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Soul Work and Giving Back: Ethnic Support Groups and the Hidden Costs of Social Mobility. Lessons from Hungarian Roma Graduates

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Abstract

For a long time, social and public policies have presented upward social mobility as an unambiguously progressive process. However, there is a relatively new line of academic research that concerns the dilemmas, or 'hidden costs', of upward mobility. Still, apart from a few inspiring exceptions, there is a lack of empirical studies, especially in Hungary, that explore the personal experiences of the impact of moving class through educational mobility. Academic literature about stigmatised, disadvantaged minorities such as Afro-Americans and Mexicans in the U.S or the Roma in Europe suggests that the professional middle class of these groups – those who have demonstrated an exceptional range of intergenerational mobility – have adopted a distinctive upward mobility strategy to overcome the challenges that are unique to them. These challenges emerge from the difficulties of maintaining intra-class relations with poorer 'co-ethnics' (people from the communities they were brought up in), but also managing interethnic relations with the 'white' (non-Black in the U.S, non-Roma in East-Central Europe) majority. As part of this minority culture of mobility, the Roma, as with other stigmatised minority groups, create and join ethnic professional organisations to enable them to culturally navigate both worlds. Throughout this paper, we focus our attention on influential ethnic support groups or organisations and address the question what effect they have on the costs of upward mobility in the case of our Roma professional middle-class sample.

Keywords: Minority culture of mobility, Hungarian Roma middle class, Educational mobility, Cost of upward mobility, Ethnic support group.

'It was a big lesson for us...Because we caused injuries to many people. They were admitted to university with our support. But at the same time, they became alienated from their families, almost to the extent that they were disowned by the communities where they came from. There were individual tragedies deriving from the fact that mobility was not a slow, gradual, multi-generational process for them.'

One of our interviewees (leader of an NGO that supports the higher education of Roma Youth)

Introduction

The Roma (or as many call themselves in Hungary, *cigány;* that is, Gypsies) are one of the most stigmatised, disadvantaged and vulnerable minority groups in Europe.[1] Although this denomination embraces super-diverse, culturally and socio-economically hybrid (Tremlett, 2009) heterogeneous subgroups of people, and despite how methodically difficult it is to assess this population (Brüggeman, 2014; Messing, 2014), according to all available research papers (e.g. FRA and UNDP, 2012), there is a huge gap between the academic achievements of Roma and non-Roma populations in many European countries, with fewer than one per cent of Roma students possessing a higher education qualification (college degree). We learn from numerous insightful research studies about the social forces and mechanisms through which being a Roma means an ethnic penalty regarding educational mobility in Hungary (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2008; Neumann, 2013; Szalai, 2013; Messing et al., 2010; Papp, 2011; Zolnay, 2016). We also know, however, bits and pieces about different societal factors (such as ethnic support groups or organisations) that facilitate or support the upward mobility of Roma and other stigmatised minority groups (Székely et al., 2005; Kóczé, 2011; Bereményi and Carrasco, 2017; Brüggerman 2014, Stanton-Salazar, 2004). These studies shed light on how ethnicity can be mobilised or used as 'ethnic capital' or 'community cultural wealth' (Pott, 2001; Yosso, 2005; Óhídy, 2016) in the process of social climbing through educational attainment. However, we have very limited knowledge (for exceptions, see: Kóczé, 2010; Durst et al., 2014; Bereményi and Carrasco, 2017; Bereményi, 2017) about what socio-economic status educational mobility brings to the upwardly mobile, and more importantly for our current topic, what the price of this mobility process is. Although social and public policies present upward mobility (especially through academic success) as an unambiguously progressive process, a new line of current academic research addresses the issue of the challenges of social climbing by analysing the 'hidden costs of mobility' (Cole and Omari, 2003: 794). In Hungary, this is a much under-researched area.

This article is written for two purposes. First, to bridge the empirical gap we analyse the personal experiences of educationally mobile Roma intellectuals through their own narratives, thereby unravelling the price of social climbing and changing

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class. Second, having become aware following earlier research of the crucial role ethnic-supportive programs play in the lives of academically successful Roma middle-class individuals (Durst et al., 2014), we analyse the influence of these support groups or supportive programs on the costs of upward mobility for their Roma beneficiaries.

For this purpose, we use a subsample of 20 interviews from previous research which explored the work orientation and work-life balance of 65 professional Roma women (Durst et al., 2016) and five additional interviews with college-educated Roma men from our new pilot project. This merged sample of 25 Roma graduates consists of individuals aged 23-49 who were beneficiaries of any ethnic support group or pro-Roma non-governmental organisation that aimed at facilitating the educational mobility of young Roma (and non-Roma) people from a disadvantaged family background. From our interviewees' narratives, four hugely influential support programs emerged as having an impact on their own mobility paths: 'Romaversitas', the late Kurt Lewin Foundation's educational program, and two pro-Roma media initiatives. Throughout the paper, we focus our attention on these programs and their role in our respondents' mobility trajectory and mobility outcomes.

