AKADÉMIAI KIADÓ

Family and personal identity among Roma students in Colleges for Advanced Studies: Identity preservation and change

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ABSTRACT

During their studies, Roma university students enter into a milieu different from their family environment and this can affect their identity. In our research, we used life story interviews ($N = 108$) to study Roma university students who attended Roma College for Advanced Studies (RCAS). We were interested in how their identities were formed and what role their family Roma identity strategy and the RCAS played in it. In our analysis, we divided the Roma students into five categories (separated, integrated, assimilated, negative, marginalized) and these identity strategies were also used to determine the respondents' family identity. In the sample, the largest proportion consisted of those who had an integrated personal and family Roma identity strategy. The majority of the respondents had not changed identity strategies and also interpreted their personal identity according to the family pattern. Some of the Roma university students went to RCAS specifically to strengthen their Roma identity. Overall, it can be said that the family Roma identity strategy can be linked to the development of personal identity, and the RCAS can have a role in preserving and strengthening the Roma identity of university students.

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INTRODUCTION

Succeeding at university can be a challenge for Roma university students, as they have to balance between two different environments (Lukács J. & Dávid, 2019; Lukács J. et al., 2023). Within their families, Roma individuals are often surrounded by family members with limited educational backgrounds, lacking familiarity with the norms and expectations of higher education institutions. In contrast, they encounter an entirely different milieu at the university, where they engage on a daily basis with predominantly non-Roma peers and educators who possess higher levels of education. Many of their parents have a lower education, and beyond emotional support, they cannot offer their children help in this world (Biczó, 2021). Socialization during university years, where they are assimilated into the academic community, can distance them from their family of origin. Their Roma identity can also be weakened during this period. After reaching this level, many no longer consider themselves Gypsies, and often they are not treated as such by the majority society either. This may be due to the fact that society often does not categorize people as 'Gypsies' on the basis of their appearance, but rather associates them with poverty (Binder & Orsós, 2022). Many dimensions of social inclusion and integration can be examined, e.g.: structural integration, social, cultural integration, civic and political participation (Spencer & Charsley, 2016). Some authors also linked these dimensions to identity (Amit, 2012; Spencer & Charsley, 2016; Thulien, Gastaldo, McCay, & W.Hwang, 2019). Therefore, it is worthwhile to study this area when examining Roma integration.

In this study, we examine Roma university students with a particular emphasis on their household dynamics and family Roma identity. Furthermore, we explore the potential connections between these patterns and their personal Roma identity strategies. Our sample consisted of Roma university students who were students of the Christian Roma Colleges for Advanced Studies Network (Keresztény Roma Szakkollégiumi Hálózat, CRCASN) at the time of recording their life story interviews. In our study, we also examine what role Roma Colleges for Advanced Studies (RCAS) can play in Roma university students' identity development.

CHRISTIAN ROMA COLLEGES FOR ADVANCED STUDIES NETWORK

Our sample was taken from the students of the CRCASN, so we will briefly describe this network. The CRCASN was established in 2011 with government and church support, via the participation of Colleges in Budapest, Debrecen, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza and, from 2012, in Szeged. The goal of the Network is to "educate Christian intellectuals who are multifaceted, who strive for a high level in their professional work, who are open to further development, who are committed and who also accept their Gypsy identity" (CRCASN Founding Document, 2011). The Network aims to educate students who are active in public life, responsible, engaged in social dialogue and who are at home in both Hungarian and Gypsy culture (Biczó, 2021; Török & Tóth, 2015). To support the social integration of Roma students, non-Roma students are also admitted to the colleges in varying numbers (Forray, R. & Marton, 2012). The students of Roma Colleges for Advanced Studies (RCAS) are provided housing, special courses and financial support to promote their acquiring a degree (Komolafe, Lukács, & Pethesné Dávid, 2019; Lukács J. et al., 2022). In these colleges, students find a peer community, which offers them the opportunity to share the challenges of university integration (Lukács J. & Dávid, 2019).

Additionally, RCAS can alleviate the sense of being "caught between two cultures" by serving as a bridge between the students' Roma families and the predominantly non-Roma university environment (Lukács J., 2023). As a result, the cost of upward mobility for Roma university students is reduced (Boros, Bogdán, & Durst, 2021).

