



A Sociological Study of the Roma (Gitano) Population Living in Granada

Granada'da Yaşayan Roman (Gitanolar) Nüfusu Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma

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Abstract

This study aims to explore how Roma (Gitano) identity is constructed and maintained through traditions and how it evolves under social changes. By employing an ethnographic approach, the research focuses on the ethnographic characteristics of the Roma (Gitano) community living in Granada, Spain, including common cultural elements, social organization models, and belief systems. Participants were selected using snowball sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria requiring Roma (Gitano) identity, Spanish citizenship, and a minimum of one year of residence in

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Granada. Data collection continued until saturation was reached, resulting in a final sample consisted of fifteen participants. Upon using content analysis techniques, four central themes emerged: *Cultural Characteristics and Traditions*, *Identity and Cultural Pride*, *Discrimination and Stereotypes*, and *Perception of the Future and Expectations*. The findings reveal that strong family bonds, respect for elders, and other cultural practices such as endogamy or mourning traditions continue to persist. At the same time, gender roles evolve, and educational participation increases. Participants also reported widespread experiences of discrimination that influence their social interactions and identity expressions. This study concludes that Roma (Gitano) identity is maintained through dynamic cultural practices that balance tradition with adaptation. Research findings underscore the need for increased public awareness to dismantle stereotypes and support the Roma (Gitano) identity. This study makes a considerable contribution to the fields of ethnography and cultural studies through an in-depth analysis of the Roma (Gitano) community residing in Granada.

Keywords: *Roma, Gitano, identity, culture, Granada*

Öz

Bu çalışma, Roman (Gitano) kimliğinin gelenekler aracılığıyla nasıl inşa edildiğini ve sürdürüldüğünü ve toplumsal dönüşümlerin etkisi altında nasıl evrildiğini incelemeyi amaçlamıştır. Nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden etnografik yaklaşım kullanılarak gerçekleştirilen bu çalışma, İspanya'nın Granada kentinde yaşayan Roman (Gitano) topluluğunun ortak kültürel unsurları, toplumsal örgütlenme modelleri ve inanç sistemleri gibi etnografik özellikleri üzerine odaklanmıştır. On beş katılımcı, Roman (Gitano) kimliğine ve İspanyol vatandaşlığına sahip olup Granada 'da en az bir yıl ikamet eden bireyler arasından, kartopu örnekleme tekniği kullanılarak veri doygunluğuna ulaşıncaya kadar seçilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler içerik analizi tekniği kullanılarak değerlendirilmiştir. Analiz sonucunda, *Kültürel Nitelikler ve Gelenekler*, *Kimlik ve Kültürel Özsaygı*, *Ayrımcılık ve Önyargılar* ile *Gelecek Algısı ve Beklentiler* olmak üzere dört ana tema ortaya çıkmıştır. Bulgularda, güçlü aile bağlarının, büyüklere saygı göstermenin, iç evlilik (endogami) veya yas tutma gelenekleri gibi farklı kültürel uygulamaların halen varlığını sürdürdüğü; ayrıca cinsiyet rollerinin dönüştüğü ve eğitime katılımın arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Bunun yanı sıra, sosyal etkileşimlerde ve kimlik ifadelerinde ayrımcılık deneyimlerinin de yaşandığı görülmüştür. Bu çalışmada, Roman (Gitano) kimliğinin, gelenek ile uyum süreçlerini dengeleyen kültürel uygulamalar aracılığıyla sürdürüldüğü sonucuna ulaşılmış; ayrıca, Romanların (Gitano) desteklenmesi amacıyla kamuoyunun farkındalığının artırılması ve önyargıların giderilmesinin gerektiği vurgulanmıştır. Bu araştırma, Granada kentindeki Roman (Gitano) nüfusunu derinlemesine inceleyerek çalışmanın önemini artırmış ve etnografi ile kültürel çalışmalar alanlarına önemli bir katkı sunmuştur.

Anahtar sözcükler: *Roman, Gitano, kimlik, kültür, Granada*

Introduction

The Roma (Gitano) people constitute the largest transnational and relatively closed ethnic community characterized by strong internal social bonds. They are predominantly concentrated in Europe, significant populations are also found in other regions of the world (Hancock, 2006; Fraser, 1992). Although the Roma (Gitano) share a common historical origin, their populations exhibit substantial diversity in cultural practices, linguistic varieties, and religious affiliations. This heterogeneity reflects centuries of migration, settlement, and adaptation to diverse geographical, cultural, and sociopolitical contexts (Marusiakova and Popov 2018; Matras, 2002; Migra and Mroz, 1994; Hancock, 2002; Liegeois, 1994). There is no definitive agreement regarding the origin of the Roma (Gitano) people. Despite the lack of historical evidence, various studies and genetic findings indicate a group of scientists who share a common opinion that these people originated from Northern India (Colocci, 1898; Grierson, 1888; Lewy, 1999; Marusiakova and Popov, 2021; Martinez-Cruz et al., 2016; Kenrick, 2007; Kalaydjieva et al., 2001; Williams, 1994). There are also notable linguistic similarities between Sanskrit (an old Indo-Aryan language) and the Romani language (spoken among Roma people) (Arayıcı, 2008; Asseo, 2007; Черных, 2003).

It is widely believed that numerous factors, including wars and droughts that began in the ninth century, contributed to the early waves of these relocations. According to the prevailing migration hypothesis, the Roma (Gitano) began migration from Northern India to present-day Iran. Upon reaching this destination, the Roma (Gitano) nomads divided into three branches. One group moved towards the Caucasus and spread across Europe by the thirteenth century. The second group travelled to Byzantium and the Balkans through Anatolia. The third group migrated through Mesopotamia before moving to the Arabian Peninsula, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt and later crossed the Strait of Gibraltar to reach the Iberian Peninsula (Fraser, 1992; Hancock, 2006; Kenrick, 2007; Marusiakova and Popov, 2021). Their initial settlements in the Iberian Peninsula began in the fifteenth century. Historical sources indicate that the initial movements of Roma (Gitano) individuals on the Iberian Peninsula were met with a positive reception by the locals. However, over time, these attitudes shifted towards negativity, possibly due to perceiving the Roma (Gitano) as a threat to established local culture and religious traditions (Motomura, 2005). Following these developments, the Roma (Gitano) population faced stringent regulations and legal constraints, as exemplified by the decrees during the reigns of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon. For example, they enacted the first law against the Roma (Gitano) people. This law mandated their assimilation into the dominant local culture under the threat of immediate expulsion from the country. In subsequent years, further restrictive measures were enforced, including prohibitions on the use of their native language and the wearing of traditional attire (Motomura, 2005). Periods of persecution against the Roma (Gitano) population persisted until nearly the twentieth century. Many of these restrictive measures persisted until the end of Francisco Franco's rule in the late twentieth century (Quesada, 2020). Following the establishment of a new political system in Spain in 1977, the Roma (Gitano) people were granted full citizenship status and improved access to essential services such as education, healthcare, and housing (Martin and

Gammela, 2005).