We call our sample the 'academic high achievers' – denoting those graduate Roma who come from a formerly less well-educated family background (where neither parent has a degree) and who are designated 'first generation intellectuals' in Hungarian mobility studies (among others, see: Ferenczi, 2003: 1074).[2] We take ethnicity as a social construct and are aware of its symbolic, hybrid and situational character (see: Gans, 1979; Tremlett, 2009, Tremlett and McGarry, 2013; Messing, 2014). In this research, however, we use the term 'ethnicity' in relation to our respondents who were purposively sampled based on their self-identification as Roma. Here, ethnicity relates to ethnic identity – a feeling of belonging or relating to a visible, stigmatised ethnic minority group.

Theoretical Background

Baldwin (1985), a black American novelist, asks whether intergenerational class mobility is worth 'the price of the ticket' (1985: 5). This question is whether those who achieve middle-class status through extreme long-range intergenerational mobility (that is, become college graduates with a working class, poor family background) suffer in terms of their psychological well-being. For Afro-Americans, the literature speaks about costs which arises from alienation from their co-ethnic Blacks (Afro-Americans), and condescension from white middle-class counterparts who do not consider the new arrivals bona fide members of the middle class (Cole and Omari, 2003; Vallejo, 2012). These factors account for the acute and chronic stress experienced by many stigmatised members of minorities who have a poor family background yet succeed in majority middle-class dominated professions. According to Friedman (2016), this stress stems from the upwardly mobile individual's dislocated

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[2] During earlier research on a related topic (Durst et al., 2016), we became aware of the dilemma regarding the meaning and use of this particularly context-dependent term (see: Mazsu, 2012) to which the equivalent is the category 'professionals' in Anglo-Saxon countries. Therefore, throughout the paper we use a more generally accepted term; that of 'academically high achieving' individuals instead.

habitus, or *habitus clivé* – a condition which occurs when one's 'class-inflected cultural identity' (2016: 1) suffers a sense of being out of place (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; Bourdieu, 2005). As Bourdieu argues (based on his own personal experience of a disrupted habitus; he was raised by a rural postal worker but climbed to be the Chair of the prestigious College du France), the academically successful, upwardly mobile class 'transfuges' are caught in a painful position of social limbo, of 'double isolation', from both their origin and destination class' (Bourdieu, 1998: 106-107, as cited by: Friedman, 2016: 10). While such 'transfuges' attempt to adopt the cultural dispositions valued in their new elite milieu, they retain a 'secret guilt' about abandoning the ties of their primary socialisation, and can never fully enjoy their success because of poorer co-ethnics left behind in poverty, who often include their loved ones and families (see also: Hooks, 2000).

Cole and Omari (2003) also emphasized that upward mobility can negatively affect the psychological well-being of the black middle-class, because many of them experience stress and frustration due to tokenism, residential segregation, discrimination and the effect of the glass ceiling constructed by majority members of society. These emotional difficulties are called the 'hidden costs of upward mobility' by Cole and Omari (2003: 794).

In a similar line, Neckerman et al. (1999) highlighted that achieving middle-class status for disadvantaged minorities is associated with problems arising from dense contact with the majority middle-class and from inter-class relations within their minority community of origin. Middle-class minorities have more extensive contacts with the majority society than their co-ethnics due to their occupational positions and other roles (e.g. consumers), so they are more exposed to prejudice and discrimination. Middle-class minorities also have more regular contact with poor co-ethnics than their majority counterparts, thus they encounter class tension (e.g. claims for support, accusations of racial disloyalty) more often. According to Neckerman et al. (1999), the response to these problems is the emergence of a *minority culture of mobility* which is 'a set of cultural elements that provide strategies for mobility within the context of racial discrimination coupled with socio-economic disadvantage' (Neckerman et al., 1999: 960). The minority culture of mobility includes knowledge, behavioural strategies and symbolic elements that help manage their relations with the white middle class and poorer co-ethnics (Neckerman et al., 1999).

Vallejo (2012) examined the minority culture of mobility among Mexican Americans and found that they use group-specific mobility strategies such as creating and joining ethnic professional organisations. These organisations provide their members with social and cultural capital, strengthen a class-based minority identity, and give cultural shelter.

This paper is written to contribute to our knowledge of the experiences of middle-class minorities from disadvantaged and discriminated groups by interrogating the issue of the role of certain ethnic organisations and educational programs or support groups in the upward mobility process of college educated Roma in Hungary. Using written documentary sources, personal accounts (narratives) of academic high-achieving Roma who were beneficiaries of these support initiatives, and interviews with leaders of these organisations, we are especially interested in the programs' effects in terms of the cost of upward mobility.