PERSONAL ROMA IDENTITY

Identity is a complex phenomenon that can change in response to certain situations (Garai, 1993; Pataki, 1986). Identity may be dispositional (pre-reflective, embodied), which are "involuntary and entrenched elements of 'identity', situated in practical and pre-reflective routines, in 'social instincts'" (Bottero, 2010: 4) or reflexive, where people reflect strategically on their own "identity" and use such self-representations to form "groups" and mobilize collective action (Bottero, 2010). This helps to position oneself in the given society. Reflexive identities can become internalized and become dispositional identities. However, certain factors can also cause dispositional identities to become reflexive. For example, individuals become reflexively aware of their nationality when they travel abroad (Bottero, 2010). According to other approaches, there are different types of identity, such as gender identity, ethnic identity, class identity, etc. Ethnic identity is a form of social identity. The concept of social identity refers to the identification with a group, the awareness of being a member of it and the emotional attachment to this awareness (Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

In general, Roma identity is strongly influenced by social circumstances, experiences of discrimination and stigmatization. A sense of 'otherness' remains embedded in their self-image (Nguyen, 2012), which can already be witnessed at a young age. Neményi (2012) studied adolescent Roma youth and found that school segregation strongly shapes their self-image, but not necessarily in a negative way: "The school provides a pleasant atmosphere for Roma pupils, it strengthens their self-acceptance and positive identity to a greater extent precisely where – either through its conscious policy of exclusion or because of the characteristics of the settlement – it concentrates them in a large proportion." (Neményi, 2012: 50) The ethnic identity of Roma people is unstable, as in many cases the self-identification and collective action necessary for the proper formation of an ethnic identity, as theorized by Yinger (2002), does not take place, only identification by others, based on external traits (Pásztor, 2015).

In a relatively clear categorization with a focus on current identity, Roma people can be classified into five identity strategies (Komolafe, Csordás, & Dávid, 2023: 27):

- Those with a **separated** identity strategy only identify with their own minority culture, are proud of being Roma, and if they need to choose, they feel more Roma than Hungarian (Keresztes-Takács, 2017; Neményi, 2012). The term dissociative identity has been used in a similar sense in several studies (Erős, 2001; Szabó-Tóth, 2009; Tóth, 2004).
- Those with an **integrated** identity strategy are strongly attached to the traits of minority and majority culture as well. They have a so-called dual identity, feeling both Roma and Hungarian (Keresztes-Takács, 2017; Neményi, 2012). In other terms, we can also say that they are people with high bicultural identity integration, who feel at home in both majority and minority cultures (Benet-Martínez, Luu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993).

- Those with an **assimilated** Roma identity strategy perceive Hungarian as their main group affiliation. They strive to fully identify with the norms and values of the majority society (Keresztes-Takács, 2017; Neményi, 2012).
- Those with a **marginalized** identity strategy are not attached to either the minority or the majority group; their identity is confused. They do not know whether they feel Roma or not (Keresztes-Takács, 2017; Neményi, 2012).
- Those with a **negative** identity strategy experience being Roma as a shame (Keresztes-Takács, 2017).

With the Roma identity strategy, we do not examine only the attachment to a given ethnic group or nationality. The individual places their own identity in relation to the majority and minority groups. This determines which group they feel closer to.

The identity strategies were examined on a sample of 533 Roma in Hungary by Komolafe et al. (2023), 55% of whom were separated, 25% were integrated and 20% were assimilated. Those with a marginalized and negative identity strategy were present in the sample in a very small proportion (four persons), so no calculations were made in relation to them. The educational attainment of Roma respondents showed a correlation with their identity. Those with a higher level of education tended to feel more Hungarian, while those with a separated identity strategy stood in majority among those with a lower level of education. About half of the sample (55%) had eight years of primary education, a proportion similar to that of the Roma population in Hungary (KSH, 2011). If we look only at those with at least a secondary school diploma, the proportions are very different: the proportion of the separated is 24%, the proportion of the integrated remains the same, and more than half of them had an assimilated identity strategy (Komolafe et al., 2023). The research identified a connection between Roma identity strategies and interethnic partner choice. Individuals with a separated identity strategy were more likely to choose only Roma partners during their lifetime, while those with integrated or assimilated identity strategies were more likely to report having had non-Roma partners at some point in their lives (Komolafe et al., 2023).

Other research has shown that the integrated or assimilated category is more common than the separated category among Roma people with higher levels of education. A significant proportion of Roma with higher education do not consider themselves Gypsies and are assimilated into the majority group, where it often did not occur to anyone that they might be of Roma origin (Binder & Orsós, 2022). Tóth (2004) examined the identity strategies of 25 Roma high achievers from Hungary and 22 from England who had obtained success in mainstream society. She examined two groups in her sample: political leaders/activists and civil servants in Gypsy affairs (they led, founded, or held a leading political position in a political organization, e.g., as a ministerial commissioner), and a group of university/college graduates. Among them, a dual identity strategy was the most typical. The fact that in the already cited Roma sample in Hungary (Komolafe et al., 2023) the assimilated were in majority in the population with at least a secondary school degree, while in Tóth's (2004) it was the integrated, might be due to the fact that in her sample more respondents existed who were explicitly representing Roma people or who were concerned with the 'Roma cause' and therefore did not want to break away from their minority group.