Nowadays, Spain has one of the largest Roma (Gitano) populations among European Nations. According to the data from the European Official Census (2010), Spain is home to an estimated 750,000 Roma (Gitano) individuals. Half of this population, around 350,000 reside in the Andalusian region, with a notable concentration of 45,000 individuals in the municipality of Granada. The primary settlement areas within the city are the neighbourhoods of Almanjáyar, Albayzin, and Sacromonte (FSG, 2010). In Spain, the Roma people are referred to as *Gitanos* (often translated as *Gypsy* in English), an exonym given to them by Spanish locals. According to Quintana and Floyd (1972), when the Roma (Gitano) people first migrated to the Iberian Peninsula in the 1400s, they claimed to originate from a place they called the *Little Kingdom of Egypt*. Thus, the word *Gitano* derives from Egypt (Aparicio Gervas, 2006; Hancock, 2006; Marusiakova and Popov, 2021). The term *Roma* was first used in 1971 at the Roma World Congress in London to describe these people, meaning a superior, free man. Another term to describe them, *Ramayana* (conquering man), comes from the Sanskrit (Council of Europe, 2012; Marusiakova and Popov, 2021). Due to frequently using both terms as disparaging labels, this study employs both *Gitano* and *Roma*. Similarly, the term *Roma* symbolizes the rich heritage, cultural dignity, and originality of an oppressed yet resilient people (Liegeois, 1994: 258). However, the self-designation of the Roma (Gitano) people in the Iberian Peninsula is *Cale* (Acton, 1979; Fraser, 1995). About 10 percent of the total Roma (Gitano) population in Europe comprises the *Cale*, with significant numbers residing in the Iberian Peninsula and Southern France (Council of Europe, 2012). Within the *Cale* community, a considerable portion, estimated at 40 percent, comes from the Andalusian region (Martin and Gammela, 2005).

In this context, the Roma (Gitano) people, distinguished by their history, religion, language, and cultural practices, have historically been perceived through a lens of curiosity. Nevertheless, historical and contemporary evidence indicates that the Roma (Gitano) people have frequently been subjected to prejudice, social marginalization, and discrimination (FSG, 2006, 2015; La Perra-Casado et al., 2018; Tarnovschi et al., 2012). This ongoing discrimination is perpetuated by the negative social image embedded in Spanish society towards the Roma (Gitano) people (Madrid-Fernandez and Katz, 2018). Their distinct geographical origins and unique lifestyles have often led to their perception as outsiders by the local population (Williams, 1994). Due to multiple social interactions, emerging prejudices shape individuals' and society's perspectives towards one another, potentially leading to mutual accusations (Kolukırık, 2005). As a closed society, deep exclusion practices are consistently directed towards Roma (Gitano) individuals. This situation is further exacerbated by stigmatization, which stems from the formation of shared negative judgments (Firat, 2022). Educational attainment also remains low. Roughly 61.1 percent of boys and 64.3 percent of girls aged 12-16 are compelled to discontinue their education for various reasons, including early labour, familial care responsibilities, or a lack of engagement with schooling (Madrid-Fernandez and Katz, 2018).

Although Roma (Gitano) people have received considerable attention in sociological

and anthropological research, comprehensive studies on these communities remain limited. Accordingly, the present study addresses a significant gap in the literature by conducting an ethnographic analysis of the intersection of tradition and the construction, maintenance, and transformation of identity among the Roma (Gitano) community in Granada, Spain.

1. Research methodology

In this research, a qualitative research method was adopted to gain in-depth knowledge about the Roma (Gitano) population living in Granada, Spain, and an ethnographic approach was employed to investigate the common cultural elements, social organization models, cultural behaviours, and belief systems of the Roma (Gitano) community. The scope of the research includes determining the ethnographic characteristics of the Roma (Gitano) population in Granada. Granada has been chosen due to the presence of a significant Roma (Gitano) population in the city for over 500 years. An ethnographic approach is a qualitative design focusing on a whole culture-sharing group (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Ethnographers study and represent the shared patterns of values, beliefs, attitudes, and languages of culture-sharing groups (Creswell, 2018: 143). Researchers aim to conduct a deep, holistic analysis of this social group to understand and describe social structures and interactions within their natural environment (Gupta, 2024). To delineate ethnographic characteristics of the Roma (Gitano) population residing in Granada, a triangulation method, in-depth interviews, and document analyses, was employed in this research. The study was conducted with the approval of the Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee at the Akdeniz University Rectorate (Decision No. 115, dated 06/03/2025). The primary data source is fieldwork. Before fieldwork began, permissions from individuals were gathered with help from *gatekeepers* (Creswell, 2018: 96), who were members of or had insider status within the Roma (Gitano) community. These *gatekeepers* facilitated researcher access and the establishment of trust with community members. Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in their local language, which helped make respondents comfortable and understand their experiences of traditions, social organization, and culture. Fifteen interviews were conducted until data saturation was achieved (Appendix). Participants were selected using snowball sampling (Creswell, 2013:156; Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016:119), a purposeful sampling method, based on criteria identifying Roma (Gitano), as holding Spanish citizenship, and having resided in Granada for at least one year. For data analysis before commencing fieldwork, the researchers undertook several preparatory steps. They visited the Andalusian Roma Sociocultural Centre, the Roma Women's Ethnological Museum, and the Sacromonte Caves Museum. These visits helped foster connections with participants and obtain crucial information about the Roma (Gitano) people living in Granada. During data analysis, audio recordings were transcribed and, where necessary, translated from Spanish to English. Based on the privacy policy, anonymity was ensured, and participants were assigned appropriate codes (e.g., participant 1). In the data analysis process, content analysis techniques, including data collection, coding, and interpretation of results (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994; Miles and Huberman, 1994), were utilized. Coding procedure, a crucial element of qualitative research,

includes aggregating the text into small categories of information, seeking evidence for the codes from various databases, and assigning labels to the codes (Creswell, 2018: 259). Content analysis revealed four primary themes: *Cultural Characteristics and Traditions*, *Identity and Cultural Pride*, *Discrimination and Stereotypes*, and *Perception of the Future and Expectations*. Each of these overarching themes was further divided into categories and specific codes, which were elaborated upon in the discussion section of this study.

2. Cultural characteristics and traditions

2.1. Family unity, sense of solidarity, and respect for the elderly

The analysis reveals that Roma (Gitano) culture is deeply rooted in traditions, notably group cohesion, strong kinship and family bonds. Interview data further support the assertion that these traditions significantly shape the ethnic identity of Roma (Gitano) people from Granada: “Traditions are important for us. If we forget our traditions, we won’t be Roma anymore” (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025). It is widely acknowledged that traditions are primarily transmitted across generations through the process of socialization (Bourdieu, 1968; Coleman, 1988). Within this process, the family serves as an informal institution wherein primary socialization occurs (Berger and Luckmann, 1991; Durkheim, 1960; Parsons, 2013). According to Mead (1934: 229), the family constitutes the primary unit of human social organization through which essential biological activities and functions are executed and sustained. The interview findings indicate that family is considered a central institution for Roma (Gitano) people: “One of the most important cultural values for me is the unity of family” (Participant 14, In-depth Interview, 2025). Especially, respect for the elderly is highly valued within their community: “We always listen to our old people. Take care of them (...) always ask them for advice” (Participant 1, In-depth Interview, 2025). Living in extended families is a common experience for Roma (Gitano) people. As Bourdieu (1968: 243-248) posits, the extended family structure functions as a support system, ensuring the preservation and transmission of social and cultural capital. The results of interviews reveal that elders have rarely been left in hospitals or nursing homes alone. Furthermore, young people are consistently advised by the elderly, particularly regarding marriage. This phenomenon can be described by the concept of symbolic capital, which comprises a set of socially recognized and legitimized values, such as social status or prestige. Individuals or groups within society operate within and leverage this symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1968: 245-248). Depending on this fact, it can be asserted that the Roma (Gitano) people maintain a collective lifestyle characterized by strong solidarity and shared responsibility. This social cohesion brings the whole society together, where social integration is usually high. Furthermore, the interview findings suggest that Roma (Gitano) people from Granada continue to exhibit characteristics of a *gemeinschaft* (community) as described by Tönnies (1957). Sometimes, the concept of family extends beyond blood kinship, representing a deeply established form of relationship that can, at times, surpass the bonds of consanguinity: “Family is more spiritual than blood relatives” (Participant 9, In-depth Interview, 2025). Similarly, these results confirm the findings of previous studies that the family constitutes a fundamental social structure