Research on Successful Roma in Hungary

The vast majority of the academic literature (e.g. Kende and Neményi, 2006; Kertesi and Kézdi, 2008; Neumann, 2013; Messing et al., 2010; Szalai, 2011; Szalai, 2013; Papp, 2011; Zolnay, 2016) that discusses the school careers and educational mobility of the Roma population in Hungary focuses particularly on disadvantaged communities.

Much of the current literature on successful Roma pays almost exclusive attention to examining young people who are still participating in higher education. For example, research by Forray (2004; 2014) examined the socio-economic characteristics and motivations of the former, Mendi (1999) investigated the factors which contribute to their academic success, but the most well studied area (e.g. Kende, 2005; Kende, 2007; Bokrétás et al., 2007; Békés, 2011) is the development of the identity of university students. This work provides valuable information about the beginning of the process of upward mobility; however, it is obviously unable to explain the long-term development and consequences of social climbing.

Few studies have investigated the process of social climbing after graduation and its consequences. Székely et al. (2005) studied the educational mobility, networks, the construction of identity, typical mobility paths and life satisfaction of Roma who were not specifically graduates but at least skilled workers. Torkos (2005) – besides identifying the factors determining school success – analysed how graduation influences social integration. The results indicate that this group typically assimilates. Kóczé (2010) studied the life history of politically active, upwardly mobile Roma women with a special focus on the intersectionality between gender, ethnicity and class. Kóczé draws attention to the fact that the mobility of the first-generation Roma intellectuals is a complex process in which psychosocial factors play an important role, as well as the traditional mobility variables. The importance of family and micro-community is emphasised in facilitating upward mobility. Máté (2015) examined the identity constructions of resilient Roma intellectuals. Óhidy (2013; 2016) conducted qualitative interviews with ten Roma women graduates and found that the most important factor in their academic success is learning motivation. Szabóné (2012) investigated the sociodemographic characteristics and mental health of Roma intellectuals. Tóth (2008; 2014) examined (mostly graduate) Roma intellectuals from the United Kingdom and Hungary to identify whether it is possible to achieve upward mobility and retain Roma identity, or whether social uplift necessarily entails a dual identity or assimilation. Results show that the most common type of identity is dual identity (here, a feeling of being both Hungarian and Roma) in the case of upwardly mobile Hungarian Roma intellectuals. Tóth stated that, in the case of the Hungarian sample, the experience of (temporal) identity crisis is common. However, none of these studies systematically analysed the price of upward mobility, nor the roles of those mediators or moderators (in our case, ethnic support groups or NGOs) that may make this painful process smoother, or, indeed, unintentionally contribute to creating other mobility-related costs for middle-class Roma in Hungary.

Research Methods and Context

The sample for this study is constituted of a subsample used in earlier research by the present authors (Durst et al., 2014)[3] and of a preliminary pilot study carried out recently within a new project that investigates the costs and outcomes of upward mobility.[4] The research applied a snowball sampling method to identify participants. We looked for interviewees who were self-identified Roma, and who had obtained a college or university degree. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with a total of 70 mostly female graduate Roma between 2011 and 2012, and then also during the pilot project in the autumn of 2017. The language of the interviews was Hungarian,[5] and interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. For this study we selected all those interviewees whose parents had not obtained a university degree; that is, those Roma who are upwardly mobile and who had participated in any educational program for Roma youth (a total of 25 interviews). In terms of age, interviewees ranged from 23 to 49 years old and included participants from urban and rural locations in Hungary.

Educational or pro-Roma support programs and support groups (those who state in their articles of association that they provided services for the betterment of disadvantaged Roma people) were mentioned by our interviewees as highly influential in their mobility trajectories. These programs provided a wide range of services: they not only supported the educational attainments of their beneficiaries – Roma students – but they also organised social events and gave material and psychological support to their members. There is a college of advanced studies (Romaversitas), preparatory courses for university entry, and the Szocháló Project (Kurt Lewin Foundation), and media internships among these programs. All were academically selective and most of them accepted applications from students who were self-declared Roma. All of them provided long-term (at least several months') support to beneficiaries. The programs are described in detail later in the paper.

Grounded theory was applied for the interview analysis. This supports the 'analytic interpretation of participants' worlds and of the processes constituting how these worlds are constructed' (Charmaz, 2005: 508). We used a general inductive approach to analysing the data 'that primarily used detailed readings of raw data to derive concepts, themes, or a model through interpretations of these data' (Thomas, 2006: 238).

