old female, explained, "I'm not even connecting where that's coming from until somebody will say something like, well, if you're Roma, I guess you like to wander around." In such circumstances, some Romani Canadians confronted the stereotype by explaining the racializing myth of Romani people as forever wanderers and highlighting the fact that the majority of the Romani people across the world, including in Canada, have long been settled.

Romani respondents occasionally used sarcasm to respond to claims and questions about nomadism. When one Canadian brought into conversation nomadism as a feature of Romani people, a Romani Canadian respondent responded: "Some [Romani people] are still being kicked out of countries if that's what you're referring to." However, there were also instances when respondents chose not to react or instead opted to use coping mechanisms learned from their parents: "Sometimes it's just like my mom used to say, 'You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear, so just move along.'"

Additional questions were based on stereotypes portraying Romani people as unclean and lazy. One respondent, a 34-year-old female who emigrated from Serbia, was asked by a co-worker how come she was Roma and was clean. Similarly, another study participant was asked by a contractor hired to repair their washing machine if their family was the only "good G*psies" as all G*psies were "lazy and disgusting." Romani individuals responded differently in such situations. Some stayed silent when faced with stereotype-based questioning, while others openly challenged the stereotype. For instance, one respondent informed the individual claiming that Romani people were "lazy and disgusting," that "that's not my experience. My experience is that they [Romani people] are hard workers and caring people." Again, similar to the other forms of assault on worth, some of these questions and comments arose from Canadians of European descent or first-generation European Canadians.

Like in other categories of assault on worth, stereotype-based questioning was also tied to expressions of underestimation that erased a Romani individual's talents and capabilities. For example, the skills and knowledge of a renowned Romani musician and his band were often questioned during contract or playlist negotiations and concerts. The musician felt the questions were rooted in stereotypes and doubts about the band's abilities and musical

education. Other professional musicians in the room were shocked both by the fact that the Romani band agreed to play classical music and that the performance was excellent. They would ask, "How is it possible that a G*psy could play such an instrument [...] and classical music?"

Yet, in such circumstances, some Romani musicians responded by attempting to befriend and win over the people posing such questions and engaging in assaults on worth. Similar responses were seen in other settings where Romani respondents sought to win over people. A Romani musician explained, "I play what they want to hear. So, even if I feel bad in the the situation, I play it. [...] It's a challenge for me. I treat these kinds of situations as a challenge. Even if I can't play that music, I'm going home, and I practice until I can't do it—I can do it. And next time when they come, I prove to them that I was developing that kind of characteristic of the music, what they like, and I'm doing it." Romani respondents argued that by showcasing their kindness, intelligence, or talent, both they and their community could gain social acceptance. Yet, there are personal risks, emotional strains, and other harms that arise from constantly engaging in conducts aimed at proving oneself's worth, working to gain gadje's acceptance, and being forced to represent an entire ethnic group.

Overall, stereotype-based questioning often resulted in feelings of shame and the anticipation of harm from those openly self-identifying as Roma. These feelings, in turn, led to a range of responses, including identity repression, preemptive self-presentation, or taking care in one's initiative on appearance, effort, merit, and experience to avoid stereotype threat.

Reactions to Romani Identity: Active and Passive Distancing.

In our study, both active and passive distancing were among the most commonly reported acts of assault on worth. Passive distancing involved incidents, gestures, or behaviors that made Romani respondents feel unwelcome in a social setting or public space—subtle acts that put a distance between a Romani and a non-Romani individual. A 77-year-old female Romani respondent described passive distancing in these terms: "People put space between [us and them] rather than saying anything. It's a feeling [...] you know that they've retreated." By contrast, incidents involving active distancing included plain acts of aversion that put a distance between a Romani and a non-Romani individual.

Several Romani study participants noticed a subtle change in the body language (e.g., gestures and facial expressions) and behaviors of Canadians they interacted with, especially those of European descent or first-generation European Canadians when they revealed their Romani heritage. Some participants pointed to avoidance of eye or body contact or shaking hands. As one participant, a 45-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary five years earlier, noted, "Our very first lawyer, yeah, he was a Canadian guy, middle-aged, white, and he was just... how to put it? He did not even try to be polite with

us. He was just openly rude. Never looked me in the eye, never shook my hand."

When Romani individuals perceived avoidance of physical or eye contact, they felt distressed, disrespected, and feared. Some respondents perceived such overt gestures as deliberate attempts to induce shame in themselves and their families, casting doubt on their ethnic identity. Others experienced such incidents as an affront to their very humanity. As highlighted by one participant, a 76-year-old female and first-generation Canadian, in the study, "One of the things that I find troubling is that, if I'm with a person, and they know who I am, and then suddenly, they find out this additional piece of information, I'm no longer the same person. I'm another person. And that lifts me from the normal human [...] and moves me into another realm. And I don't like that."

Several Romani study participants experienced instances of active distancing in social gatherings and family outings. Some described experiences where Canadians would "back off at parties," kindly and politely excuse themselves, or leave conversations upon discovering the Romani heritage of their companions. Some Romani respondents talked about a sense of non-Romani individuals becoming visibly uncomfortable and acting strange in their presence. For instance, one respondent, a 32-year-old female who emigrated from Romania, shared an incident where she invited a friend, her friend's boyfriend, and a new date for a double-date dinner. Although he appeared interested in her, after she mentioned her Romani background, her date spent considerable time in the bathroom. When confronted, he used racial and gender slurs, claiming she was undeserving of him and his body and calling her a "dirty G*psy." Another Romani woman recalled how she felt when "the [Hungarian] waiters and waitresses would come to serve [her and her family]" when she was a child, turn away, and "never be kind and talk nice to us. It was always like they were forced to come and take our order." In other incidents, when confronted, non-Roma stopped the conversation and did not want to talk about it anymore. Romani respondents shared feeling "very small," othered, mistreated, or excluded in such humiliating circumstances.

Some Romani study participants experienced incidents of active distancing combined with ethno-racial insults in mixed-family homes. One Romani respondent talked about his former partner who distanced herself from him and their children and abused the children when she found out that he was Roma. "This was a very, very big blow to her. It was very disappointing for her. And it was a very prepared plan to break up the relationship," he explained. Furthermore, she started to bully the children, telling them, "You are G*psy. All kinds of bad language." Another participant, a 48-year-old female whose father is non-Roma, also admitted her father tried to generate distance between her and her Romani identity by occasionally calling her Romani mother, uncles, and aunts "a bunch of dirty, no good-for-nothing g*psies" and actively telling her to "hide your G*psy identity." She reported that these actions only served to make her feel ashamed of her identity, yet she silently endured the humiliation.

Romani children were direct subjects of both passive and active distancing in circumstances outside their homes. A respondent, a 57-year-old female and a third-generation Canadian, recalled going to a park alongside her dad and playing her instrument on Sundays. Yet, while some people would gather around to listen to the music, many others "would pull their

children away and wouldn't let the children play with us and keep a wide berth." While some Romani children experienced active distancing with non-Romani parents prohibiting their children from either hosting or being hosted by Romani children, they also faced prejudice, bullying, and physical aggression. Instances of violence included peers cutting the hair of a Romani child, as well as slapping or striking her with rulers. While the act of cutting a Romani girl or woman's hair is a manifestation of gendered violence, within some traditional Romani subgroups is also considered an act of dishonor. While we learn that acts of this nature went largely unaddressed by the school leadership, a few participants shared their incomprehension about the reasons for maltreatment. In the words of a Romani respondent, "Walking down the hall, the seas would part. I don't know if it was fear of touching me or fear of me."