among Roma (Gitano) communities across different countries (Edden et al., 2011; Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2014).

However, nowadays, traditions among younger Roma (Gitano) generations are evolving under the influence of modernization and cultural integration into Spanish society: “People don’t want to live the same life as old people did traditionally (...) Now they live like Spanish people” (Participant 5, In-depth Interview, 2025). Contemporary empirical evidence indicates that, compared with older generation, younger Roma (Gitano) individuals are increasingly renouncing many of the traditions, beliefs, family values, and cultural practices. This process has accelerated transformations in expression of their identity and may led to assimilation (Hellas, 1996; Parno and Vasileuță-Ștefănescu, 2021). The changing of identity markers has not been a recent phenomenon. Identity is an essential element in the ongoing interaction between the individual and the environment. Thus, increased mobility and environmental changes may alter the collective identity of a group and that of its members (Lewin, 1972). According to postmodern theory, the era of modernization and globalization is characterized by the breakdown of traditional cultural structures and the fragmentation of identity, which are seen as prominent transformations. The fact that individuals are no longer confined by traditional roles often leads to multiple, potentially conflicting identities (Bauman, 2000). Therefore, the assumption that identity in traditional societies is composed solely of predetermined elements and that individuals have no choice in selecting or modifying the elements of their identity is no longer valid (Berger and Luckmann, 1991).

2.2. Marriage and gender roles

For centuries, the Roma (Gitano) people have developed distinct marriage traditions and rituals. These practices range from elaborate engagement parties and lavish, well-attended ceremonies with gift-giving to simpler forms such as elopement, followed by cohabitation (Gamella, 2000). Reflecting their deep affinity for Flamenco dance and music, wedding celebrations may extend for a minimum of three days (Ruiz, 2007). The marriage tradition among the Roma (Gitano) people is a complex and multifaceted topic of research. Based on the results of interviews, seven subthemes have been identified within this area of inquiry. These subthemes are as follows: *Consanguineous Marriage*; *Blood-Stained Handkerchief Tradition*; *Engagement Ceremony*; *Family Approval*; *Bond Between Two Families*; *Early Marriage*; *Mixed Marriages (Exogamy)*.

Endogamy, specifically consanguineous marriage, has historically been a notable practice among the Andalusian Roma (Gitano) community, primarily perceived as a mechanism for safeguarding their cultural heritage and communal cohesion (Gomez-Alfaro, 1999). Notably, marriage between cousins was a frequent occurrence until the preceding century. However, based on the interviews, this practice is gradually forgotten. Interview data indicate that this marital tradition was based on the Roma (Gitano) population’s apprehension regarding the potential loss of their distinct identity, family name, and blood: “Also, a common thing is marriage between cousins (...) to protect Roma culture and to continue the same blood” (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025). Historically, Roma (Gitano) identity has been

constructed through a notion of ancestry based on a belief system centred on filiation and lineage (Scheffler, 2001). Considering this ideology, one becomes Roma (Gitano) by birth from Roma parents, and shared blood has remained the key symbol of Roma (Gitano) identity and its transmission from generation to generation. However, as Gamella and Nunez-Negrillo (2019: 98-99) noted in their article, Spain exhibited some of the highest rates of consanguineous marriage in Europe during the twentieth century (until the 1970s). But in sharp contrast to the Spanish population, the rates of consanguinity and inbreeding were higher among Roma (Gitano) people. Surprisingly, recent decades have witnessed an evolution in marriage practices within the Roma (Gitano) community, with a discernible increase in intermarriage:

Among the younger generation, mixed marriages are common (...) There are conflicts or disagreements (...) coming from the non-Roma families, as they did not accept their sons or daughters marrying a Roma person. Roma families tend to be more tolerant and receptive. (Participant 14, In-depth Interview, 2025)

While significant, these changes are disproportionate, as mixed marriage continues to face rejection within some Roma (Gitano) and non-Roma (Gitano) families. As Matras (2008) argues, gender differences are particularly pronounced in the context of mixed marriages. Specifically, when the bride is non-Roma, she is generally accepted into her husband's family. In contrast, a non-Roma groom is typically not afforded the same level of acceptance. Consequently, the growth of intermarriage both arises from and enhances the minority's internal heterogeneity (Gamella and Alvarez-Roldan, 2023: 554).

Besides, arranged marriages between families or relatives were also common among the Roma (Gitano) community in the last centuries. According to Lagunas (2005: 252-253), older generations within the Roma (Gitano) community lacked autonomy in partner selection, which is now common among their children. Roma (Gitano) viewed marriage as a dual union, connecting both individuals and their families which strengthen family bonds (Edden et al., 2011). Although arranged marriages are not common, the interviews reveal several examples of them: "My mother-in-law and I are first cousins, and I am also related to my father-in-law as a second cousin. We belong to the same family" (Participant 14, In-depth Interview, 2025).

Fiesta de Compromiso [the engagement party] is a traditional part of marriage, during which two families meet, agree, and get to know each other better. After engagement, the couple is permitted to meet freely and enjoy life, but without intercourse. However, in traditional Roma (Gitano) communities, if marriage is not recognized by the families, the couple may decide and elope secretly (Matras, 2008:6). Due to alleged sexual intercourse after the elopement, families are forced to recognize this marriage. This practice has also been observed among the Roma (Gitano) community in Granada:

But if the girl's father does not want his daughter to marry that guy (...) they run away together, maybe they have sex or whatever. So, they destroy

this tradition of marriage. Finally, they have to get married because they have already had a relationship. And according to the Roma Law, girls must be virgins. (Participant 9, In-depth Interview, 2025)

The age of marriage varies from family to family. It depends on whether the family follows or not the *Roma Law*. In most cases, young Roma (Gitano) girls from traditional families prefer to get married and not to start higher education:

A friend of mine has a sister who studied till secondary school. She wanted to continue studying, but her parents didn't understand why she wanted to study because, for them, the most important thing is marriage. (Participant 1, In-depth Interview, 2025)