Influential Pro-Roma and Ethnic Support Groups

Many of our respondents mentioned in their narratives that without the support of the Kurt Lewin Foundation's (KLF) preparation course for university entry they would never have been admitted into higher education. KLF's program for secondary school students from poor, disadvantaged family backgrounds operated from 1995 to

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2007. The aim of this initiative was to promote the social integration of disadvantaged university students, facilitate access to higher education for those who intended to become university students, and also to support members psychologically and professionally throughout their education. The initiative had two parts: a preparatory course for university entry and the Szocháló Project (a webpage about social sciences). Most of the student participants came from the countryside and were either close to graduating from high school or had already obtained a high school diploma, or A-level qualification (*érettségi*), one or two years earlier. Both Roma and non-Roma students could apply to the program. The course was mainly designed for those students who wished to apply for the field of sociology, social policy or social work, but some students tried out for other areas of study at the beginning of the program. Later, the organisers had to narrow the choice of study and institutions due to a lack of teachers and several other factors. In the end, the program prepared students exclusively for the entry exam for the sociology, social policy and social work course at Eötvös Loránd University. The program also sought to help students outside of education by organising social events (e.g. summer camps, and year-round excursions), and by providing mentoring and emotional support to participants. Tuition was free and books and a travel subsidy was also provided. The preparatory course lasted 10 months per year, but those students who were admitted to university could continue to access support within the framework of the Szocháló Project. The aim of the Szocháló Project was to compensate for the professional and cultural deficiencies of students from disadvantaged family backgrounds by making available work on the project website. The project also included a mentoring program: younger students were mentored by older project students in terms of their studies, support for integration, and keeping in touch with their families (Ligeti, 2001) as the mentors realised how important but difficult it was for academically high achievers who suffered from the above-mentioned dislocated habitus to maintain relations with family members.

Another important 'protective agent' (Stanton-Salazar, 2004) in the lives of our upwardly mobile respondents was Romaversitas Hungary. Romaversitas was founded in 1996 by the Roma Civil Rights' Foundation (Forray and Boros, 2009).[6] Its aims, according to its founding document, are to create equal opportunities for outstanding young Roma studying in higher education by offering them training and coaching and providing them with talent management, together with financial, psychological, professional and ethical support for smoothing their transition into positions typical of middle-class intellectuals. The overarching aim of the program is to create an autonomous intellectual elite of Roma origin which will contribute to the creation of a Roma middle class through fostering a feeling of responsibility for and commitment to the advancement of this ethnic group (Arnold et al., 2011).[7] The program's stated missions include helping deal with the conflicts associated with becoming a Roma intellectual, and strengthening students' Roma identity (Arnold et al., 2011).

According to Foundation Evaluation Research 2010, there was disagreement about the political commitment of Romaversitas between those who supported the foundation's active role in the Roma civil rights movement, and those who wished to promote professionalism. In 2010, the latter approach was favoured by the then-

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[6] See: the history of Romaversitas: Arnold et al., 2011
[7] http://romaversitas.hu/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/alapicc81tocc81-okirat_2014-1.pdf

current management. However, by 2014 it had become clear that the foundation needed to represent an activist approach as well (Arnold et al., 2011; Héra, 2014). An employee of Romaversistas put it this way: 'Professionalism and activism go together. One without the other is worth nothing.' (Héra, 2014: 9)

Romaversitas offers a wide variety of services to its students. However, the range of services is subject to change because of the foundation's funding problems: as an NGO it relies primarily on grants, donations, and supporters (Forray and Boros, 2009; Héra, 2014). Our interviewees, former beneficiaries of this ethnic support group, reported to having received much-needed financial as well as professional support. All participants received monthly scholarships,[8] which many of them used to support their poor families at home. The program also provided personal professional assistance, including language courses, private tutors for students working on their theses or preparing for academic competitions, and mentors (older students who helped them adjust to the community of Romaversitas). Furthermore, students took part in monthly group events (called 'Open University') involving lectures and seminars. Our respondents emphasised the presence of emotional support as well: Romaversitas students can ask for psychological assistance and lifestyle coaching. The foundation also helps in their career building by offering assistance with job searching and writing grants or job applications. In addition, there are social events such as camps and film clubs. Students have to complete all the requirements of their university or college studies, maintain a grade-point average of at least 3.0, and take part in mandatory courses in exchange for the services provided by Romaversitas (Arnold et al., 2011).

Finally, a couple of our socially mobile interviewees were beneficiaries of media internship programs. One of these pro-Roma support initiatives was the journalist internship program of the Center for Independent Journalism (*Független Médiaközpont*). The aim of the project was to prepare talented Roma youngsters for a career in journalism in majority society, and it only targeted Roma students. At the outset, educational attainment was not one of the selection criteria, although later only university students and new graduates could participate. The program operated between 1998 and 2012, during which time 110 students completed it. The Roma Press Centre (*Roma Sajtóközpont*) was the initiator of the project, but the organiser was the Centre for Independent Journalism. The internship took ten months (daily 8-9 hours) and comprised two parts: a theoretical education and work at an editorial office. Students received a scholarship to cover their living expenses, and participants from the countryside also received accommodation and travel subsidies (Szabó, 2013).