We also documented other instances of active distancing where Romani Canadians, including young people, felt individuals feared them. Some Canadians feared Romani people simply because of the color of their skin. Others avoided social or bodily proximity to Romani individuals. One female participant, a 47-year-old who emigrated from Hungary, recalled an unsettling incident during a group assignment where one of her classmates displayed clear discomfort and fear, as indicated by her body language and demeanor. The participant noticed the classmate leaning away, turning their face away, and speaking as if she were repulsed or afraid of the participant's presence. Despite feeling disturbed by the encounter, the Romani respondent chose not to react, stating, "It was strange," she said. "I just feel strange, but I haven't done anything. If she fears me, OK, I don't care. […] but it bothered me. So, I don't know. I'm not perfect yet in this. I have to train myself more for a reaction like this."

Romani women have also experienced distinct active and passive distancing in their workplaces, hospitals, universities, and other public settings. A young Romani woman who worked for an art gallery had to endure this form of indignity in the presence of her co-workers at a Ukrainian store. A woman entered the store, and upon sharing concern regarding the war in Ukraine with another employee, she "ran backward into the wall and said, no, no, no, no, no" when she saw the Romani employee. The woman recognized her Romani origins based particularly on visible Romani markers that were distinctive for the region from which both women originated—a black dress and gold jewelry. In another instance, another Romani woman, a 32-year-old and a first-generation Canadian who had previously been hospitalized for suicidal thoughts, faced added suspicion and scrutiny when other patients in the ward learned of her Romani background. "Everybody was kind and sharing their experiences […] then suddenly, on one particular day, it changed to, are you a compulsive liar," she recalled. They avoided her for the remainder of her stay. Similarly, a Romani student talked about her grandfather's Romani ethnicity in a university class where everyone else spoke about their background. In return, she faced distancing and "a very bad reaction from other students, including students of color."

Just as other assaults on worth, active and passive distancing leaves life-long impressions on one's feelings; however, those enacted by other marginalized identities seemed to elicit the most shock. Despite enduring parallel experiences of everyday and major discrimination,

some Romani respondents felt there was very little solidarity between communities of color, such as Roma, Black, and Indigenous communities, due to a lack of awareness of the existence of Romani people and the indignities and racialization they have endured. As one Romani respondent, a 76-year-old female and a first-generation Canadian, recalled, "This cuts across all kinds of [racial and] ethnic groups."

Acts of distancing were more likely to be met with non-responses from Romani individuals and to generate sentiments of embarrassment, shame, vulnerability, confusion, and discomfort. Passively distancing acts that involved subtle gestures or behaviors, such as avoiding eye contact, sometimes escalated into actively distancing acts and/or ethno-racial insults. Regardless of initial reactions, most Romani individuals interpreted active and passive distancing as aggressive or rude behaviors and understood them as grounded in fear and bias.

Experiences of Being Underestimated and Discredited.

Romani Canadians spoke about incidents when they were underestimated or discredited. In particular, being underestimated was underscored as a common manifestation of assault on worth, as mentioned by 19 respondents. The Romani respondents' capabilities, from their intellectual and moral skills to their linguistic and educational knowledge, were underestimated across diverse environments. These findings mirror those of Michele Lamont et al., who documented similar patterns in Brazil, where one-third of middle-class stigmatized respondents reported being underestimated. In our study, the experience of being discredited was intertwined with enduring stereotypes and tropes about Romani people as a collective, leading to the devaluation and mistrust of their abilities, behaviors, and morals.

Several participants mentioned the workplace as a significant environment where they were underestimated or discredited, with doubts about the intellectual abilities of Romani individuals being salient. "They thought I was stupid," a participant said about their employer and co-workers. Another, a 61-year-old female, recalled being seen as "potentially lazy, not as organized" as the non-Roma employees and unlikely to accomplish the tasks assigned to her. A third respondent, a 52-year-old male who emigrated from Slovakia, shared that Roma "were only underestimated by employers, especially when employers were East Europeans and/or Ukrainians, who didn't believe that the Romani individuals could do the work as well as other people [...]. And in the end, they realize that we are very capable and seek us out [...]." Consequently, Romani individuals find themselves having to prove their worth and skills: "Until you prove yourself, they assume that you are not capable."

Within work environments, being discredited was often tied to the enduring trope of Romani criminality. Occasionally, co-workers reduced Romani individuals to this trope, openly making unfounded accusations and wrongly accusing them of thievery. Such occurrences have caused Romani individuals to withdraw from group activities, a form of preemptive isolation or exclusion. As one respondent candidly admitted, "I'm not coming to any more

work parties, nothing. I'm just working here, and that's it."

In professional settings, Romani adults faced skepticism regarding their intellect, education, experiences, or knowledge, as well as being discredited as unintelligent, liars, or lazy. Study participants described instances where non-Roma Canadians, especially those of European descent or first-generation Canadians, disdained their public talks or refused to ask them questions, asserting, "They know [the topic] better than I do." A respondent shared that she attended a meeting with 20 teachers to speak about Romani culture. "When I started," she recalled, "non-Romani people degraded me, that the story I'm telling is not true. And there is another way to define Roma and Romani culture." Upon learning about the Romani heritage of those they dialogue with, some Canadians would abruptly switch to a slower speaking pace, a different mannerism, or change how they respond to Romani individuals, including more thorough explanations, as if Romani people "can't possibly understand what they're talking about," as one respondent put it.

Education represents a distinctive trigger for skepticism and racist beliefs regarding the Romani people as a collective, prompting Canadians who encounter educated Roma individuals to regard them as exceptional due to their deviation from preconceived notions about Roma people's "inferior" intelligence or culture. As highlighted by a participant in the study, a 58-year-old male, "When you're talking with non-Roma, and you're saying that you have education this one, this one, this one, so they looking at you like, oh, really? [...] Hard to believe, right?"

Similar incidents occurred in social interactions, initiated particularly by Canadians of European descent or first-generation Canadians, who discredited Romani individuals as "bad G*psies." In one community, neighbors began treating their Romani neighbors differently upon becoming aware of their Romani heritage. The neighbors questioned their intellect or skills. "Do you know anything?" they would ask. Similarly, a 55-year-old male participant who immigrated to Canada from Slovakia eleven years before remarked, "They think that since we are dark, we are foolish. Once he found out I am not that stupid, he changed his way of communicating with me." Another participant expressed feeling alienated at times, sensing that they are viewed as outsiders or aliens.

Overall, being underestimated or discredited was more likely to stem from deep-rooted racist beliefs that Romani people are lazy, unintelligent, or untrustworthy. Responses to experiences where Romani individuals were underestimated or discredited in the workplace often involved forms of preemptive self-presentation, where Romani individuals worked hard to prove their intelligence or capabilities. Meanwhile, acts of underestimation or being discredited that occurred in social interactions varied between preemptive self-isolation and preemptive self-presentation. Both coping mechanisms attest to the harmful and degrading nature of assaults on worth that specifically target and question one's skills, morals, and education.

Experiences of Being Overlooked and Ignored.

Romani Canadian interviewees recounted various incidents where they encountered experiences of being ignored and overlooked in private, professional, educational, social, and other settings. Being overlooked or ignored, which typically occurred in medical, legal, or other institutional settings, occurred to a lesser extent in isolation from acts of major discrimination.

Being ignored was exemplified by Romani individuals through experiences that involved a more intentional act or conscious decision to dismiss someone, not acknowledge someone's presence, or respond to their questions, stories, or concerns. The incidents when Romani individuals felt overlooked included primarily situations when Canadians did not notice or give them attention when they should have. In most cases, Romani Canadians described being ignored or overlooked in circumstances that evidently displayed being feared.