In addition to the personal identity strategies described above, other identity-related phenomena can also be observed. These are difficult to detect by examining the current identity of

individuals. One of these involves the so-called rediscovered identity, where already assimilated children actively try to strengthen their minority identity (Nótin, 2020; Tóth, 2004). The other is the hidden identity, which in certain situations does not have an external manifestation: the individual does not reveal or even hides their minority identity from their environment, knowingly or unintentionally. However, the existence of the phenomenon does not give us information about the inner experience of identity (Tóth, 2004). The third category to be mentioned constitutes the peripheral identity, in which case the Roma origin is only one identity element among many, and others (e.g. gender identity) are given more importance (Békés, 2011).

FAMILY ROMA IDENTITY

The family is considered to be one of the most important factors influencing the formation of identity (Erikson, 1968; McLean, 2015). This is where social dispositions are first formed and where children are educated about what they should be like in the world (Mallman, 2018). In addition, every family has its own identity, which forms during the interactions among family members. Several studies have shown how parents' behavior (e.g. support, attachment) influences their children's identity formation (Mullis, Graf, & Mullis, 2009; Prioste, Tavares, Silva, & Magalhães, 2020). But siblings (Davies, 2015) and extended family relatives can also influence people's identity formation. During early childhood socialization, parents convey ethnic identity to the children, who primarily obtain information about ethnicity from them (Hughes et al., 2006; Knight et al., 2011). Identity formation in the nuclear family is the parents' responsibility, which can be influenced by the parents' experiences, personality and the narrower or wider community in which they live.

No targeted research on family Roma identity has been conducted so far. In the literature, one can mainly read about assimilated Roma families or the extremely traditional ones. Many families with Roma ancestry now consider themselves more Hungarian. Children are also easily assimilated as a result of interethnic marriages of the Roma people. This is shown by the 2011 census data, where 98.5% of children from Roma parents in homogamous relationships were identified as Roma. In contrast, Roma-non-Roma interethnic couples identified 57% of their children as non-Roma and only 38.4% as Roma (Szabó, 2021). Roma families with strong traditionalism prioritize the culture, traditions and norms of their community over those of the majority, and gender roles are sharply separated from each other. Men serve in the main decision-making role (Mrhálek, Lidová, & Kajanová, 2015). Women remain predominantly responsible for household chores and taking care of the family and children (Durst, Fejős, & Nyírő, 2016; Kóczé, 2010; Neményi, 2010; Pálos, 2010; Szabóné Kármán, 2020). Usually, special ceremonies are associated with courtship, proposal and marriage (Vajda, 2015). They are homogamous in terms of marriage, trying to find a partner from within their own Roma community (Kovai, 2017; Szuhay, 1995). People belonging to bilingual communities also speak the Roma language and often use it in family circles. The extended family and the community surrounding them play a more prominent role in shaping and strengthening Roma identity.

The literature therefore mainly provides examples of the two more extreme identity strategies. In our research we also try to fill this gap.

THE AIM OF THE RESEARCH

Between 2011 and 2016, the Semmelweis University Institute of Mental Health examined the students of the Christian Roma Colleges for Advanced Studies Network in five colleges operating during this period. The institute's research team measured the mobility and social integration of Roma students in several dimensions via the use of several methods. The family and personal identity of Roma young people were measured by examining the relevant parts of life story interviews. In the present study, we examine Roma university students with a focus on their household dynamics and family identity and how these patterns might be related to their personal Roma identity strategy. Furthermore, we investigate the impact of the RCAS on their identity formation.

METHODS

The interview questions asked about the respondents' life story in past, present and future stages, including short and long-term goals and plans for the future. The interviews were conducted in the RCAS and lasted between sixty and one hundred and fifty minutes. Data collection took place at the beginning of the autumn semester in each study year. The researchers conducting the survey recorded the interviews. The MAXQDA 2020 content analysis software was used for coding and analyzing the typed interviews (Kuckartz & Rädiker, 2019). Statistical analyses (descriptive statistics, χ^2 test) were performed using the SPSS Statistics software.

We explored the identity formation of Roma university students based on their individual narratives. One way of understanding family's role in identity formation is the perspective of narrative identity, according to which storytelling forms identity (McAdams & McLean, 2013). Creating narratives about themselves and their lives is something that everyone does in order to understand themselves and their environment (Reese, Leyva, Sparks, & Grolnick, 2010). Family members are highly influential in shaping people's identities and are even described as 'co-authors' of people's narrative identities (McLean, 2015). The stories that family members tell about their families and each other are incorporated into their identity (McLean, 2015; Wiking, Gyberg, Wängqvist, & Svensson, 2023). The texts of the life story interviews were coded and subcodes were defined within the codes. Using the codes, we divided the participants' Personal Roma Identity types into categories and examined whether these identity types can be used to determine their family identity types. The family identity strategy was mainly based on the respondents' memories of what their parents conveyed to the children within the family. After identifying personal and family identity types, we looked for connections between the different categories.