The other media internship program was a Roma Scholarship Media Program (*Roma Ösztöndíjas Médiaprogram*) at the broadcaster Hungarian Television. The program operated in 2006 and 2007 and seven students completed it.[9] The aim of this initiative was to offer an opportunity for Roma journalists and presenters to appear on TV and work on TV programs (Szabó, 2013). According to Szabó (2013), the other goal of Hungarian Television was to contribute to the creation of a credible and

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[8] Since the academic year 2017/18 the Foundation has no longer offered this monthly scholarship, but it was available at the time our interviewees participated in the program.
[9] http://hvg.hu/karrier/20071219_mtv_roma

positive image of Roma by using the trainees themselves. One of our respondents, a former trainee in this initiative, told us why she had joined the program and why she believed in its positive effect on the Roma community: 'During the last 20- 30 years there has been public discourse in Hungary about how much change it would bring about in public thinking if there were Roma presenters on television. I was there, one of those few media people, sitting in on a non-Roma program, in which there was not a single word about Roma. Still, I felt strongly that I was working as much for Roma issues during this time as when I worked for a Roma NGO. Just by sitting in front of the camera, showing my face.'

In the following section of this paper we address the role of these support programs on the cost of mobility, insofar as this can be unearthed from the narratives of our respondents.

Results

In the first part of this chapter we introduce the costs of upward mobility which are influenced by the support groups and programs (for other costs of upward mobility in the case of Roma high achievers, see: Durst et al. 2014; 2016), while in the second part of the chapter we demonstrate how these costs are affected (mitigated or strengthened) by these programs themselves.

Among our sample, according to the narratives of our Roma respondents, one of the greatest costs of educational mobility was the phenomenon of dislocated habitus. The tension or struggle of respondent identity came from the difficulty of maintaining relationships within families and community of origin while at the same time also establishing new ties to the majority society that they encountered on a regular basis during their educational and working careers. Both the rejection of the non-Roma majority and growing distance from their original communities resulted in the feeling of many of our interviewees that they were 'in no-man's land'. They no longer felt at home in their old, 'Roma' world, nor did they yet belong to their new, non-Roma middle-class world, facilitated by their educational achievements. As one of them, 45-year-old Mona, put it: 'For the Gypsies, I am no longer Gypsy; for the Hungarians, however, I am not yet Hungarian.'

Here we must take a detour. On the one hand, among the new generation of critically thinking Roma intellectuals (artists, social scientists, media experts) one has recently been able to trace the influence of post-colonist and British cultural studies, especially of Stuart Hall's (1992) concept of 'new ethnicity' (Bogdán, 2017). This new conception of ethnicity embraced by young black British film-makers and also by some Roma intellectuals in Hungary is a product of a 'new cultural politics which engages rather than suppresses difference and which depends, in part, on the cultural construction of new ethnic identities... It is a recognition that we all speak from a particular place, out of a particular history, out of a particular experience, a particular culture... We are all, in that sense, ethnically located and our ethnic identities are crucial to our subjective sense of who we are... This...is the politics of ethnicity predicated on difference and diversity' (Hall, 1992: 257).

On the other hand, the hegemonic public discourse on Roma or Gypsies (*cigány*) in Hungary is and has historically been based on a socially and culturally

constructed distinction between 'Hungarian' and 'Gypsy' (*magyar-cigány*; with the latter even being called 'new Hungarians' in certain historical periods). This distinction has been based on prejudice, ethnic discrimination and stigmatisation, coupled with the socio-economic disadvantages of the 'Gypsies' (Horváth, 2012). This historically embedded binary opposition or socially constructed distinction (Kovai, 2016) has not only had an effect on public discourses, but was also internalised by many of the Roma.

This binary opposition between 'Hungarians' and 'Gypsies' commonly appeared in the narratives of our respondents. One of them, Eszter in her mid-thirties, complained that: "It is brutal that the Gypsies think of me as gadjo [non-Gypsy], and the gadjos believe that I am Gypsy." Many of our interviewees also reported that they even felt excluded from their own families merely by becoming the only educated members of the family; a feeling which was reinforced by the stigma of 'becoming a Hungarian' (*elmagyarosodott*), or becoming a 'gadje'. "My family was happy when I got into college. Even my brothers told me what an achievement it was. But for that same reason they also excluded me somehow because they thought I had become an educated Hungarian gadje. And this is still the situation today."