Instances of Romani individuals being intentionally ignored were reported in other public service institutional settings that later escalated to more overt expressions of major discrimination. One account highlighted an incident at the Canadian border control, where a respondent recalled an officer's dismissive behavior upon requesting their family documents. Notably, upon identifying their Hungarian Roma heritage, the officer callously threw their legal documents aside on the table, creating a sense of being ignored. The respondent felt the gesture showed that "he doesn't want to deal with our case."

Other incidents with Romani Canadians showcased how being ignored was tied with active distancing acts, when, for example, a defense immigration lawyer they hired consistently did not respond to questions and refused to make eye contact throughout a meeting, deeming them unworthy of attention or even being acknowledged. Such behaviors make Romani individuals "feel ashamed of who I am and make my family feel ashamed" or even a "much greater sense of not existing. And that's very traumatic in a different way." The Romani individual decided not to go back to the same lawyer.

In anticipation of being overlooked or ignored, some Romani individuals turned to varied forms of preemptive self-isolation or self-exclusion. For instance, while attending an event at the Roma Community Center, an art exhibition coordinator ignored the Roma-Hungarian artists by not speaking directly to them. In response, the artists stayed silent and distant from the conversation.

Overall, Romani respondents have shared fewer everyday experiences in which they were ignored or overlooked in comparison to other assaults on worth. Romani respondents were most likely to report feeling ignored or overlooked in service or institutional settings. At times, both occurred in tandem with other passive or active distancing acts or behaviors. Feeling or being ignored or overlooked exacerbated feelings of erasure and led to perceptions that their concerns and even humanity were disregarded.

Theme 4. Major Discrimination

Our definition of major discrimination derives from David Williams' major discrimination scale and is comprised of three domains: the outright denial of services or resources (housing, employment, Canadian Border Service Agency (CBSA), Immigration Refugee Board, and social services), unfair or hostile differential treatment (translators in courts, schools, social services, legal aid, and healthcare settings), and ethno-racial profiling (medical setting, police, refugee hearing).

In this study, we classified incidents as an outright denial of services or resources when the respondents explicitly recalled or perceived the denial of access or resources because of their Romani identity. We examined unfair or hostile differential treatment, particularly when such behaviors were perpetrated by representatives of institutions who provided Romani people with services or resources inferior to those given to others, thus focusing on institutional racism. Additionally, we considered ethno-racial profiling incidents when Romani individuals were perceived as criminals or threats and treated with suspicion in contexts where their access to resources or services could be compromised.

We asked the respondents about personal experiences that involved the outright denial of services or resources, unfair or hostile differential treatment, and ethno-racial profiling. We also asked the participants about their perceptions regarding the existence of major discrimination against Romani people in Canada. We found that more respondents reported at least one personal experience of major discrimination (n=47) than those who believed that major discrimination against Romani people (n=31) exists in Canada (See Table 3. Perceptions of Major Discrimination Against Roma vs. Romani Participants Reporting Major Discrimination)

Table 3. Perceptions of Major Discrimination Against Roma vs. Romani Participants Reporting Major Discrimination

Characteristics	Roma (n=64) N (%)
Perception of Discrimination Against Roma in Canada	
Yes	31 (48.4)
No	16 (25.0)
Missing	17 (26.6)
Participants reporting >1 act of Major Discrimination	
Yes	47 (73.4)
No	17 (26.6)

Reported acts of major discrimination were more likely to be executed by representatives of institutions. (See Table 4. Experiences of Major Discrimination)

Table 4. Experiences of Major Discrimination

Characteristics	Roma (n=64)
Denial of Resources or Services	
Housing	15
Canadian border or Airport entry	5
Employment	9
Federal Programs	14
Differential Treatment	
Interpreter/Translator	8
Canadian border or Airport	8
Lawyer	9
Educational Setting	13
Workplace Setting	17
Medical Setting	7
Law Enforcement (Police)	8
Ethno-racially profiled	
Medical Setting	14
Law Enforcement (Police)	7
Refugee Hearing	6

Perceptions of Discrimination Against Romani People.

Groupness and the level of connection to one's identity group impact the perception, extent, and severity of harm internalized when an individual is targeted by discrimination (Lamont 2016, Son Hing 2012, Link & Phelan 2001). In the GTHA, we found that along with self-consciousness as Roma, other axes of inequity influenced Romani respondents in recognizing and attributing acts of major discrimination to their Romani identity.

When asked about their views regarding major discrimination, several respondents were uncertain or didn't believe their Romani identity impacted any of their experiences with discrimination, attributing them instead to other axes of inequity, such as migrant status, gender, socioeconomic status, and English as a second language status. One 41-year-old male respondent explained his lack of exposure to major discrimination in these terms: "I have been in Canada since I was 14. I don't have an accent. I speak fluently in English. I look like a Canadian. I act like one. You know, I blend in quite well. Like I said, I'm pretty highly educated. I have worked in an executive-type job for a long time. And so, my experience of Canada is pretty privileged. I'm not coming here just a few years ago from Slovakia with a thick accent or barely speaking English." This explanation touches both on the role of stereotypes in the dominant discourse and identifying Romani people and the nexus between varied axes of inequity.

Other Romani respondents perceived differential treatment solely based on xenophobia due to being perceived as a foreigner or racially ambiguous, as opposed to being explicitly identified as Romani individuals. One respondent, a 51-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary, explained that Canada is a better environment than Hungary despite the fact that "Stereotypes may occur towards us here as well. But I don't think this has anything to do with one being Roma." The respondent further detailed, "I think because Canadian people don't necessarily know what the definition meaning of being a Roma truly is. For example, Eastern Europeans describe Roma differently than Canadians. So, I believe that discrimination or stereotypes aren't necessarily put on Romani people because they are from a Romani background, but more that certain Canadians have something against different groups such as immigrants and refugees. And Roma people are pulled into that category as immigrants and refugees. And the discrimination, in my opinion, occurs more so because of that."

Yet, commonly, xenophobia has often converged with anti-Roma discrimination. Existing research (Beaudoin, 2014) and some of our interviews indicate a link between Canadian media, societal views, political discourses, and policies regarding Romani asylum seekers and immigrants. For instance, Romani respondents in our study found the narratives arising from the federal level, particularly the "bogus refugees" trope, to be harmful and weaponizing against Romani people. Two respondents maintained that the term "bogus refugees" was part of the "political machine, [...] fit[ting] very well into a right-wing conservative agenda." Another two respondents contended that the government's usage of "bogus refugees" reflected a weakening of Canada's reputation for multiculturalism and inclusivity. Moreover, when asked about the Canadian government's usage of the term

"bogus refugees" in reference to Romani people, 22 respondents shared that they experienced negative sentiments and emotional responses as a result of that rhetoric.

Still, several Romani respondents pointed to the presence of double standards in the treatment of Romani individuals as opposed to other refugees. One respondent emphasized that "certain groups of people who are refugees achieve media attention and sympathy and funding, and other people are excluded." Another respondent contrasted the widespread refusal to acknowledge the Romani people's struggles with the empathy given to other categories of refugees.

In fact, Romani leaders and organizations have spoken out against the growing racialization of Romani asylum seekers in Canada since the 2000s. For example, amidst the Canadian government's construction of the term "bogus refugees," one respondent organized a protest while another helped coordinate letters as a member of the Toronto Roma Community Center's Social Justice Committee. This amplification of Romani people's voices within the discourse surrounding the Canadian refugee system is critical, considering the system is not reflective of Romani people's experiences and undermines their narratives when implementing decisions for Romani refugee claimants (Beaudoin, 2014).

Denial of Resources and Differential Treatment.