However, the blood-stained cloth tradition, which most non-Roma (Gitano) may find unacceptable, is common among Andalusian Roma (Gitano) people (Demeter, Bessonov and Kutenkov, 2000; Talewicz-Kwiatkowska, 2014). Premarital chastity and the public proof of virginity on the night before the wedding is very important in *Roma Law* (Gamella and Alvarez-Roldan, 2023: 21). The bride must undergo a ritual performed by the eldest female member of the family, with a white handkerchief that will indicate whether she is "pure" or not. If she does not pass the test, the groom has the right to cancel the wedding. If the test is passed, the spotted handkerchief is shown to everyone with great delight (Ruiz, 2007). Some families follow these rules, and as interviewees said, the families of the bridal couple wait on the first night to see a blood-stained cloth as a sign of virginity. Almost all of the interviewees gave us this example: "Most families, 'very good' families, do it (...) but right now, this tradition is changing. In my opinion, such things are very important" (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025). As they said: "Roma men prefer to marry younger women to ensure they are virgins" (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025). However, some participants view this tradition as immoral:

One of the most important traditions is that when a Roma woman gets married, she must prove that she is a virgin. It is something very personal. I feel a little bit angry because we have Instagram, we have TikTok, where people post and watch videos, which are very personal, very private. (Participant 11, In-depth Interview, 2025)

The distribution of gender roles is a significant aspect of the family structure in Roma (Gitano) societies (Matras, 2008). In most cases, women fulfil psycho-emotional and cultural roles, while men focus on providing economic support for the family. Having children is a central duty for Roma (Gitano) women (Demeter, Bessonov and Kutenkov, 2000). Also, Roma (Gitano) women have the responsibility to maintain old traditions and values and transfer them to new generations. Based on the in-depth interviews, it is evident that, even without holding formal authority, the Roma (Gitano) women are recognized as the cornerstone of the family: "A Roma woman is at the top (...) above the man. The woman is the pillar of the

family. We have a proverb: ‘A Roma man is nobody without his Roma woman,’ and it’s true” (Participant 3, In-depth Interview, 2025). Hence, although the Roma (Gitano) community is recognized as a patriarchal society, matriarchal elements can also be observed within the family structure (Corradi, 2018).

Due to limited education and early marriage, the employment of Roma (Gitano) women is limited. Those women who do not have a higher education usually work in a secondary labour market. Their professional activities are limited to trading or working in beauty centres as manicurists and hair specialists. However, the responses indicate that, nowadays, the number of Roma (Gitano) women who receive higher education and occupy high-level positions in jobs has been increasing since the end of the last century. Education provides cultural capital, which improves social mobility (Bourdieu, 1968: 243-248). As Gamella (2020:811) claims, access to education and improvement of living conditions have an impact on the marital choices of Roma (Gitano) youth. However, despite these positive changes, Roma (Gitano) women have not been fully emancipated yet.

2.3. Mourning traditions

The strong collective feeling among Roma (Gitano) people is evident in their shared pain, even among individuals who do not know each other, stemming from their common membership in the Roma (Gitano) community. According to the Symbolic Interactionism theory (Mead, 1934: 200-203), social behaviour, like mourning practice, is shaped through symbols and interactions within the collective. The Roma (Gitano) people are distinguished by an interesting and deep mourning tradition: Participants’ descriptions of these rituals reveal deeply rooted cultural practices that emphasize respect, emotional expression, social solidarity, and group cohesion. Mourning practices have a more collective character rather than an individual one. *Luto* (mourning), as they call it, expresses a kind of respect toward the community. Furthermore, mourning rituals show marked gender differences and are highly structured (Cisneros-Kostic, 2010: 59-71; Edden et al., 2011; Stewart, 1997). As participants mentioned in the interviews, during *Luto*, women wear black for extended mourning periods, sometimes lasting two months, sometimes two years, or even their entire lives. Social restrictions and social isolation, such as no TV, music, or parties, are also characteristic features. Sometimes, men stop shaving their beards during mourning periods.

2.4. Religion and spirituality

Emile Durkheim (2008), in his work *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, discusses the social and cultural functions of religion. Religion is not only a personal belief, but it also has a social cohesion function and contributes to stability in society. Religion brings individuals together and strengthens social bonds. In the case of this research, most participants showed a strong collective religious attitude. The majority of the participants identify themselves as a part of the Catholic Church, while the rest of them are Evangelicals and atheists. However, the overall picture reflects that most of the participants are distanced from organized religion: “For me, religion is not important, but when I got married, we had a marriage ceremony

in the Catholic church, and now I am going to church when someone dies, or someone is baptized” (Participant 8, In-depth Interview, 2025).

The Evangelical church has seen an important increase in popularity among Roma (Gitano) people. Roma (Gitano) adults, as members of this church, try to attend the daily worship called *Cultos*. This process can be explained by the term reaffiliation, which means shifts (from one religious group to another) within religious traditions (Stark and Finke, 2000). As identified in the results, communal activities and music have significant importance within the Evangelical Christian community: “Evangelical churches are a kind of relationship model (...) it is a relationship between church communities. They make food and eat together (...) sing Christian songs” (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025). The inclusion of music, singing, and dancing in religious rituals means that religion is intertwined with Roma (Gitano) culture. The reaffiliation of the Roma (Gitano) people in Granada toward Evangelicalism can be identified through the *Rational Choice Theory*, which assumes that individuals make religious choices based on benefits and costs. More clearly, religious reaffiliation is mostly driven by social networks and the rewards of consolidating a new religious movement (Stark and Finke, 2000). As Participants stated, the Evangelical church offers them emotional and social rewards, such as music and community unity, which are attractive to them. The evangelical church also has a mechanism of social control by promoting social norms, in particular, preventing drug use and criminality: “If you are part of this church, you can’t take a drug, you cannot do bad things” (Participant 1, In-depth Interview, 2025). As Durkheim (2008) signified, religion provides a shared set of rituals and beliefs that bring people together into a single moral community, often referred to as a church.

2.5. Calo language

Calo is a mixed language developed by the Roma (Gitano) of the Iberian Peninsula as an in-group covert form of communication (Gamella, Adiego, and Fernández Ortega, 2016; Gamella et al., 2011; Garcia, 2009). There is only a limited number of sources that elucidate the genesis of the Calo language. As Ruiz (2007) reviews, Roma (Gitano) people of Spain are known as *Cale*, and came from the Hindi word *Kala* (black), which probably refers to their dark skin tone. The Calo language was widely spoken among the Roma (Gitano) people from Portugal, Spain, and South America; apparently, it emerged in Andalusia, Spain’s southern region, and expanded into other areas. The phonology of the Calo language is a mix of Spanish and Roma words (Bakker, 1995). A few hundred Calo words were recorded by McLane (1977, 1985) from the Andalusia region, and it was stated that 22 percent of lexical elements in his corpus were of Spanish origin, while 68 percent were of Hindi (therefore, Romani) origin. Unfortunately, since the nineteenth century, the Calo language has occasionally been used (Bakker, 1995). At present, only a few Roma (Gitano) speak the Calo language. As participants noted in interviews, they only know some Calo words:

In Andalusia, we have a lot of words that come from the Calo language (...) *chulo* [cool]; *camelar* [to love]; *curer* [to work]. (Participant 4, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Most of us have nicknames. This is an ancient. (Participant 6, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Under Franco's regime, speaking Calo was forbidden. So that's why the Roma people lost this dialect. (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025)

As McLane (1985, 1977) highlighted, even the most knowledgeable speakers may not know more than fifty or a hundred words; however, some parts of Flamenco songs are sung in the Calo language.