Bearing this special Hungarian context in mind, with its strong and almost unbridgeable ethnic boundaries, one can better understand the feeling of being located somewhere 'in-between' (*lebegés állapota*, in: Mendi, 1999) that many of our respondents who moved class experienced. One of them likened this transitional state, or the straddling of two worlds ('Roma' and 'Hungarian'; that is, non-Roma) to a 'schizophrenic life': "I have suffered for this [to get a degree], indeed. It is like living a schizophrenic life in that you leave your roots behind where you once felt happy and good about yourself, and then come to the city where you live a completely different, bubbly, energetic life. And neither there nor here is good. Nowhere is good anymore. My other [Gypsy] colleagues have the same experience. And because my partner is not Gypsy either, this also contributes to the confusion inside me." (Dorina, a middle aged Roma woman)

Apart from the experience of dislocated habitus, another cost of educational mobility came up regularly in the narratives of our respondents in the form of a feeling of having low self-esteem. One of the overarching themes in the interviews involved accounts of choosing a university to attend. Many recounted why they did not feel confident applying to prestigious universities in the capital, Budapest, but only to their 'lighter versions' – less prestigious colleges in the countryside. Elena, for example, justified her choice of higher education institution by recalling how her mother kept saying to her, "do not dream big, they will never accept a Gypsy for law or medicine".

Last but not least, many of our respondents reported about another cost of their educational mobility: their extreme feeling of responsibility towards their disadvantaged, poor co-ethnics (Roma people from their communities) and their urge to serve them and foster their social and economic advancement (see also: Hinton-Smith et al., 2017 for internationally mobile Roma women). Eszter told us: "I like to deal with several different things, but my soul work is the Roma issue, and now I accepted a job at a Roma newspaper because there I can give something back from what I have received [from my family, my kin]." Listen to Ani as she summarises her

motivation for training and working in London as a psychologist and her desire to take home her new knowledge to help disadvantaged Roma schoolchildren with mental health issues in rural Hungary: "It bursts from my soul. To work for "Roma issues", which in my case means to help these disadvantaged children. One of them is my cousin. You cannot do otherwise. Roma for me means my family. My kin, my folks. And if they are suffering from poverty, I need to help them. Otherwise how could I feel good, even if I'm in a better position?!"

Lajos, formerly a social worker but now a small company business manager, expressed similar concerns: "Origins oblige. There is my extended family, my folks, my kin. We come from the same litter (*alom*), the same breed. And if it is not good for them [their poverty], but it is good for me, then I help them. Otherwise how could I feel good?!"

Even those who have decided to pursue their individual happiness and leave behind the needs of their Roma communities report to having some troubling feelings: "Sometimes I feel really guilty. All my Roma acquaintances from Gandhi [a charitable secondary school for talented Roma schoolchildren] work on Roma issues (*cigányügyben dolgozik*). It is only me [who does not]. I came here to England to work in a school as a teacher. As a Hungarian girl teaching history. I live my own life, feeling grateful though to everybody who helped me to get my degree. Sometimes I feel that my old teacher and friend from Gandhi feels indignant at me for not working for Roma issues. I should, shouldn't I? It is not right, is it, to live your life having left behind the Roma? But I'm good with my life now, why should I go home?!" (Laura, 35 year old Roma woman)

This troubling dilemma for educationally mobile Roma relating to having to choose between individual self-betterment and their urge (or the embodied expectation from their mentors) to work to improve the situation of Roma communities (Hinton-Smith et al., 2017) leads us to the second part of our paper which analyses the effects of ethnic support groups and organisations on the costs of upward mobility.

Our research findings indicate that ethnic support groups and pro-Roma professional organisations or programs play an important role in reducing these costs of upward mobility.

The significance of Roma support groups in dealing with the identity crisis (habitus clivé or dislocated habitus) emerged in several interviews. For instance, Lia remembers it this way:

"For me, the life-changing thing was that I got into Romaversitas from the second year of my university course. You become part of a community, where you can see that, we – Roma people – are diverse, but we have the same problems, and we are not alone. Because the process of separation from your family already started during college years. Your cousin of the same age earns a lot of money while you are still nowhere, just studying. It is another, different world when you are participating in higher education. And Romaversitas helped me get through this transitional period."

Another interviewee, Lili, also emphasises that participating in the programs of the Kurt Lewin Foundation and belonging to its community helped her overcome the difficulties of upward mobility:

"I could share the experience of my Roma identity and about the social decompression sickness which comes when you quickly rise up with classmates I met on the university entry preparation courses. That is, I experienced the dilemmas [of upward mobility] with them, and that forged us together."