Among all cases of outright denial of resources, the denial of housing based on Romani identity was the most widely reported. Strikingly, about half of the respondents who were denied a rental (8 out of 15) attributed the denial to their Hungarian Roma origins. For instance, a Romani respondent stated, "[…] here in Toronto, it's very difficult to get a rental when they realize that we are Hungarian Roma. They don't want to rent properties to us. When I introduced myself, they asked about our background, and when I said Hungarian Roma, they immediately said, 'Sorry, we are not renting you the place.'" Another respondent who reported frequently being denied housing explained that the denial of housing based on Romani identity was not always direct: "There were instances where we were rejected because of our Hungarian-Roma background. Of course, the explanation was different. But I knew that was not the real reason […]. They said that the apartment was already taken, that they had some other applicants who already paid, or something like that [despite having a visible renting status]." A Romani respondent, a 37-year-old male who has also served as an interpreter for many Hungarian Roma, attested to anti-Roma sentiments expressed by landlords, "They said because you're from Hungary, and we have experience with Hungary Roma, so therefore we're not going to give you apartment," due to a belief that Roma are "not good renters."

In other cases, a simple disclosure of Hungarian origins was enough to warrant a sense of distrust. For instance, a Romani respondent, a 30-year-old female looking for a new house, described being asked about her origins. She stated, "And when they ask me where I'm from, I said Hungary. And they immediately asked me if I was G*psy. And I said, yes, I am.

And then I don't know if it's related to me being G*psy, but I did not get the home. But more likely it was." The practice of landlords equating those with Hungarian origins with Roma stands in stark contrast with the widely reported lack of awareness of Roma and the general lack of ability to profile Roma individuals outside of stereotypical markers. This may be partially attributed to the growing awareness of neighborhoods such as Parkdale in Toronto as residential hubs for Hungarian Roma and heightened media attention during influxes of Hungarian Roma.

Romani people have also faced major discrimination, particularly in the form of differential treatment, within the workplace, especially justified by the entrenched tropes related to Romani criminality. One respondent worked as a cleaner in homes where household members would "stay with [them] in the house, getting up in [their] hair" despite not typically doing so for other cleaners. This individual had also worked in a flea market with "traumatic" experiences where customers repeatedly counted the change they were given, suggesting mistrust.

In response to experiences of major discrimination in the workplace, Romani people have rationalized repressing their Romani identity. For example, one respondent who revealed their Romani identity to their manager at a women's dress shop was no longer allowed to work at the cash register, accused of allowing customers to steal, and became jobless within five days. Reflecting on the turn of events, the Romani individual commented, "That kind of experiences, whether we have 1 or 100, constantly remind us not to tell anybody because [...] will not work in our favor."

Hesitancy amongst Romani individuals to disclose their ethnic identity in the workplace stem from prior experiences where disclosing their identity has led to major and/or everyday discrimination. Identity repression also stems from witnessing others in the workplace, such as customers and/or clients experiencing anti-Roma discrimination. A Roma person, a 63-year-old female, Canadian-born, worked at a store where any woman "with a long skirt, even if she was Arabic" was accused of being a "thieving G*psy." The respondent used this experience to explain why many Romani individuals repress their Romani identity, reporting that "[people] are going to paint you with that version of how they view Romani. So, a lot of Romani just hide who they are." Despite rationalizing why Romani people repress their identity, the woman also expressed pride in her Romani identity: "We're proud of our music, proud of our art, proud of what we believe in and the way we live and our respect for the elders and all of that."

In addition to encountering unfair treatment related to the association of Roma people with theft, one respondent, a 76-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Italy, shared that she was "getting abused, and done too much work" and felt "like a slave [...] sweeping hair" while working at a hair salon. After failing to be promoted, the Romani individual eventually left the hair salon job. The inability to receive a promotion despite hard-working efforts is a relatively subtle example of labor exploitation. In other incidents, a Roma person was initially denied pay for his labor, while a 55-year-old female and a second-generation Canadian described how her dad would end up jobless despite having been "promise[d] [...] the moon" and "work[ing] his a*s off."

Romani respondents also reported experiencing intertwined violence and major and everyday discrimination in Canada relatively early in their lifetimes, particularly within the education system. One study participant, for example, mentioned bullying and beatings from other students and measures by parents to distance their children from the respondent.

While everyday discrimination might have originated from fellow students, teachers often downplayed, punished, or dismissed these experiences of Romani children. In certain cases, teachers actively chose to punish Romani students unfairly and differentially. A respondent emphasized that "the teacher did nothing to stop it, did nothing to intervene, did nothing at all to interject, to stop that discrimination," or "When we'd stick up for ourselves, we would get punished," and "The only time they intervened is when I fought back." Thus, the role of teachers is disconcerting as they not only allowed students to engage in everyday discriminatory acts without consequences but also, at times, contributed to instances of major discrimination and endorsed students to consider Roma people as worthy of scrutiny, distancing, and dishonor.

In institutional settings, in tandem with acts of major discrimination, teachers used assaults on worth like the ethno-racial insults "evil G*psies" and "dirty G*psy" to associate Romani individuals with theft and other negative stereotypes. Teachers also employed stereotype-based questioning as a tool for differential treatment. A Romani woman who repressed her identity in school recalled when a teacher uncovered her identity and questioned "why [her] family moved around so much," thereby "trying to put [her] on the spot and make [her] feel ashamed for what she thought was a cultural habit." In another instance, a professor subtly asked a Romani female student why their art did not align with their culture and suggested that they focus "on some colorful skirts and things." That experience has had long-term impacts on the young woman, who still refrains from wearing skirts to this day. The respondent described feelings of nausea, anxiety, panic, numbness, and/or threat in such situations. "I did try to educate. I smiled. But I usually freeze and don't quite know what to do, honestly. I feel overwhelmed," the respondent said.

The previous examples may single out a few teachers as outliers, suggesting that instances of major and/or everyday discrimination are individual, insular incidents. However, they occur within the confines of educational institutions and are perpetrated by representatives of those institutions. In fact, the prevalence of differential treatment in educational settings emerged as the fourth most reported experience of major discrimination, thus suggesting a broader structural problem.

One participant's experiences epitomized the increased pervasiveness of covert institutional racism in educational settings as teachers leveraged their authority to discourage her educational trajectory unfairly. While sharing her early childhood experiences in the Canadian education system, the participant, a 55-year-old female and second-generation Canadian, described every teacher in the school as "horrible." She emphasized, "They were all [...] it was horrible. I can't even begin to tell the story." The exception was one elementary school principal of Romani heritage who kept his ethnic identity secret but treated her well. This singular positive encounter underscores a stark contrast in the degree of acceptance the

respondent faced. The fact that the only other Romani person the respondent knew was engaging in identity repression highlights the lack of safety experienced even by Romani individuals in authoritative positions and paints a dismal picture for Romani students. The respondent attributed the perceived unfair and discriminatory treatment by all teachers to her parents' disclosed Romani identity. She recounted instances such as her mother being expelled from the PTA and her father being removed from running the Boy Scouts. One teacher even came to her house and spat on her mother for knowingly adopting a Romani child perceived as "too white" and allegedly destined for ruin.

These experiences underscore the profound harm the respondent faced, despite her ability to pass as non-Roma, solely based on her parents' Romani identity. Additionally, the respondent revealed troubling incidents related to her hearing loss, alluding to the nexus between racism and ableism. She recalled being misdiagnosed as neurodivergent and teachers expressing, she was destined to be a "midget," leading to placement in a class for students with learning differences. When her hearing loss was eventually discovered, her mother confronted the first-grade teacher, who admitted being aware the respondent was hard of hearing but assumed only "few people would care." These instances showcase the extent of disregard some Canadian teachers had for Romani students and their educational trajectory, as well as the disregard for the importance of respecting the respondent and her family's agency. These examples expose the adversity Romani students and their families, as well as children belonging to other oppressed groups, must navigate to receive the same access to educational opportunities as other Canadians.