2.6. Flamenco as cultural heritage and iden

Flamenco is an art form encompassing dance (*baile*), singing (*cante*), and guitar playing (*toque*), which has been influenced by diverse cultural traditions (Cisneros-Kostic, 2010). It is most closely associated with Spain, particularly the region of Andalusia (Moon, 2015; Ropero, 1995). Especially Flamenco as an art form reflects the historical experiences of the Roma (Gitanos) and originates from marginalized communities, having developed gradually over time. By 1765, Flamenco had gained recognition as a distinct form of Spanish dance and was increasingly incorporated into dance schools (Ropero, 1995). In 2010, Flamenco was recognized as a World Heritage Treasure (Cuellar-Moreno, 2016).

The origins of Flamenco remain a subject of scholarly debate, with contrasting perspectives on its historical development. Some scholars argue that Flamenco is not only a Roma (Gitano) invention but rather an Andalusian cultural phenomenon that incorporated the Spanish Gitanos. Supporting this perspective, Totton (2003) contends that, the Roma (Gitano) did not introduce their own musical traditions; instead, they adapted existing local music and served as cultural catalysts in the emergence of Flamenco through the cultural synthesis of Andalusia. Conversely, substantial historical evidence and different research suggest that, following the arrival of the Roma (Gitano) in Europe during the fifteenth century, they demonstrated significant artistic creativity that contributed to the development of Flamenco (Leblon, 2004). Additionally, some scholars argue that centuries of Arabic musical influence in the Andalusian region played a significant role in shaping Flamenco (Ivanova, 1970). Similarly, Cisneros-Kostic (2010), suggests that Flamenco is a synthesis of diverse cultural traditions that evolved over the centuries.

Based on the interviews, notably, they learn the art of Flamenco in informal settings, most often within the family or close-knit circles of relatives: "My mum was a Flamenco singer, so Flamenco is part of our family. I have it in my blood (...) I don't have any musical education. This is a family tradition" (Participant 6, In-depth Interview, 2025). Therefore, it can be concluded that Flamenco is a social phenomenon transmitted through social interaction and characterized by a strong sense of community. In his book *Mind and Society*, Vygotsky (1978) supports the idea that cultural knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation within families. According to his *Socio-Cultural Theory*, learning is shaped by social and cultural practices, and knowledge is developed within communities of practice.

Another key concept associated with Flamenco is its cultural significance. As the participants assert, Flamenco is an integral aspect of the identity of the Roma (Gitano)

community of Granada. Music and dance are regarded as inherited traits, deeply embedded in the community. Flamenco represents the cultural heritage of Andalusian people, particularly in Granada, the Sacromonte district, where Flamenco dance is performed every day for tourists. In this context, Flamenco functions as a form of cultural capital for them (Bourdieu, 1968). While Flamenco is part of the culture of both the Roma (Gitano) and the Andalusian population, the relationship between the Roma (Gitano) and Flamenco exists on a distinct emotional level. It is more than dancing and singing. It is a way of life that came out of the necessity of a population to express itself (Cuellar-Moreno, 2016). As Caballero (1988) suggests, in order to learn the art of Flamenco, one must live and understand its true essence, for it represents not only performance but also a way of life:

It is not only music or only dance. It is “a way of life” (...) It is about how we express our identity and our society (...) For me, Flamenco dance marks an important difference between those who learn it and those who inherit it from their family. (Participant 8, In-depth Interview, 2025)

It is something very deep inside you. You feel it very strongly (...) When Roma people play Flamenco, it is another feeling. You need to be born with that. (Participant 15, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Therefore, when examining the Roma (Gitano) community, Flamenco should not be contextualized in isolation. Thus, Flamenco is a continually evolving art form, shaped by historical change and continually reinterpreted through the unique artistic expression of each performer (Tottons, 2003).

2.7. Old professions and the current labour market

According to Ruiz (2007), during their early migration to Spain, the Roma (Gitano) people adopted diverse occupations for survival. While integrating into mainstream society, some secured stable employment, whereas others resorted to begging and thievery. Blacksmithing, copper pot-making, and basket weaving were the most widespread crafts among the Roma (Gitano). In Spain, basket weavers are still known as *canastero*. Furthermore, healing and fortune-telling were also typical jobs, especially for Roma (Gitano) women. Based on the interviews, five main historical professions are commonly indicated: *craftsmanship*, *metalworking*, *trading*, *animal-related jobs*, and *artistic professions* were very common in Roma (Gitano) society, following their migration to the Iberian Peninsula. As participants mentioned, these professions are passed down through generations and are highly meaningful for them. Today, most Roma (Gitano) continue their historical professional activities, such as trade, including street retailing and other commercial activities. Thus, the historical jobs of Roma (Gitano) people are reflected in their surnames today because they think that these professions are a part of their identity:

When we came to Spain, our professions were based on our talents: artisans, ironworkers, and sheep takers. We were great musicians. So, we dedicated ourselves to what we had learned before because Spanish society didn't let us get involved in it. (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Based on in-depth interviews, it can be observed that nowadays some of these professions are mostly forgotten, or they may still exist for tourists. Roma (Gitano), living in a non-traditional way, has recently been working in all fields as professionals, including teachers, lawyers, and bankers. Moreover, Roma (Gitano) people are quite hardworking, and since some of them refuse higher education, they have mastered professional activities since childhood: “I started working when I was eight. My first job was giving water to people working in the sugarcane plantation and also cleaning the factory” (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025).

3. Identity and cultural pride

3.1. Understanding Roma (Gitano) identity

Ethnic identity plays a crucial role in shaping the self-perception and cognitive functioning of individuals within ethnic groups. Despite this, a clear definition of this concept remains elusive, as scholars have yet to reach a consensus on the conceptualization of ethnic identity. According to Weber (1978), ethnic identity is not a fixed biological characteristic; rather, it is socially constructed through history, social relations, and culture. Similarly, Tajfel (1981: 255), in defining the concept of ethnic identity, refers to the ethnic aspect of social identity. Moreover, identity shaped by social processes is sustained, modified, or even redefined through social interactions (Berger and Luckmann, 1991: 194). Conversely, as Phinney (1990: 499-500) argues, the cultural aspects of ethnic identity are also emphasized in social science literature. Also, ethnic identity involves a shared sense of attitudes and values toward the groups, including their history, language, or behaviour.