SAMPLE

Our sample was taken from the students of the CRCASN. After all the students were invited to participate in the survey, a total of 186 respondents provided data, 117 of whom were of Roma origin and 69 of non-Roma origin. In the present study, only those students who identified themselves as Roma were surveyed, and their responses provided an indication of how they perceived their identity.

In this study, we analyzed the interviews of 108 Roma students, 58% of whom were women; they were all over 18 years old at the time of the interview, their average age being 21 years. 53% of the students came from villages, 29% from towns, 14% from towns with county rank and 4% from the capital. The Roma students of RCAS participating in the research are young people studying in various higher education institutions, with a high proportion of social work, teaching, law, health, finance and economics students. 10.7% of the respondents' mothers and 8.2% of their fathers had a college or university degree.

RESULTS

Personal Roma Identity Strategy (PRIS)

We categorized the students' identities according to the five Roma identity strategies listed in the literature review (Table 1).

- **Separated PRIS:** Those with a separated identity strategy felt primarily Roma and were generally very proud of their origins.

   "I identify as Gypsy and feel like it too. I really don't like it even if they make jokes about me being Hungarian […] I am Gypsy, and I like it when people say that." (21-year-old-woman)

- **Integrated PRIS:** They felt at home in both Roma and Hungarian cultures, and that they belonged to both.

   "We are Hungarian citizens, but within that we are of Roma nationality. In plain terms: both must be kept, both must be built, equally, naturally." (21-year-old man)

- **Assimilated PRIS:** They preferred to consider themselves Hungarian. They generally could not even identify which Roma subgroup they belonged to.

   "Well, if I can put it that way, then I don't really live my Roma identity. That, I don't at all, and more towards the other. But this is probably – and I refer to this again – probably because I got into a group like that and I didn't have to put emphasis on that." (20-year-old woman)

- **Identity crisis/marginalized PRIS:** They did not know whether they feel Roma or not For the majority of those with a marginalized personal identity strategy, their family did not have a clear sense of where they belonged and this uncertainty remained with them into their university years.

   "I was always confused about this. So now you ask me if I identify as Gypsy or Hungarian, and I cannot give a complete, real answer." (20-year-old woman)

Table 1. Personal Roma identity strategy of students of RCAS ($N = 107$, %)

	Separated	Integrated	Assimilated	Negative	Marginalized
Characteristics	More Roma, proud Roma	Roma and Hungarian too	More Hungarian, little or no attachment to being Roma	Ashamed of being Roma	Does not know where they belong
Personal RIS	15	68	13	1	3

- **Negative PRIS:** We interviewed one student with a negative self-identity strategy who also saw this pattern in her family. In the RCAS, she came closer to accepting her Roma identity, but she could not completely overcome the negative feeling associated with it. *"That they instill in a child that they should be ashamed of who they are, so I felt shame when I was a child. And to put it this way, this won't go away."* (22-year-old woman)

No gender differences can be observed in the distribution of one's PRIS ($\chi2(2) = 0.257$, $p = 0.879$).

Family Roma Identity Strategies (FRIS)

The identity strategies listed in the theoretical introduction (assimilated, integrated, separated, marginalized, negative) were applied to the definition of the FRIS as well (Table 2). This identity definition mainly refers to the nuclear family in which the child grows up. This can be influenced by grandparents, extended relatives, the particular minority community to which family members belong and the wider society. Family identity can also be influenced by the children, so the process of FRIS development is not necessarily unidirectional. Parents' identities may also change as a result of issues and problems that arise in the course of raising children. A grown up, independent child may develop a different family identity strategy in their own family than in their family of origin. This is because parents are jointly involved in the development of the family identity strategy. Family identity can also change over time. The interviews revealed how respondent felt about their family identity overall during their childhood. Respondents came from families with different structures (two-parent, single-parent, foster, blended). For the purposes of the FRIS definition, 'family' was defined as the parents (birth parents or foster parents) and siblings with whom the students lived during their childhood. FRIS may also be influenced by extended family members should they maintain active relationships with them. Family identities can also be formed or changed in response to the perceived or real expectations of the external environment, such as the local community.

No gender differences existed in the distribution of family Roma identity strategy either ($\chi2(2) = 2.147$, $p = 0.342$)

Separated FRIS. For families with a separated FRIS, the preservation of tradition is very important and they feel more Roma than Hungarian. They are proud of their origin and want to pass on the Roma culture to their children. Among the preserved traditions, the system of rules

Table 2. Distribution of family Roma identity strategies ($N = 108$, %)

	Separated	Integrated	Assimilated	Negative	Marginalized
Characteristics	Very traditional, they emphasize that they are Roma	They are present in Roma and non-Roma environment, observe few traditions	There are no Roma traditions; hardly any talk of being Roma occurred at home	They are ashamed that they are Roma	They don't know their origins; confused family identity
Family RIS	15	48	31	3	3

regarding relationships and the knowledge of the Gypsy language in bilingual Roma communities were particularly important.