Romani individuals shared experiences of differential treatment in places such as hospitals and healthcare facilities. One Roma person, a 48-year-old and second-generation Canadian female, mentioned an instance where a hospital stationed security personnel outside a Romani family's room to prevent Roma from coming in and out. An employee of the hospital reported this case to the Roma Community Center, mentioning that nurse's logs alerted the staff in a particular hospital ward to "be careful with them because they're G*psies." The notifier also sent contact details where the non-profit could report this instance of institutional racism.

Such differential treatment by healthcare workers reflects the healthcare worker-to-Romani patient power dynamic, where the Romani patient's well-being depends on the quality of medical assistance provided. In their positions of power, as previously highlighted with teachers, healthcare workers have employed assaults on worth to accompany their acts of major discrimination. For example, an ambulance worker responded to one participant suffering from a panic attack by initially accusing them of taking drugs. When recounting the incident, the Romani individual was certain that the misguided presumption, a clear discrediting of their morals, was due to their Romani identity.

Not only have Romani people been discredited in their experiences of major discrimination with healthcare workers, but their right to medical care has also been denied, including in circumstances when the Canadian government created a hostile environment for Roma refugees. For example, a 55-year-old female of second-generation Canadian status mentioned that in seeking emergency care, a "doctor told her [daughter] to go home and

make some medicinal teas because you must be good at those." This remark regarding medicinal teas further underscores how the differential treatment of Romani people in medical settings has been, at times, directly tied to their Romani identity.

Although differential treatment of Romani people is not always overtly or solely linked to their Romani identity, such experiences of major discrimination leave lasting implications on Romani individuals' well-being. One participant, a 41-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Hungary, previously suffered a fractured ankle and sought help at the emergency room. Despite a referral from her primary care physician, the attending doctor callously remarked, "If you're here, you could come here, you can walk home," refusing to provide the necessary cast for the injured ankle. This disregard resulted in long-term health complications, including damage to her ligaments. Another participant similarly narrated an instance faced by his wife in the hospital during the pandemic. The attending doctor not only minimized the severity of her condition but also mocked her. In addition, the doctor "pretended she had no problems at all," suggesting a more deliberate disregard for her well-being. As a result of these forms of interactions with medical professionals, many respondents reported either bringing family members who could advocate for them or, more commonly, choosing to repress their Romani identity in medical settings.

This persistent link between major and everyday discrimination also presented itself in Romani people's interactions with federal programs and legal representatives. Incidents of being underestimated and discredited quickly escalated to harmful and unfair differential treatment based on being ethno-racially profiled. A respondent spoke about the Children's Aid Social Service representatives who consistently used the phrase "G*psy family" to describe their family. When reviewing court documents related to her mother and siblings, she noticed some hints from the social service representatives that the children should be rescued from their Romani parents. The representatives insinuated that the parents' alleged bad morals and habits might be transmitted to the children.

Similarly, another study participant, a 23-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary fourteen years earlier, shared an incident with an interpreter in a refugee hearing. The interpreter purposefully mistranslated the words of the Romani asylum seekers to discredit the family. The respondent recalled that the interpreter assumed that the parents did not speak English. So, the interpreter was "purposely getting things wrong. And my parents caught it because my dad spoke English, [but] they were not allowed to correct it. They were actually told not to speak in English. They had to go through the interpreter. And even the person who was in charge of that, they had a completely dismissive attitude." Such differential treatment from the interpreter is noteworthy, considering interpreters/translators are likely from the same countries of origin as Romani asylum seekers and, thus, are also likely to have brought in stereotypes from their home countries.

Furthermore, some defense lawyers treated their Romani clients as "inferior and intellectually deficient." One study participant said, "I have a lawyer and a bad experience with him. He thought that I was stupid." Another respondent, a 67-year-old male, confessed he encounters the most challenges when engaging with federal programs, clarifying that "the moment we say we are Roma, especially social services [...] immediately it is a different

treatment. Either it will end up so positive or [...] no help at all." In response to the differential treatment, he asserted there "will be a point you have to fight to [...] you have almost to force yourself to [...] forcefully to ask for help. So, like psychological [...] it becomes like psychological gameplay," emphasizing the extent of how arduous and depleting of a task it is to seek help.

Incidents of Ethno-Racial Profiling.

Ethno-racial profiling was the most evident manifestation of institutional racism in encounters with law enforcement. When a respondent, a 51-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary, was pulled over and ticketed, he recalled the police officer stating that "my name seemed familiar to him from an earlier incident," sending a strong signal that the police officer viewed the Romani individual differently for having a name that he associated with involvement with illegal activity. Another respondent recollected that he was traveling with his brother and Romani friends when a police officer pulled them over and "asked us where we were going and stuff like that. And they were looking for someone of the same [...] he looked like us. He showed pictures [...] we were, kind of, pissed off about it because obviously, it wasn't us [yet] he asked my brother if we were G*psies." Upon nodding his head and confirming their ethnic identity, the police officer slapped his brother and asked for them to leave.

While both instances incited anger in the Romani respondents, who relayed the experience, neither responded to the insulting interactions out of a sense of resignation. At the same time, in such interactions, Romani individuals, like other racialized individuals, fear potential police violence. Furthermore, acts of major discrimination are frequently imbued with assaults on worth.

At times, previous acts of ethno-racial profiling of Romani people informed assumptions about Romani visibility and identifiability. One respondent, a 58-year-old male, recalled a judge at their immigration hearing stating, "Oh, you look perfect, you look OK, you don't look like a Roma," in reference to his ability to pass. Not only did his response imply doubt regarding the respondent's experience of being persecuted, as he was advocating for asylum, but it also unveiled a common assumption that Romani people look a specific way.

Usage and rationalizations of racialization in institutional settings have the power to further stigmatize Romani people. Racialization contributes to hierarchies and distinctions between who is socially and racially accepted and who is not. The judge's comment caused the Romani individual to feel angry and confused, and he later reflected on the encounter, stating, "What do you think about what we are as Roma, that we have four eyes? [...] What is this question, like, I look normal, like I don't look like a Roma. [...] I think I'm not less or not more like anybody else. But what is this, like, oh, you look normal?" Another respondent, a 21-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from the Czech Republic and self-identified as Roma to the Canadian immigration officer, was also met with disbelief: "I don't see that you are Roma; your, your skin is not as dark. Like, how can you tell me

you are Roma? Like, why are you immigrating here? What's the point of immigrating here?"

In such circumstances, some Romani individuals felt disrespected and discredited, especially in light of having experiences of being easily ethno-racially profiled in Europe. As one respondent explained, these differing perspectives allow uncertainty to take root: "You feel like you're not really sure where you belong."

For many Romani respondents, responses to major discrimination included resorting to not responding, which often triggered variable sentiments of resignation, anger, normalization, and pain. Not responding typically occurs in settings with highly apparent power dynamics. We also noticed that respondents who had previously been proactive confronters in response to ethno-racial insults tended to no longer respond after experiencing acts of major discrimination. For example, a participant, a 32-year-old male who immigrated to Canada from Hungary twenty-three years before, has remained silent ever since experiencing employment discrimination. He also voiced resignation regarding confronting ethno-racial insults in public: "If someone calls me a G*psy at a gas station and I get mad, is there someone else out there that's going to get mad that I got called a G*psy at the gas station when it's found? It's not, right? No one's going to say anything."

Furthermore, as a result of personally experiencing major discrimination or hearing of it through family or friends, many Romani individuals engage in repressing their Romani identity when seeking employment, medical care, and housing. In the case of the same respondent, upon being denied employment after revealing his Romani identity, he decided, "I'm never going to tell anyone, especially when it comes to business because it's how I feed my child and how I get myself higher in life."