The interview results are consistent with both theoretical frameworks, as participants demonstrate a strong sense of belonging to the group, along with a deep feeling of cohesion, reflected in their shared values and attitudes: “Being a Roma, it is about following some values (...) Even if you have Roma blood and don’t follow values, you are not Roma” (Participant 12, In-depth Interview, 2025). In this context, Ungar (2008), underscores the importance of kinship networks and practices in fostering Roma (Gitano) resilience. The majority of participants strongly identify as Roma (Gitano), expressing significant pride and a deep understanding of their history, which aligns with this model: “I am a Roma because I know my history (...) I am very proud of being a Roma” (Participant 10, In-depth Interview, 2025). As they assert, their identity is shaped by cultural heritage and belonging, which have been preserved across generations: “Roma is a culture, a way of thinking, traditions, and lifestyle” (Participant 8, In-depth Interview, 2025). In this regard, Rummens (2000) asserts that Roma (Gitano) identity construction is the process of developing personal and social identities. Moreover, according to Marushiakova and Popov (2004), Roma (Gitano) identity is characterized by several shared features, including collective consciousness, common behavioural patterns, and shared values. From this perspective, scholars note that Roma (Gitano) identity should be understood as a dynamic process reflecting the history of migration, persecution, and resilience (Hancock, 2003). The notion that - *Roma is a way of thinking* - implies that reality is perceived through the lens of one’s socialization, thereby

confirming the theory's central claim that reality is not fixed, but rather shaped by social processes.

3.2.A sense of belonging

Throughout their difficult history, the Roma (Gitano) people acculturated to Spanish culture while simultaneously contributing to the music, lifestyle, and language of the regions where they have resided. Notably, the differences between Roma (Gitano) people and non-Roma (Gitano) people are less significant in the Andalusian region. Even bringing up this topic was unpleasant for participants. Nowadays, the majority of Roma (Gitano) people living in Spain feel well-integrated in Andalusian culture, consider themselves Spaniards, and at the same time, they maintain a strong sense of collective identity: "Spanish people are similar to us. We are the same. But we have different traditions (....) We have different types of thinking" (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025). The analysis indicates a dual identity, characterized by a strong sense of belonging both to Spain and to Roma (Gitano) culture, while sustaining cultural uniqueness. Comparable findings were reported in a study of Eastern European Roma (Gitano) populations, where analyses indicated that Roma (Gitano) individuals in Romania showed a strong dual identity, which probably reflect a confirmation strategy in response to high levels of misrecognition directed against them (Kende et al., 2024). According to the interviews, such dual belonging can be explained by Yuval-Davis's (2011: 10-15) theory, which claims that belonging is more than membership. It is also defined as an emotional attachment and a sense of feeling *at home*. People must adapt to the groups they belong to for fear of internalization and exclusion, and their social bonds are strongly influenced by their membership or lack of membership in particular groups. Moreover, individuals with a dual identity evoke more positive attitudes and experience sociocultural and psychological benefits compared to those who identify with only a single culture (Fleischmann and Op De Weegh, 2022; Nguyen and Benet-Martínez, 2013; Zagefka and Brown, 2002).

3.3.Relationship with neighbours

The majority of participants live in the Almanjayar district, Granada, and the others in Sacromonte, Albayzin, and San Miguel del Alto. Sacromonte is a historical settlement area of Roma (Gitano) people. Here in the historical past, and sometimes now, Roma (Gitano) people lived in the caves. Now this district is more touristy. In other districts, Roma (Gitano) people live with different ethnicities, in the same neighbourhoods. Depending on the interviews, it can be stated that in general, participants have good relationships with their neighbours. Some participants highlight a good relationship between them and non-Roma (Gitano) people, while others underline discrimination or cultural differences:

My neighbours have their life, and I have mine (....) But the fact of being a Roma closes many doors for me. There are many people who, even if they say "hello" in the street, even if they stop to talk, are still racists who don't like us. (Participant 3, In-depth Interview, 2025)

However, some interviewees express concerns regarding the erosion of traditional neighbourhood practices, and social solidarity persists among neighbours in certain instances: “In the past, this was a neighbourhood with a lot of happiness (...) they had ‘Arte’. For example, you say ‘Alle’ and you smile (...) Now you cannot feel the same” (Participant 1, In-depth Interview, 2025).

3.4. Self-actualization and wellbeing among Roma (Gitanos)

According to Maslow’s (1943) *Hierarchy of Needs Theory*, an individual’s needs are organized hierarchically, beginning with primary physiological necessities and advancing toward self-actualization. People are continually motivated to satisfy their needs. In this context, hobbies, leisure activities, money, and freedom play a key role in self-actualization, represent the final step in Maslow’s model, and contribute to an individual’s sense of fulfilment. Drawing from the interviews, the results clarify valuable findings about the attitudes of Roma (Gitano) people toward the aforementioned needs. The primary categories of leisure activities include spending time with family and friends, cultural activities, physical activities, and travelling. Flamenco culture, which includes singing, music, and dancing, is deeply rooted in the cultural activities of the Roma (Gitano) community. The research findings indicated that the Roma (Gitano) people do not place special importance on money. For them, the non-material world is more meaningful than the material one. Their goal is to meet the minimum needs for a fulfilling life:

If we don’t have money, we don’t worry about it (...) I have my family – I am happy. I have food – I am happy. I don’t need more (...) We don’t live to work; we live to be happy. So, we have a Romani saying – “health and liberty” (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Money is perceived by Roma (Gitano) people as a requirement, whereas family, health, and freedom are considered more meaningful than wealth, as these values ensure that no one is left alone when they need help. This attitude corresponds to (Weber, 2001: 23) the concept of *value-rational* action, where actions are motivated by cultural or ethical values. Regarding freedom, according to the results of the interview:

Freedom is life itself; if you do not have freedom, you are not alive (...) Freedom is the only time when you can breathe (...) Today we have to live in a place, within four walls (...) I remember when I was a child, we lived in a tent. (Participant 3, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Regarding this, the concept of freedom for Roma (Gitano) people goes beyond the simple meaning of this word:

There is a Roma song that says: “First comes family, second health, and third freedom”. But freedom (...) It refers to having a memory of the past and now being able to express ourselves freely: “who we are, what we think, what we feel.” (Participant 10, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Several participants noticed that modern economic systems limit freedom: “I have freedom if I earn money. Without money, I am not free because I have to pay a lot of bills

(...) it is freedom without freedom” (Participant 9, In-depth Interview, 2025). As Marx (1990) asserts, people become alienated from themselves when they are constrained by economic structures. Under modern conditions and rules, Roma (Gitano) people are not able to do whatever they want. They idealized the past, when they could freely move around the world, living in tents and travelling.

4. Stereotypes and social prejudices against the Roma (Gitano) people

Over time, the integration of Roma (Gitano) people into European societies has been impeded by systemic marginalization, discrimination and social isolation (Gheorghe et al., 2016). Due to negative stereotypes and prejudice, they have faced barriers in accessing education, employment, housing and healthcare (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2020; Ringold et al. 2005). The discrimination experienced by Roma (Gitano) people exemplifies the concept of institutional stigma, as discussed by Goffman (1963: 30-34). According to Goffman, upon encountering an unfamiliar person, first impressions often enable us to promptly deduce the category and attributes we assume the person possesses, thereby rapidly establishing their social identity.