> "I spoke Gypsy and I learned Hungarian after. Our culture. Well, if we go somewhere, let's say at Christmas to gather, at Easter, then we had different greetings, Roma greetings. For instance, if the family sits down together, we always have to say toasts. In Gypsy, of course. And then, if, say, there comes a time in my life, we have this that the girl has to get asked. Asked if I'm allowed to court her. This can happen after about half a year of getting to know each other, until then the two families must not meet in each other's homes. And the boy and the girl can't go to each other's home either. And then when this getting asked happens; at this time, the date of the engagement also has to be fixed. After this there is this courtship for us at first – our culture is like this, that when we go to the girl's place, we sit down, but she is not there yet, she only comes out after and then it always has to be asked if you love each other and if she is the girl who you like. Then I need to tell my plans, of course in Romani language. So, we only speak in Romani language. Then there is the wedding, at the wedding, I don't know if there is this custom in Hungarian traditions, culture, that it can be announced that the week before we only bring vegetables and then we will only bring gifts at the wedding. There is the veiling – that the girl's head is tied. When the ceremony, the church and the state, has happened then there is this bride dance after and after that they tie the girl's head."
> (19-year-old man)

Usually in such families, both parents are Roma, their personal identity strategy is also separated, and they already have many relatives and acquaintances who strongly hold on to their traditions, so this pattern is also externally reinforced from within the community. Usually, parents lived together in these families while the children were growing up. They were less likely to be single-parent families and blended families than the other FRIS categories. The traditions and expectations of the extended family and the Roma community had the most significant influence on them.

Children from families with a separated identity strategy were the most likely to seek a Roma partner. In their narratives, the parents' will was a primary consideration in partner choice. The consideration also came up in their case that their partner should come from within their own Roma subgroup.

> "On a cultural level, it was important, even more so for my parents. My parents wouldn't have tolerated it if I get together with a Hungarian girl or a Hungarian Gypsy girl." (20-year-old man)

In families that strongly follow traditions, female and male roles are sharply separated. However, most of the narratives revealed that the expectations for women in the family were already lighter in relation to the children than what was typical in the parents' generation.

> "First and foremost, that family above all else, that they are very mindful of that women should be raised to be modest, there is no wearing bikinis, miniskirts or anything like that. I have that in too. It's not a good expression that I was brought up with this, but this is what is normal for me too and I am used to this. It is such an important value system for us that women are not really in the company of men and such. […] By the way, this is an interesting thing, but Dad also completely supported even though they are protective of girls and don't let them go anywhere. For us, it was a serious step that I could go to Fehérvár to study. Even more so that I could come up to Pest. But Dad allowed all of this. There was even a case when I applied to the Faculty of Law at the age of 18, but at that time I was only accepted to Pécs, and Dad wanted to let me go there as well, but Mom didn't let me, because we had no friends or relatives there." (22-year-old woman)

Some of the separated families also had customs that made it difficult for children to integrate into society.

> *"Our childhood with the Olah Gypsies is such that they speak to the child primarily in Gypsy and that's how they learn to speak primarily, and then when they start kindergarten at the age of 3-4, they start to get acquainted with Hungarian speech, Hungarian customs, Hungarian habits, and they speak to them only in Olah Gypsy and at first, they don't understand what they say to him in kindergarten. So basic things like I want to go out or I want to pee, God forbid, etc. – he can't express it, only in Gypsy. This is a problem. And the kindergarten teachers don't speak Olah."* (20-year-old man)

However, in the majority of the separated families, there was a tendency to want to keep Roma customs and traditions at a level which, in their opinion and experience, would not hinder the social integration of their children.

> *"But not at a native level, because my parents thought that when they started school they spoke Gypsy at a native level, so they didn't even really speak Hungarian. They could speak, but not well. Which would have been necessary at school, so they had disadvantages. And they thought that if they talk to us in Hungarian and teach us, our mother tongue is not going to be Gypsy, then we can assert ourselves better."* (19-year-old woman)

Integrated FRIS. Families with an integrated identity try to balance between Roma and Hungarian culture. They feel they belong to both. They incorporate elements of Roma culture and traditions into their family life that fit well with the norms and values typical of the majority society.

> *"I think for those who preserve traditions better there is a strict set of rules about what they can and cannot do. For instance, that a Gypsy can only marry a Gypsy. For us, this was not so much the case."* (19-year-old man)

The parents' personal identity strategy can be different from the family identity strategy, but in families with a clearer identity strategy, a common direction is formed, which gets transferred to the children, as shown in the following quote.

> *"And Mom keeps these Gypsy customs very strongly, so she wears long skirts and wears her hair only in a bun. And for example, they didn't force these on us. […] No. Because Dad told Mom to forget it, because we should be like the non-Gypsies, so we should fit in, so let's not act Gypsy that I really have to wear long skirts."* (20-year-old woman)

In these families, often only one parent is Roma.