Overall, the fear of major discrimination against Romani people was duly noted among Romani respondents and was exemplified by the common preemptive choice not to disclose one's Romani identity when engaging with institutions.

Theme 5. Relativistic Minimization and Satisfaction with Canada

Despite discrimination and inferiorization, which have led to widespread identity repression amongst Romani people, Romani individuals conveyed more favorable assessments of their treatment in Canada compared to Europe. One respondent described Canada as a "beautiful place" relative to "a lot of places in Eastern Europe where [their] children are still segregated in schools, and [their] houses are still getting burned down." Another Romani individual highlighted how Romani Canadians can enroll in mixed schools, unlike in Hungary, and similarly mentioned that "the situation is pretty good here in Canada for Roma."

The tendency to view life in Canada more favorably than within Europe was observed, including among individuals who had experienced anti-Roma discrimination in Canada. For example, one Romani person who noted that their lawyer regarded them as "stupid" later mentioned that Romani people possessed more freedom in Canada, particularly due to greater job opportunities. Another respondent, a 76-year-old female who immigrated to Canada from Italy seventy-three years ago, highlighted that amidst receiving stares in restaurants, her parents "[told her] to be thankful they didn't all get murdered." The contrast made between discrimination in a restaurant setting and murder is particularly noteworthy, considering the respondent's grandmother was a victim of the Holocaust.

This practice of discounting the harm from a negative experience, in this case, assault on worth, through comparison with more severe negative experiences, such as major discrimination, particularly institutional racism, is known as relativistic minimization. Romani individuals have minimized the harm of major and everyday discrimination in Canada arguably because it is less explicit or perceived as less harmful than structural anti-Roma racism in Europe. One respondent explained that the perpetrators of discriminatory acts in Canada "don't say it straightly" and "hide the message." Another Romani person mentioned that they encountered limited "true discrimination" since most Canadians are unfamiliar with Romani identity and mistake it for being Romanian.

Establishing a distinction between what is and what is not "true discrimination" is a form of relativistic minimization. It possibly and partly explains why 12 of the Romani respondents who said that anti-Roma discrimination does not exist in Canada (see Table 3. Perceptions of Major Discrimination Against Roma vs. Romani Participants Reporting Major Discrimination) also reported being subject to differential treatment, ethno-racial profiling, or denied access to opportunities—10 of these 12 individuals were immigrants or refugees. For example, one Romani individual from Hungary mentioned that although they may have faced discrimination due to their skin color in Canada, particularly when seeking a place to rent, such treatment could have been an accident.

Despite the presence of relativistic minimization, there is no denying that, for some, Canada represents a safer space, free from the overt and covert manifestations of structural racism that Romani people were forced to endure in their home countries. Among Romani respondents expressing any sense of satisfaction with Canada (n=17), the majority also expressed no perception of discrimination in Canada (n=10).

For those who have been able to live a life of perceived acceptance, free of persecution, in Canada, the impacts reflect a process of healing.

For some respondents, Canada represents an environment where they can be free of shame. One respondent, a 60-year-old female refugee from Hungary, who perceived no anti-Roma discrimination in Canada, expressed satisfaction with Canada, stating, "I don't feel embarrassed here in Canada to be Roma. I don't feel bad because here in Canada it's a multicultural society living, and I don't feel bad here," emphasizing the vital role that shame, particularly its absence, plays in garnering positive or satisfied sentiments of living in Canada. This belief of Canada as a multicultural society, conveying a society that is accepting of varying ethno-racial groups due to the diversity of individuals populating Canada, surfaced a number of times among Romani respondents.

For other respondents, Canada represents an environment where people can finally feel humanized. One respondent, a 51-year-old male and a refugee from Hungary, highlighted the mental health challenges associated with systemic violence in Hungary, by contrast with the ameliorating effects that Canada offers. The respondent confesses, "I believe I have post-traumatic syndrome from these experiences from Hungary," centering his interlocutor on the serious ramifications of anti-Roma racism endured in Hungary. "It's the first time that I feel myself to be a whole person, a respected person, not treated as a below-average person. Here in Canada, I feel that I am treated the same as everybody else. […] Everything feels better. My soul feels better; my well-being, my health, and my mood are all better." But, qualifying this positive assessment, he added: "Canada is starting to go in a different direction, a worse direction," highlighting how satisfaction with Canada can coexist with an awareness of discrimination. Similarly, another respondent, a 67-year-old male and an emigrant from Macedonia, balances their love and admiration for Canada as "the best country in the world" with the growing sense of reality that "discrimination is also here in Canada and it's getting bigger and stronger. And we need to confront it and deal with it."

Most of our respondents left their countries of origin due to persistent anti-Roma racism, particularly overt manifestations of institutional and everyday racism. They left their homes and families with a vision of a better life free of hate crimes, hate speech, and discrimination. It was evident that being accepted in society was important for them, and the varied manifestations of anti-Roma racism they had faced in their countries of origin informed their perspective on feeling safe and able to practice their own cultural customs in Canada. Though this study had no measures for well-being that could further validate these responses, and such measures would far exceed the scope of this study, expressions of satisfaction with Canada are noteworthy, particularly as such assessments were rarely extended to their countries of origin.

Theme 6. Awareness and Perceptions of Non-Romani of Roma People, History, and Anti-Roma Discrimination

We contrasted the awareness and perception of Romani Canadians and their systemic challenges with the perceptions of a small group of non-Romani Canadians (n=23) about Romani people and anti-Roma discrimination. We found that more non-Romani respondents admitted to having an awareness of Roma (n=17), as opposed to only awareness of G*psy (n=3). The majority of non-Romani respondents also confirmed they knew little of Romani history, had limited to no exposure to any Romani people in Canada, and were uncertain regarding the size of the Romani population in Canada.

Furthermore, even in select cases where non-Romani respondents reported having an awareness of Romani people, history, or culture, the description of Romani people often included racializing myths such as "nomadic people" (n=9) or "travelers" as defining qualities. Moreover, all non-Romani respondents reported familiarity with the term G*psy and were well acquainted with some of both the romanticizing and villainizing stereotypes and myths often associated with the word, easily describing them when asked. Most non-Romani Canadians we interviewed cited first hearing of the villainizing and romanticizing stereotypes through Disney movies and early childhood literature. A few respondents mentioned having learned of the stereotypes through their travels to European countries.

Regardless of whether they were aware of Romani people, history, or culture, nearly all non-Romani respondents believed Romani individuals were likely to experience discrimination for having a distinct accent, having non-citizenship status, and being perceived as a racial minority, along with other visual markers that would distinguish them as "Other" rather than specifically Roma. This dominant belief is likely linked with the fact that nearly all non-Romani participants readily expressed an awareness of Canada's complicity in systemic injustices in general, coupled with conclusions of general Canadian lack of awareness regarding Romani people. Overall, non-Romani respondents pointed out Canada's shortcomings and displayed goodwill in their desire for a more inclusive Canada. However, even the most well-intentioned still engaged, to differing degrees, in misunderstanding, misidentifying, and discrediting the Romani people.

One non-Romani respondent, a 36-year-old white male Canadian, who frequently volunteers with a Roma organization, admitted to participating in discrediting and misunderstanding a Romani individual despite acknowledging that many of the stereotypes associated with Romani people were misguided. When a Romani individual approached him with a $50 bill to purchase a ticket and mentioned he had not received the proper amount of change, the non-Romani volunteer recalls:

"There was confusion about how much change I'd given him, and the stereotypes had seeped into my brain. I was convinced that he was trying to bamboozle me [...] the thought had entered my brain. I recounted, and he had not. But the thought entered my brain. I thought this dude was trying to pull something on me. He was not. But the thought entered my head."