Young people who typically come from ambitious, assimilated Roma families and who are not raised and primarily socialised in a Roma community do not mention that they had an identity crisis due to upward mobility. However, these supportive programs contributed to their finding or discovering their Roma identity, which was regarded as a 'good thing' by the interviewees. One of our respondents, Eva, said the following: "It is interesting that with joining Romaversitas I found my Roma identity and then, during the program, for the first time in my life, I had a Roma boyfriend.' Later in the interview she recalled: 'When I feel like belonging to some Roma community, then I think of Romaversitas. Until I got into Romaversitas, it didn't mean anything to me to be a Gypsy...When they asked about my Gypsy identity I didn't know what to say... My Gypsy identity is that my parents are Gypsy. But there is really nothing else. No language, nothing."

Tóth (2014) introduces the notion of 're-discovered identity' for this situation, defined as follows: 'there may be periods in the lives of minority people when ethnicity does not dominate [...] However, in other periods of their lives, they can discover and re-formulate it, and experience their minority identity.' (Tóth, 2014: 21-22) Our results suggest that pro-Roma supportive programs contribute to the (re)discovery of Roma ethnic identity.

As we have demonstrated above, we found that a lack of self-confidence and defeatism appears in the narratives of the majority of our graduate Roma respondents (Bereményi and Carrasco, 2017 reported similar results in the case of the Spanish Roma). This can also be considered the price of upward mobility, since a social context, 'where the level of social dissimilarity is higher along with exposure to negative stereotypes and reflected appraisals about one's group of origin' (Rumbaut, 1994: 754) may lead to low self-esteem.

We found that pro-Roma supportive programs had a positive effect on our interviewees' self-respect and helped them overcome their defeatism, as Nóra states:

"I wanted to apply for a rural college [*a low prestige institution in Hungary*] because I did not have self-confidence. But the Kurt Lewin program wanted to send me to ELTE University [*a high prestige institution in the Hungarian capital*]. Firstly, I did not want to apply to that university, since I was afraid of it. However, they said that I should try it, and finally I said OK."

Separation from family and the Roma community of origin, the place of primary socialisation, along with the rejection of the majority group may lead to loneliness and isolation. Ethnic supportive programs can also help reduce this cost: several interviewees added that they had found friends, even their closest friends, or indeed partners through participation in the program.

However, participation in the support groups or ethnic professional organisations may also increase the costs of upward mobility. Several studies (Higginbotham and Weber, 1992; Pantea, 2015; Durst et al., 2016) have revealed that upwardly mobile minorities often feel that they are indebted to the families or communities that facilitated their higher education. Hinton-Smith et al. (2017)

highlighted that their interviewees – college-educated Roma women – often experience tension regarding their wish to give back to Roma communities and the simultaneous desire to avoid this burden and have the same opportunities and free choice of job selection as non-Roma graduates. Pantea (2015) notes that holding down jobs in which individuals can 'give back' to their community typically requires significant individual effort.

The situation for the youngsters who participated in ethnic support groups or supportive programs may be complicated by the fact that these programs often emphasise the role of their members in contributing to the betterment of the wider Roma community. For example, the Charter of the Roma College of Advanced Studies (*Roma szakkollégiumok*) – a new initiative started in 2012 – summarises the aims of the five Hungarian Christian Roma Colleges and contains the following statement: 'The mission of the college of advanced studies is to educate, train and organise into the community those Roma intellectuals who are interested in social inclusion [...] and capable of a responsible social dialogue by developing their personal skills and recognising their mission. Therefore, we foster the creation of a community which can serve as a role model of successful cohabitation in our society. In this way, we support the upbringing of young intellectuals who combine professional excellence with social sensitivity and awareness. This is how we help the rise of Roma people and the Roma-Hungarian cohabitation.'[10]

This is in line with one of the missions of Romaversitas, too, as stated in their founding document: 'We aim at creating a Roma elite that feels responsible and committed to the advancement of its own ethnic group.' Of course, as one of the leaders of Romaversitas emphasised to us in an interview, it is not an expectation of the program that their students work for the Roma community. However, Romaversitas, through its institutional habitus, mediates a value system, a way of thinking which is apparent from its former students' – our interviewees'– narratives.

The other important puzzle that needs solving is the role of pro-Roma supportive programs in the mobility outcomes (the choice of study and work) of our interviewees. The role of the supportive programs in the choice of study of high achieving Roma and their admission to university can only be examined to a limited extent through the narratives of our respondents. The participants of the Kurt Lewin Foundation program (the only institution mentioned by our respondents that facilitated their transition from secondary to higher education) believed that they would not have applied to university without the foundation's support. Some of them had not even considered this to be an option, while others thought they would not have been able to prepare for the university entry exam without help. The next important step on the mobility ladder is graduation; here, the professional assistance and emotional and financial support of the programs was emphasised by almost all the interviewees.