Assimilated FRIS. The assimilated families prefer to consider themselves Hungarian, do not follow Roma traditions, and try to live according to the norms, values, and traditions of the majority society. In these families, often only one parent is Roma. At the level of information, they may know that their ancestors were of Roma origin, but they do not consider it important.

> *"We haven't really preserved these traditions. Mom wanted to break free from this situation too, in which they were, so I don't even speak the language anymore."* (21-year-old woman)

> *"We were rather raised as Hungarian. […] Last year it was the end of the year ceremony at school – very funny – that they told us to sing the Gypsy anthem and I'm nudging Mom asking if it exists? 'Well, I don't know either.' After all, she doesn't know these either. Because on her side the relatives don't speak Gypsy either or anything."* (20-year-old woman)

Those who come from assimilated families often first encountered the fact that they are different from others when they were at school.

> "Well, my mom is not Roma, she's of Hungarian origin, my dad is Roma. […] And we lived among Hungarians, so until the age of 10 I didn't even know what Gypsy was. For me it was strange, when I found out. […] I heard it when they told me in elementary school that I was Gypsy. And then I asked it at home why they had told me this and they didn't answer me at home. I asked am I Gypsy? I asked at home and they didn't answer me then." (21-year-old woman)

Negative and marginalized FRIS. In the case of a negative identity, family members know that they are Roma, see it as a shame and feel that they have to struggle more to prove that they are not the type of Roma that the society and they themselves view negatively.

> "They think that this puts them at a disadvantage." (21-year-old man)

In the grandparents' and great-grandparents' generation, negative family identity strategies emerged more often than in the family formed by the parents of Roma students.

> "My Grandfather…it was very visible on him, but he really didn't like it, not even saying it, even though he lived in a village where there were only Gypsies, and he scolded those who didn't work, but he looked like the biggest Gypsy there, I always laughed at him when I was there. He was like that. My great grandfather was rather ashamed of it. When my godmother had this boyfriend who became her husband, he rather didn't tell him. He didn't come to my school leaving celebration either. I learned about this later and scolded him. He said it was because he looks like a Gypsy, and he didn't want people to see it." (22-year-old woman)

The marginalized identity strategy is typical for those who do not know whether they belong to the majority or the minority, and are not really attached to either. In terms of family identity, this can most likely occur when someone grows up in a mosaic family, where completely opposite identities are transmitted to them or they are brought up in state care.

In the research literature, individuals with negative and marginalized identity strategies tend to be the least represented. In our study as well, we found few individuals whose family or personal identity fell into these categories. However, it should be noted that our sample is special in that it only includes students who have applied specifically to RCAS, so presumably they have accepted to some extent that they have Roma ancestry.

Identity preservation and change

One third of Roma students of RCAS (35%) did not keep the identity strategy they had received from their family as their personal one. The Family Roma Identity Strategy was associated with which Personal Roma Identity Strategy the Roma university students had ($\chi 2(4) = 51.315$, $p < 0.001$). Of the three most common identity strategies, children from integrated families changed identity in the lowest proportion (11%) while children from assimilated families did so in the highest proportion (65%); 40% of those with a separated family identity changed identity (Table 3).

Two groups of people with a separated PRIS can be distinguished. Most of them come from a separated family themselves, and respecting and observing traditions is expected in their families. They also kept this family identity as their personal one.

Table 3. Distribution of personal Roma identity strategy by family Roma identity strategy (*N* = 108)

		Personal RIS					
		Separate (%)	Integrated (%)	Assimilated (%)	Negative (%)	Marginalized (%)	Total (%)
Family RIS	Separated	60	40	0	0	0	100
	Integrated	11	89	0	0	0	100
	Assimilated	3	59	35	0	3	100
	Negative	0	0	67	33	0	100
	Marginalized	0	33	0	0	67	100

"I am of Gypsy origin. My mother and father are Gypsies. And our whole family, in fact. In our family there aren't really any people of Hungarian origin. So, I would say that I come from an original Gypsy family; I'm an Olah gypsy. […] To this day we keep all the customs and traditions." (19-year-old woman)

A certain selectivity exists in the observance of traditions. They are proud of their Roma identity, they consider themselves Roma rather than Hungarian, but they remain more open to the norms of the majority society than their grandparents' and parents' generation.