Such moments of transparency display the power of stigmatizing and racialized beliefs—their grip on our collective rationality and how they influence people in moments when

they are seized with uncertainty and vulnerability. The respondent turned to their closest frame of reference—the racist myths he and other non-Roma have admitted being exposed to since childhood, regardless of this non-Romani volunteer's extensive exposure to Romani people and awareness of these beliefs as false. The importance of this transparency cannot be understated, as the notion that Romani people cannot be trusted with money, portraying them as thieves or swindlers, carries severe consequences. Several Romani respondents faced adverse effects, including the loss of job opportunities, unjust accusations of workplace theft, and a voluntary withdrawal from both professional and personal social events due to encounters shaped by such stereotypes.

A respondent, a 47-year-old Canadian-born female, provided insight into typical introductory exchanges Romani individuals may encounter when disclosing their identity to those with little or no awareness of the Romani population. When initially asked, "Are you familiar with who the Roma people are," she admitted, "I know of Romania," coinciding with experiences several Romani Canadians reported. While this reply merely reflects a candid acknowledgment of the respondent's limited knowledge about Romani people, history, or culture, the progression of such interactions goes on to highlight how introductory exchanges that involve disclosing one's Romani identity can shift from accommodating a harmless admission to becoming draining, exclusionary experiences for Romani individuals.

These experiences become draining and exclusionary because of how deeply embedded and far-reaching misunderstandings regarding Romani people are—from their dress to lifestyle, history, and origins. For example, when discussing perceptions of "G*psy" people, the respondent remarked, "I appreciate the style and the artistic, creative flow of it," then, after a brief pause, acknowledged, "without really knowing it." This could be interpreted as an admission of their assumed vision of what "G*psy" dress entails, followed by an acknowledgment of their lack of knowledge about the traditional attire associated with it. However, as the conversation continues, it becomes clear that the respondent romanticized Romani identity without a valid reference point or foundation to substantiate her claims:

> Respondent: I just think it's beautiful.
>
> Interviewer: OK, tell me what part you think is beautiful.
>
> Respondent: I just like the clothing, and the jangling, and the music. And I like the dancing.
>
> Interviewer: OK. What kind of G*psy music do you know?
>
> Respondent: I don't know any G*psy music.

This interaction exemplifies how the exonym G*psy can invoke images of beauty, "jangling," and dancing, regardless of exposure to or awareness of everyday Romani Canadians. As previous Romani attestations have asserted, these romanticized stereotypes generalize Romani people with mythical abstractions that obfuscate the reality of their history of persecution and their contributions. Thus, romanticizing stereotypes can challenge or harm one's sense of agency regarding how their culture and heritage are represented.

Everyday introductory exchanges can generate multiple instances of being misunderstood and of assaults on worth in one exchange. For instance, the same respondent confused Romani people with Romanians and "G*psy" with Egyptians throughout the interview. When attending a cultural event, the respondent states, "They had like a yearly cultural thing, and one of them was a Roman one [...] Roma one." When the interviewer clarifies, "Was that a Roma one, or was that Romanian," the respondent adds, "It was Romanian." Observing a misunderstanding, the interviewer further clarifies, "So Roma is the word from Romani language, which means the people, right? And it's not the same as Romanian. So you could be a Romanian Roma," where in response the respondent states, "Got it. Got it." Yet, later on, when asked whether they have ever had any Roma or "G*psy" friends, the respondent answered, "None that I'm aware of, except for maybe my ex-husband's business partner is Egyptian. And his name is Imad. And that's the extent of that." When directly questioned with, "Do you feel Egyptians can be identified as Roma or G*psy?" the respondent laughed nervously and replied, "I don't know." Then, she reiterated that her ex-husband's business partner, Imad, also had an Egyptian sister.

Another respondent, a 38-year-old female, Canadian-born, also misunderstood Romani people, similarly engaging with the romanticization of Roma and conflating the term Roma with Romanians and G*psy with Egyptians. However, strikingly, in this interaction, the respondent, a former social worker with previous interactions with Romani individuals, went as far as to refer to themselves as G*psy. She begins, "I love G*psies personally. I also identify myself as having a G*psy soul because I've learned a lot about [them]—very fine, very spiritual, very loving, [...]." While she advocated for a need for more stability and held Canada accountable for "providing for needs for G*psies," because of her first-hand experiences that life necessities such as employment, finances, food, and shelter are inaccessible, the juxtaposition of her claiming G*psy status was concerning. This dichotomy is best illustrated in the following example: "I have seen, before, back when I was younger and studying to become a social worker. I was involved in the community back in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and traveling throughout Canada. And I have a G*psy soul. I've dated G*psy as well. And so, I know. I totally know. And I have [...] I'm a beach girl. So, I'm totally hip and G*psy. Oh, my god, yeah. And so, from what I see from the news, yeah, I have seen [...] I have seen that there's a lack of safety. There's a poverty thing that G*psies and G*psians are experiencing that the government doesn't seem to care about."

Another respondent—the only landlord included in the study—stood out as the sole individual to use Hungarians synonymously with Roma. When asked about their familiarity with Romani people, he responded, "I admit that I have had no experience with Hungarians whatsoever," displaying the quick connection that many others have described of equating all Romani people to Hungarians and vice-versa.

Such conversations run parallel to how Romani respondents have described interactions with non-Romani Canadians. These instances of confusion surrounding Romani identity have broader societal implications because they highlight a disparity in awareness about Romani identity by contrast with romanticized associations with the exonym G*psy. As emphasized earlier, there was a dominant perception among Romani respondents that the

exonym "G*psy" is largely interpreted as a synonym for bohemian or free-spirited—all concepts that convey a particular lifestyle choice instead of an ethnic identity. However, considering ethnic identity merely as a lifestyle choice that can be entered and exited downplays the significance of honoring one's heritage, history, and cultural traditions. In the case of Romani people who have held on tightly, whether openly or behind closed doors, to their Romani identity, despite policies that encouraged the erasure of Romani culture, history, and practices, it is essential that their ethnic identity be recognized for what it is, the core of a people, rather than a set of lifestyle stereotypes.

Only a few non-Romani respondents could provide first-hand testimonies to the daily indignities that Romani individuals bear while residing in the GHTA. One non-Roma respondent, a 33-year-old white individual who emigrated from the UK, relayed an encounter with neighbors in a Parkdale apartment complex, a known low-income, migrant, or refugee residential area in the GHTA. During the exchange, the respondent recalls a neighbor saying, "Oh, yeah, there's G*psies that live in that house." The respondent describes the encounter as marked by a negative tone. Another respondent, a 59-year-old Canadian-born female, shared several similar encounters: "I've also been with them and experienced how people make negative assumptions and say not-so-great things right in front of them, discriminatory remarks [...] I think we'd say that or racist even, certainly biased [...] that are, first of all, untrue and not fair. And so, I've witnessed some of the struggles they face just to be accepted."

The same respondent attested to structural inequities in the form of a lack of readily available neighborhood amenities/provisions: Romani "communities are not as well serviced. The roads won't be as good. They'll be living in less attractive parts often, not always, but often." Such an assessment acknowledges that not all Roma are low-income but that many do experience housing discrimination through being relegated to under-resourced areas. Another respondent, a 49-year-old female and a high school teacher, Canadian born with a European background, corroborated this observation: "Yeah, so they live in crowded conditions and try to find affordable housing in parts of the world that are parts of the city that are statistically more dangerous." As a teacher, the non-Romani respondent has had Romani students and asserts, "I know they face many challenges though [...] they witnessed right in front of them, the shooting of a 12-year-old boy," speaking to the early violence Romani children are exposed to.