Our results suggest that these programs have an impact on the labour market position of respondents as well. In previous research (Durst et al., 2016) we found that the jobs of most of our respondents – full-time, part-time, or at least volunteer work –

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[10] Charter of the Roma College of Advanced Studies (*Roma Szakkollégiumi Charta*). 2012. (http://krszh.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Roma-Szakkoll%C3%A9giumi-Charta.docx)   Accessed: 15.01.2017.

are related to 'Roma issues'.[11] The labour market segmentation of college-educated Roma is explained by their distinctive experience of a minority middle-class status and by the impact of a discriminatory social environment.

The labour market segmentation of upwardly mobile Roma intellectuals who were beneficiaries of supportive programs is even more representative of the subsample of the present research when compared to the more general cohort of college educated Roma (Durst et al., 2016): we found that all of our 25 interviewees work in the area of Roma issues. As we mentioned earlier, participation in supportive programs may strengthen the wish to give back to the community of origin, thereby fostering the intention to find a job in this field. One of our interviewees with a Roma mother but non-Roma father said the following about why she started working at an NGO that supports Roma people immediately after graduating:

'On the one hand, it probably comes from my family background; as a child, I felt that my mother and father came from different places. [...] On the other hand, I became more aware [of these inequality issues] during my time at Romaversitas. That is, those things which we felt perhaps only vaguely and were curious about became conscious there, and I began to be interested in this situation [*the difference between the situation of Roma and non-Roma people*] and the roots of it.'

Another reason for the concentration of Roma professionals in the ethnic job segment of the labour market is that supporting programs receive job offers related to Roma issues so they can help their students find a job in these areas. In addition, students themselves become involved in special networks through their program membership which can be helpful when finding jobs related to the Roma issue.

The majority of our interviewees work in the public or non-profit sector in jobs that deal with Roma issues. Since the creation of jobs in the public sector is policy- and not market-driven, these are vulnerable positions (Cole and Omari, 2003). Furthermore, public and non-profit sector jobs are characterised by lower wages and fewer opportunities than the private sector.

Conclusion

Minorities who achieve upward mobility within an environment of racial discrimination and socio-economic disadvantage often face unique challenges which may negatively affect their psychological well-being. These emotional difficulties are called the 'hidden costs of upward mobility' by Cole and Omari (2003). Middle-class minorities are in a specific position since they need to manage simultaneously both their relationships with the majority society and with their poorer co-ethnics (people from their communities of origin).

The purpose of our study was to examine the role of some pro-Roma supportive groups on the hidden cost of upward mobility of graduate Roma in Hungary. We analysed the significance of the following supportive programes: Romaversitas Hungary, a preparatory course for university entry at the Kurt Lewin Foundation, and two media internship initiatives. We found that these support groups

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[11] In our definition such jobs are related to the Roma issue which aim at improving the situation of Roma people living in poverty, and support the protection of their interests (Váradi, 2015).

have an ambiguous and multi-faceted effect on the costs of upward mobility: they help to overcome many of the challenges of the process of social climbing, although they may contribute to increasing some other costs.

The supportive groups helped many of our interviewees with managing their identity struggles and also contributed to overcoming their beneficiaries' low self-esteem and defeatism. Furthermore, participation in these groups represented cultural shelter, for our interviewees felt protected against isolation and loneliness by their involvement. However, we found that the feeling of responsibility to 'give back' to the wider community may have been strengthened by participation in these programs or ethnic support groups, and this motivation may contribute to participants' intention to find jobs which are related to the betterment of the whole Roma community. It is not a stated expectation of the programs that students should work for the Roma community, but institutional habitus mediates a value system, a way of thinking. Obviously, this is not the only factor that contributes to the intention of all our respondents (former beneficiaries of these support programs), to work in a position that aims – directly or indirectly – at the advancement of the wider Roma community. The interviewees' individual work preferences, their urge to provide help and to serve 'their' disadvantaged people (a need that 'arises from the soul', or as we call it, 'soul work'), along with the discriminatory practices present in majority society contribute to their segmentation in the labour market (see: Durst et al., 2016).

The problem is that positions which are connected to 'the Roma issue' (e.g. social workers, teachers, mentors, human rights lawyers; Collins, 1983) are mainly designed to serve the needs of poorer Roma, and are therefore usually emotionally difficult jobs requiring huge individual effort. In addition, because most of these positions are found in the public or non-profit sector, they are often vulnerable and offer lower wages and fewer career opportunities than the private sector.

One thing is clear from the narratives of the educationally mobile, academically high achieving Roma: Although working for the betterment of the wider Roma community is a free choice for many of our interviewees and the only area in which they wish to operate, many believe that more opportunities should be created for those who want to find a job in the private sector or in any area not related to 'Roma issues'. One successful initiative in this regard is the Integrom Program of the Boston Consulting Group and Autonómia Foundation which has helped Roma who have completed secondary education find employment in the corporate sector.[12]

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[12] The Boston Consulting Group (2015): Integrom Program. Breaking Barriers To The Labor Market. https://goo.gl/RFZTMJ

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