"My grandparents are even more traditional and observe these traditions. My parents are more traditional but have a more modern outlook. And I have a modern understanding, but I still observe the traditions, the ones that I think are, so to speak, foundational for me and can be linked to the modern understanding. So, getting married at 16, for example, I can't link that to modern under-standing. But marrying a virgin girl, I can link that." (20-year-old man)

The other group was born into an integrated or assimilated family, but changed their identity and became explicitly proud of their Roma identity. They had fewer Roma traditions in the family to reach back to, which they would feel obliged to observe in their lives. In their case, this identity strategy is rather reflected in their love of being Gypsies, which they emphasize. When it comes to partner choice, they usually look for a Roma partner, but Roma origin is not as strong a criterion for them as it is for those who grew up in a separated family. It seems obvious concerning both groups that they are proud of the 'decent' Roma people. They emphasize the cultural values of the Roma, the beauty of their traditions and their love for their families, but they do not identify themselves with the lower-class Roma.

"We are gypsies, and they know that, but my parents can behave in a very civilized way, and they know that we are honest. We don't steal, we don't lie, and if we say something is so, it will be so. And basically, they look down on people who are not… how shall I say it? The ones who are not clean, who go in dirty." (21-year-old man)

"I'm not ashamed of being Gypsy, I'm even proud of it, because I can get here even though I'm Gypsy. And I am proud when I watch something on TV, and then they're Roma, and then they're a doctor or something, and then I'm proud of it and it's nice to hear it." (21-year-old man)

For those with a separated family pattern, no strong identity reinforcement was observable, for them the RCAS may have more of a role in identity preservation.

Most of those with an integrated family identity strategy have also become integrated. In some interviews, the Roma university students bore a dual identity, but in some situations did not emphasize that they were of Roma origin. The literature refers to this as a hidden identity, whereby in certain situations the individual does not disclose or actively hides their minority identity from their environment, either consciously or unintentionally. However, the existence of this phenomenon alone does not provide information about the inner experience of identity (Tóth, 2004).

> "So, the way we are with it is that we don't always have to emphasize this, and it's not the first thing when we meet someone and then wow, I'm a Gypsy, but when the situation calls for it, and we have to speak up and defend ourselves, when you have to, but when you don't, you don't. This does not mean that I am denying it, but it depends on the situation." (20-year-old woman)

In our sample, those with an assimilated personal identity strategy consisted of those whose family identity was assimilated or who experienced a negative Roma identity at home.

Rediscovered identity is typical for children of assimilated families (Nótin, 2020; Tóth, 2004), which the interviews repeatedly reflect. Young people from such families were generally given a greater impetus to rediscover their identity by the RCAS, so many of them already had an integrated personal Roma identity strategy.

> "Well, I have been Roma since September […] Before that I had been Hungarian for twenty years. Nobody knew." (20-year-old woman)

RCAS offers students courses in Roma ethnology and identity. In addition, Roma students can find a peer community where their peers are trying to find their way in university life coming from similar backgrounds. RCAS bridges the students' family environment with the university world, thereby reducing the cost of social mobility (Boros et al., 2021; Lukács J., 2023).

Many of those with an assimilated and integrated family background have deliberately enrolled in a RCAS to reinforce their identity there.

> "I am half Roma. On my mother's side. We don't really observe any traditions. I mean, I would like to get to know it, but it was left out of my upbringing. […] I came here to learn about it and to develop an identity." (19-year-old man)

The search for identity and the reinforcement of Roma consciousness compared to parents usually started before the university years, but it was the RCAS that provided an opportunity to get to know the history, groups, and traditions of Gypsies better.

> "My Roma identity is very important to me. In relation to my parents, I could say that it is perhaps more important than for them. I think it has always been important to me. Now I go here, so it is more important, but I was concerned about it before." (20-year-old woman)

RCAS can help to develop a positive Roma self-image, which can help Roma students to show others the positive side of being Gypsy.

> "When I was younger, it was bad that I was also a Gypsy, and what does this mean now, and then as I understand it more and more, and I got impressions from the outside world, so I was a little afraid of that, that I wondered how I could be accepted, or what was this? And then I said, oh, who cares, I'm a Gypsy, I'll still show that a Gypsy can learn, and a Gypsy can be smart and educated. If possible, I would stay silent when this was a topic, but now, since I'm here at this school, it has become more

and more clear to me that there is no need to hide this, because there is nothing to hide in this, but it must be expressed in such a way, this subject must be approached in such a way to attract the other person and make them like the way you present yourself, so that they are like it can be so cool if someone is Roma?" (21-year-old woman)

DISCUSSION

In our research, we defined Family Roma Identity Strategies based on Personal Roma Identity Strategies. In the sample, three types of FRIS emerged more prominently: the separated, the integrated, and the assimilated. Families with a separated identity strategy were proud of their Roma origins and traditions. They lived in a more closed Roma community than those with the other two family identity strategies. Children from this background also tended to have a separated PRIS. Families with an integrated FRIS kept only those Roma customs and traditions that they did not think would hinder their integration into the majority society. They felt equally part of the majority and minority group. Roma students from such families also tended to have an integrated PRIS. Members of assimilated families felt more Hungarian, belonging to the majority society. For some of the children from such families, the rediscovered identity described in other literature (Nótin, 2020; Tóth, 2004) was typical when they started to consciously search for their Roma roots and identity as adults. For this very reason, many of them already had an integrated personal Roma identity strategy at the time of recording the interviews. The family identity strategy generally predicted their own identity strategy. This connection was weakest for children from assimilated families, but this may be mainly due to the higher proportion of students enrolled in RCAS who want to reinforce their Roma identity.