CONCLUSION

We set out to identify the personal and subjective perspectives of Romani people living in the GHTA, Canada, regarding their experiences, pain, and reactions to everyday discrimination and major discrimination. We found the majority of Romani respondents experienced at least one assault on their worth while in Canada. As Link & Phelan (2001) recognized, "power is essential to the social production of stigma." Consequently, the salience of reported stigmatizing acts or assaults on worth among the Romani population in Canada is evidence of the existence of ingrained and interlinked institutional, societal, and individual hierarchies and power dynamics that have persisted against Romani people well beyond Europe.

Among all experiences of everyday discrimination classified, Romani respondents were more likely to report incidents of feeling or being misunderstood, often involving an interplay between the lack of awareness of the existence of Romani people and the enduring tropes relating Romani people to criminals or mysticism. Particularly key was the stark contrast between the level of awareness of Roma realities, on the one hand, and familiarity with racializing tropes often associated with the exonym and slur G*psy. Our findings suggest being misunderstood reaffirmed decisions by our respondents to repress their Romani identities.

In terms of major discrimination, we found the denial of housing and differential treatment in educational, medical, workplace, and federal assistance settings were among the most reported, which is largely in line with the historically enduring practices of institutional racism reported in European nations (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022). Our review also found that nonresponses and preemptive presentation more commonly appeared among respondents who had faced major discrimination.

Thus, to move forward toward justice, current and future efforts to address Romani Canadians' needs in each sector/domain must also be situated in the context of Romani people's subjective pain and reactions to enduring everyday and major discrimination.

Throughout history, Romani people have faced persecution for acts of identity expression—so much so that Romani identity repression is an intergenerationally ingrained tactic used for survival. Romani identity repression has also been reported in the US and Europe (Matache et al., 2020). In this study, we also found that identity repression was used as a coping mechanism to avoid major discrimination in employment, housing, and medical care and, additionally, as a coping mechanism to avoid assaults on worth.

Perpetrators of everyday and/or major discrimination tended to be characterized as having a European background. Most likely, that pattern was at least partly related to Europe's long and enduring history of anti-Roma racism, societal norms, and their ability to identify and racialize some Roma individuals based on visual, auditory, or other cultural markers, given their history of in-country exposure to Roma people.

While those who stigmatized or perpetrated assaults on worth were commonly framed as being of European background by Romani respondents, it is important to acknowledge the role that stereotypes of stereotype play in identifying those with prejudice (Swim, Cohen, & Hyers 1998). Moreover, it is critical to emphasize that most Romani respondents had

European backgrounds themselves, thus probably fearing, anticipating, or considering harm and stereotype threat in those particular interactions. Thus, we do not downplay the amount of stigmatizing and discriminatory acts reported to have been committed by those of European background, we inquire whether the generalizing classification of Europeans as perpetrators may have obscured and, therefore, underreported acts committed by non-European and/or non-white Canadians. In fact, several Romani respondent interactions highlighted how members of other racial and ethnic groups are also complicit in the perpetuation of Romani assaults on worth, indicating a wider societal problem.

We also found that more than half of the Romani respondents personally experienced acts of major discrimination, which outnumbered the Romani respondents who believed in the existence of major discrimination against Romani people in Canada.

Lastly, we learned that Romani perceptions of how non-Romani Canadians view them both as individuals and as a collective identity closely align with and mirror the perceptions held by non-Romani Canadians toward the Romani people. Most non-Romani respondents did not know much about Romani history, culture, and practices. In contrast, all normalized or knew of the harmful stereotypes that have persisted through the ages against Romani people. Many non-Romani respondents generalized nomadism as a practice to all Roma people. The characterization of the Romani identity as one equated to "nomadic" and "traveling" people remains inculcated in dominant narratives and perceptions. Even some recent studies continue to refer to Roma as "Travellers," despite a broader acknowledgment of the waning practice of nomadism within a majority of Romani communities (Dixon et al., 2023) and the recognition of the existence of Travellers as a distinct group in Europe.

This study's findings must be considered in light of its limitations. To start, the field research team encountered challenges in engaging Romani individuals in the project largely due to a lack of trust in researchers but also due to linguistic, social, and cultural differences within the Romani families or communities. Additionally, the generalizability of these findings is constrained, as is common among studies that employ snowball sampling strategies, small samples, and qualitative data.

The key strength of this study lies in being an inaugural study examining subjective experiences of anti-Roma everyday and major discrimination in Canada. Another strength is its inclusion of Romani researchers and interlocutors to create a space of relatability and vulnerability, allowing for further insights. Furthermore, this work contributes to a scarce body of Roma-led and Roma-related literature in Canada. The findings from this study reflect the importance of elevating the narratives and experiences of Romani people because they highlight the ways in which subtle indignities can ostracize an individual to the point of self-effacement.

Generally, there is a need to move beyond statements of diversity or cultural sensitivity education in the workplace and in educational and medical settings by investing more resources in anti-racism education and policies and Roma-led initiatives, co-centering Romani voices and Roma-related issues, which span a multiplicity of social and institutional settings.

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This study is a culmination of extensive collaboration and commitment to raising awareness about the history and injustices faced by Romani Canadians. We aspire for the study to serve as a tool to combat and prevent major and everyday discrimination and amplify the voices of Romani Canadians.

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About the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights

The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights (FXB Center) is a university-wide Center at Harvard University. Francois-Xavier, son of the Center's founder Albina du Boisrouvray, tragically lost his life while on a helicopter rescue mission in 1986. Endowing the Center in 1993 with support of the FXB Foundation, Albina sought to perpetuate the values, generosity, and compassion that motivated Francois, who strove especially to protect children. The Center is premised on the inextricable link between health and human rights, as advanced by founding director Jonathan Mann and strongly supported by then-Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, Harvey Fineberg. The FXB Center champions the rights and dignity of every individual, with special attention to children, the most vulnerable. The FXB Center employs interdisciplinary approaches to such complex problems as poverty, forced migration, climate disruption, oppression, racism, bigotry, discrimination, and inequity. By protecting fundamental human rights, the FXB Center aims ultimately to improve the physical, mental, and social well-being of individuals and populations. To learn more, please visit fxb.harvard.edu.

Harvard University's FXB Center for Health and Human Rights founded the Roma Program at Harvard in 2012. The goal of the program is multifold: to develop a body of research and methodologies that examine and give voice to topics and issues Roma people prioritize; to spotlight and amplify the voices of leading and emerging Roma scholars, organizations, activists, and leaders; to shift the field of Romani Studies away from the margins of academic interest and co-center it in social, health, and political theory and multidisciplinary, multi-thematic, and multiregional studies; and to create connections and collaborations with other communities of scholarship. The program has implemented research projects that have spearheaded two volumes and a significant corpus of peer-reviewed articles, as well as studies, commentaries, and other publications. Our major contributions encompass:

- Participatory research in partnership with Roma young people, organizations, and individuals.
- Expanding the scope of Romani Studies to the Americas.
- Introducing and strengthening research areas within Romani and global scholarship: anti-Roma racism; everyday discrimination as experienced by adult Romani individuals and adolescents; reparations for state-sponsored injustices; patterns of denial and distortion of Roma history.

About the Canadian Romani Alliance

The Canadian Romani Alliance is a not-for-profit, volunteer-based organization that engages in public education, advocacy, and community capacity building and works in solidarity with other equity and justice-seeking groups. The mission of the Canadian Romani Alliance is to amplify the voice of Canadian Roma and to ensure the best interests of Roma peoples throughout Canada, while raising awareness about our community and addressing challenges of exclusion, misinformation, anti-Roma discrimination, and racism.

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