The interviews revealed various forms of discrimination faced by the Roma (Gitano) community in Granada, Spain. A key finding was the widespread presence of negative stereotypes: “People, even today, still tell their children such sentences – ‘Don’t go that way because the Roma people will steal you’ (Participant 10, In-depth Interview, 2025). “When I go to the store, I am often followed because they think that I might steal something” (Participant 13, In-depth Interview, 2025). Similar patterns have been identified in Romania, where the Roma (Gitano) constitute a significant ethnic minority. Despite ongoing efforts to reduce discrimination and strengthen social cohesion, Roma (Gitano) continues to experience high levels of unemployment and poverty, as well as limited access to education and healthcare (Ringold et al. 2005). As stated by Crocker et al. (1998), stigmatized communities frequently experience prejudice, which can have profound negative effects on their life outcomes and overall well-being. According to the annual report on Discrimination and the Roma Community by Gypsy Secretariat Foundation (2023: 15–17), numerous cases of workplace discrimination have been documented. This includes employers refusing to accept CVs or declining to interview candidates of Roma (Gitano) origin. Furthermore, discrimination has been reported in bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, where Roma (Gitano) individuals’ entry has been denied. The most frequent instances of discrimination, however, occur in supermarkets and shopping centres, where security guards closely monitor Roma (Gitano) people or falsely accuse them of theft. Similar results are observed according to the results of the interview: “Sometimes when I walk, if a woman sees me, she hides her bag, because she thinks I might steal something” (Participant 9, In-depth Interview, 2025).

It is observed that traditional and social media portrayals not only perpetuate these stereotypes but also cultivate misconceptions among the general population. Multiple instances of hateful rhetoric aimed at Roma (Gitano) individuals have been documented on social media platforms. Offensive anti-Roma (Gitano) statements, periodically posted by

readers of online publications, are also widespread, contributing to the dissemination of false information and inciting aggression towards the Roma (Gitano) community. This case can be analysed through the framework of *Critical Race Theory* (Cole, 2017: 42-56), using the concept of *non-colour-coded* racism, in which individuals are racialized based on symbolic markers, rather than relying on skin colour. All forms of racism, whether colour-coded or not, can manifest on a personal level and may be activated by specific triggers.

The marginalization of the Roma (Gitano) community can also be understood through the concept of stigma (Goffman, 2014: 32-35). According to Goffman, stigma is a process that relegates an individual or a group outside the boundaries of what is considered normal in society. This process culminates in discrimination, social exclusion, and the perpetuation of negative stereotypes. Of the three categories of stigma, tribal stigma (ethnic/cultural stigma) holds relevance for the Roma (Gitano) community. As indicated by participants in the interviews, they have been historically stigmatized due to their origins and excluded from mainstream society. This form of stigma not only affects individuals but also extends to the community and is frequently transmitted across generations. The interview results demonstrate that participants have a fear of social stigma. This apprehension compels them to exercise vigilance and take accountability to prevent unjustified accusations in the future:

If you are a Roma, you have more responsibility in life than an ordinary person because every time something bad happens, everyone is quick to say: "That's because I am a Roma person, and I did it (...)" If there is a problem, I try to leave because they will blame me. (Participant 9, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Similar findings are observed in various studies across Europe. Despite being EU citizens, Roma (Gitano) from Eastern European countries is considered as experiencing stigmatization and exclusion due to their ethnic identity and lifestyle, which positions them as suitable targets for a new global racism (López Catalán and Aharchi, 2012). Goffman (2014: 100-102) asserts that stigmatized individuals sometimes employ passing, a concept that elucidates how Roma (Gitano) individuals internalize and react to societal stigma. In the interviews, participants described adjusting their behaviours, such as concealing their surname or address on their résumés or not disclosing their identity at work, managing their social identity, and avoiding discrimination:

When you want to start a new job and send your CV with your Roma surname and address, they don't call you (...) because we are an invisible part of the culture of a Spain. Even though we have been in Spain for more than 500 years. (Participant 8, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Examples of spatial marginalization are also evident in the interview results, including several instances where individuals concealed their place of residence: "There are cases when people are not hired for jobs because of their residential area, because of stereotypes. For example, people from Almanjáyár are marginalized and prejudiced. It is like a ghetto" (Participant 4, In-depth Interview, 2025). Individuals who acknowledge their stigma often undertake extensive measures to prevent its revelation. Goffman (2014: 172) further explains how stigmatized groups endeavour to navigate society by obscuring their identity or learning

to coexist with their stigma by formulating an identity strategy. This process is known as *covering*; a *covering* strategy is also commonly utilized, in which a Roma (Gitano) individual does not fully obscure their identity but avoids actions that would render it conspicuous (Goffman, 2014: 147-150).

The in-depth interviews show that participants frequently describe their experiences of exclusion in diverse social and professional realms:

Usually, when I want to rent a house, as soon as they recognize that I'm Roma, they refuse to give me a house. (Participant 3, In-depth Interview, 2025)

If I want to be a "boss," it will be very difficult for me to grow up in my career (...). They need Roma as a worker but not as a "Boss." (Participant 4, In-depth Interview, 2025)

I was with my friends, and we decided to go to a bar. They asked me for my ID (...) he didn't let me in. (Participant 11, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Marginality constitutes a state of disadvantage for communities and individuals, stemming from vulnerabilities associated with disparate environmental, cultural, ethnic, economic, political, and social determinants (Mehretu et al., 2000). *Micro-peripherality* has also contextualized this phenomenon (Blom, 1998). This designates uneven development within localized geographic units; wherein marginalized households may reside in specific neighbourhoods. This is a consequence of numerous vulnerability factors, including ethnicity and immigrant status (Mehretu et al., 2000). Moreover, marginalization is a socio-spatial process and a metaphor that underscores the geographical dimensions of social exclusion (Trudeau and McMorran, 2011). Two contradictory tendencies connected with identity have been noted. Based on the results, it was revealed that numerous respondents obscure their identities or only divulge their origins when necessary. Conversely, some respondents have never hidden their identities, expressing pride in their Roma (Gitano) heritage:

If someone asks me whether I am Roma or not, I will tell them that I am Roma. But without question, I don't like to say that I am a Roma because they think with stereotypes. They think that Roma people steal or kill (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Obscuring a socially stigmatized identity is often seen as a strategy to ensure acceptance and a sense of belonging. Thus, it is commonly utilized by individuals with concealed stigmatized identities.

In recent years, public initiatives implemented by various organizations and Roma (Gitano) activists contribute to raising awareness of Roma (Gitano) communities, strengthening inclusivity and fostering cultural pride within mainstream society (Kenrick, 2007).

4.1. Challenges faced by Roma (Gitano) people in Granada

The study findings reveal that the adversities encountered by the Roma (Gitano) community can be segmented into several subcategories, with family and family well-being the most salient. These challenges are frequently linked to economic stability: "For

Roma people – poverty and economic inequality. We see the income gap between Roma and non-Roma. So, the main challenge is the economy” (Participant 7, In-depth Interview, 2025). Similarly, Serbia continues to face significant challenges regarding the socioeconomic conditions of its Roma (Gitano) population. For instance, unlike the non-Roma (Gitano) population, a substantial proportion of the Roma (Gitano) live in segregated settlements under conditions of poverty, while more than 70% are either unemployed or rely on temporary jobs (Radovanovic and Knazevic, 2014).