Those with a separated (also referred to as dissociative) personal Roma identity strategy, who describe themselves as more Roma than Hungarian and take pride in their heritage, have traditionally been treated as a single group in research (Keresztes-Takács, 2017; Szabó-Tóth, 2009; Tóth, 2004). However, our study suggests that there could be two kinds of "proud Roma" groups, and FRIS helps us in categorizing them. One group consists of those with a traditional separated PRIS, who grew up in families with separated FRIS. Preserving traditions passed down from their ancestors remains important to them. Regarding marriage, they strive for homogamy, often within a Roma subgroup (e.g. Olah, Boyash, Romungro, etc.). The other group includes those with a separated PRIS without strong traditions who come from assimilated or integrated FRIS families that maintained little or no tradition. Their Roma identity became important to them, more so than to their family members with whom they grew up. They follow fewer traditions, are more open in partner choice, but they take pride in the achievements of other successful Roma individuals and aspire to be like them. Since they do not have clear traditions associated with a specific Roma subgroup (e.g., Olah, Boyash, Romungro, etc.), they do not distinguish themselves from other Roma groups but rather from those "Gypsies" whom they believe lead a lifestyle that brings shame to the Roma community.

Role expectations for women have been weakened in the generation of the Roma university student respondents. The traditional Roma family roles, where women are responsible for the household and for the care of children (Durst et al., 2016; Kóczé, 2010; Neményi, 2010; Pálos, 2010; Szabóné Kármán, 2020) stood most prevalent in families with a separated identity strategy in the parents' generation. These expectations were also weakened for children from separated

families, as shown by the fact that female Roma university students could even continue their education further away from their place of residence. Similar findings by Pascual, de Vicente, Matulic, and Amador (2020) suggest that with the presence of Roma women in higher education, family relations in Roma communities are also changing.

The personal identity of the Roma students in RCAS differed from the results measured by Komolafe et al. (2023) on the Hungarian Roma sample. The largest proportion of the students attending RCAS had an integrated identity strategy, whereas more than half of the respondents in the Roma sample had a separated identity strategy. This could be explained by differences in educational attainment, as Komolafe et al. (2023) showed in their study that fewer of those with higher educational attainment identified themselves as Roma only. In their sample, among those with at least a secondary school degree, the assimilated identity strategy was the most common. The fact that, despite their high educational attainment, the majority of the students of RCAS had an integrated identity strategy rather than an assimilated one, can be explained by the fact that they had applied to an institution specifically designed for Roma people. This makes it likely that they are not completely isolated from their Roma identity. The results can also show that the goal of RCAS to help students develop their Roma identity has been achieved.

A limitation of the research is that in some cases it was difficult to clearly categorize the respondents' Roma identity strategies based on the interviews. Furthermore, in our study, we could only examine the participants' current personal identity. We do not know how the identities of the respondents have evolved after graduating from the RCAS. We do not know to what extent those for whom the RCAS helped in preserving or strengthening their identity were able to maintain their identity after transitioning from the relatively protected environment of the RCAS into the working world.

CONCLUSION

The identity of Roma students of RCAS can be influenced by many things, and family is one such factor. In this primary socialization environment, Roma children observe an identity model which they either try to follow or abandon in their own lives. Family identity can also be shaped by the influence of the children as they are growing up. For example, in several cases, parents deliberately aimed to convey a different family RIS to their children than what their own RIS was, to help their children better succeed in society. The majority of RCAS students had a Roma identity strategy similar to what was characteristic of their family of origin.

Both the personal and the family Roma identity strategy of the RCAS students could be divided into five groups (separated, integrated, assimilated, marginalized, and negative). For the separated personal Roma identity strategy, two subgroups could be identified: those who followed traditions and those without clear traditions. The root of their differences lies precisely in the families in which they grew up. While tradition followers hail from families bearing a separated FRIS and follow family traditions, the group with separated FRIS without clear traditions comes from integrated or assimilated families and one of their sources of pride is these Roma who are high achievers.

For the majority of the RCAS Roma students, the atmosphere and training that the college provided helped to reinforce their identity or to become more aware of the history and culture of Roma people.

Ethical statement

The research was approved by the Ministry of Human Resources (4835-2/2016/SZOCSTRAT). Only those individuals were included in the research who stated that they were properly informed and voluntarily agreed to the data collection. Respondents were able to opt out of the data collection process at anytime. Data was treated and analysed completely anonymously in accordance with ethical expectations.

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