The in-depth interviews emphasized the importance of familial well-being, which participants equated with happiness and regarded as one of their primary life objectives: “A main challenge of my life is having permanent work, stable income, living with my family, and staying happy. It is only a challenge in my life” (Participant 2, In-depth Interview, 2025). Consequently, in contrast to modern, industrialized individuals, their attitudes and behaviours are predominantly communal rather than personal. Another challenge pertains to the recognition of Roma (Gitano) culture by the mainstream society, the dismantling of prevalent stereotypes, and the elimination of racism against them:

No discrimination, no racism because we are equal. To fight for my rights, for my identity, and for my freedom (....) I want to show the rest of society that I am a Roma woman who is working and studying at the same time. (Participant 11, In-depth Interview, 2025)

Similarly, different studies indicate that Roma (Gitano) communities across Europe continue to face challenges, including marginalization, and social exclusion, which hinder their integration into mainstream society (Crowe, 1994; Castles et al. 2014). Besides, the participants who have attained societal success possessed substantial cultural and social capital and aspired to function as exemplars for young Roma (Gitano). Their objective is to communicate to young people that no obstacles impede achievement; perseverance is paramount, and they can realize any aspiration. Applying Maslow’s (1943) *Hierarchy of Needs*, it becomes evident that the satisfaction of physiological requirements takes precedence. Subsequently, the need for societal recognition emerges, culminating in self-actualization.

5. Perception of the future and expectations

The findings of in-depth interviews reveal a divergence in participants’ future perspectives, categorized as either optimistic or pessimistic. While the majority of interviewees perceive their future positively, emphasizing progress, modernity, and education: “But even if we lose our historical professions, we win new ones, for example, more and more Roma get university degrees” (Participant 8, In-depth Interview, 2025), some of them are concerned about the potential erosion of their culture, traditions, and customs through assimilation into mainstream society: “I think in the future they will be mixed with another” (Participant 4, In-depth Interview, 2025). Furthermore, a near consensus exists among participants regarding the persistence of discrimination and stereotypes against the Roma (Gitano) community, with a shared belief that education and progress will bolster their resilience and capacity to challenge such inequalities. Simultaneously, they advocate for the preservation of communal

identity and harmonious coexistence with nature, reflecting a belief in the intrinsic connection between Roma (Gitano) people and the natural world. This connection can be elucidated through the concept of *collective consciousness* (Durkheim, 1960). Participants express concern regarding the limited understanding of their culture among the wider population. They aspire to achieve global recognition through social inclusion. Consequently, education is deemed crucial for mitigating these challenges.

Participants expressing a pessimistic outlook harbour apprehensions regarding the erosion of Roma traditions and culture, including the nomadic lifestyle and historical occupations. They voice concerns about the potential assimilation of Roma (Gitano) people into other groups, as such processes could precipitate the dissolution of Roma identity: “Well, in a few decades there will be no Roma” (Participant 3, In-depth Interview, 2025).

Conclusion

Empirical evidence from ethnographic research suggests that traditions, cultural practices, and ancestral origins remain central to the identity of Roma (Gitano) people in Granada, reinforcing a strong sense of collective identity. Analysing in-depth interviews through content analysis identified four primary themes: *Cultural Characteristics and Traditions*, *Identity and Cultural Pride*, *Discrimination and Stereotypes*, and *Perception of the Future and Expectations*. An analysis of in-depth interviews demonstrates participants’ strong Roma (Gitano) group belonging, characterized by profound cultural unity, cohesion, deep historical knowledge, and ethnic pride. Despite strong Roma (Gitano) group affiliation and collective identity, most Roma (Gitano) identify themselves with the Spanish people and culture. Flamenco culture is also an important facet of their identity. As participants describe it, Flamenco is a *way of life* transmitted across generations. Traditions, such as respect for the elderly and family unity, and gender roles, emerged as central elements in maintaining Roma (Gitano) identity, though these are transforming, particularly with increasing educational and workforce participation among women. Practices such as endogamy, examination of blood-stained cloth, or communal mourning rituals illustrate the mechanisms through which identity is preserved, even as some traditions evolve. While some families strive to maintain these practices, others do not prioritize them.

Stereotypes and prejudice constitute another key finding. The analysis of in-depth interviews reveals that the Roma (Gitano) community in Granada faces various forms of discrimination, notably in the workplace and within establishments such as bars, restaurants, and nightclubs, where Roma (Gitano) individuals have reported denial of entry. Research findings indicate that stereotypes against Roma (Gitano) people are deeply ingrained in mainstream society. Consequently, participants expressed fear of social stigma, often leading them to conceal their identity or reveal it only when necessary. Participants prioritized family well-being, followed by financial stability and the mitigation of societal stereotypes. Immaterial values, such as family well-being, health, and freedom, were considered more important than material wealth. Participants’ future outlooks were divided between optimism, anticipating increased public awareness of Roma (Gitano) and the dissolution of

stereotypes, and pessimism, fearing assimilation and a subsequent loss of cultural identity.

It can be asserted that the Roma (Gitano) people maintain a collective lifestyle characterized by strong solidarity and shared responsibility. The Roma (Gitano) community reveals dynamic interaction between adaptation and tradition in the construction of their identity and culture. Finally, this ethnographic research concludes that Roma (Gitano) identity is maintained through a process of ongoing negotiation, as the community adapts its cultural practices while preserving long-standing traditions.

This study contributes to the literature by examining Roma (Gitano) communities through a multidimensional socio-cultural framework and strengthening Roma Studies through the integration of micro-level qualitative data that elucidate everyday life practices. These results call for greater public awareness and targeted interventions to challenge deeply entrenched stereotypes and cultivate a more inclusive social environment that supports the cultural integrity of the Roma (Gitano) people, including public awareness campaigns, cultural recognition, and improved access to education.

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Appendix. Key Informants

Participants	Age	Gender	Marital Status	Occupation	Educational Background	Interview Duration
Participant 1	35	Female	Single	Human Resources Officer	Bachelor's degree in Tourism and Economics	1 h 07 min
Participant 2	24	Female	Single	Nurse	Bachelor's degree in Nursing	1 h 16 min
Participant 3	50	Male	Singl	Formwork Carpenter	Incomplete primary education	1 h 10 min
Participant 4	31	Male	Single	Chiropractor/ Massage Therapist	Secondary Education	1 h 08 min
Participant 5	47	Male	Married	Filmmaker	Bachelor's degree in Law	59 min
Participant 6	65	Male	Divorced	Construction Worker/ Cave Builder	No formal education	1 h 41 min
Participant 7	58	Male	Married	Library Staff	Bachelor's degree in History	1 h 50 min
Participant 8	42	Male	Married	Flamenco Dancer and Tourist Guide at the Museum of the Gypsy Woman	Two-year post-secondary vocational education in Tourism	1 h 54 min
Participant 9	62	Male	Divorced	Guitarist and Singer	Primary education	59 min
Participant 10	36	Male	Engaged	University Lecturer	PhD candidate in Art History	1 h 34 min
Participant 11	26	Female	Engaged	Travel Consultant	Bachelor's degree in Tourism and Economics	1 h 05 min
Participant 12	45	Male	Single	Tourist Guide at the Museum of the Gypsy Woman	Two-year post-secondary vocational education in Tourism	1 h 47 min
Participant 13	62	Female	Married	Staff Member at the Andalusian Gypsy Sociocultural Center	Secondary education	1 h 35 min
Participant14	66	Female	Married	Director of the Andalusian Gypsy Sociocultural Center	Bachelor's degree in Law	1 h 20 min
Participant15	80	Male	Married	Flamenco Dancer	Secondary education	1 h 36 min

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