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## Voices in the "Gypsy Developmental Project"

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## Voices in the “Gypsy Developmental Project”

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The starting point for this article is, What are the hegemonic models of man and woman that educational practices are orientated toward in gypsy communities (models that are often in conflict with mainstream schooling institution’s models of socialization)? We do not find the collectivism/individualism approach for explaining socialization in minority cultures helpful, for it can lead us to misunderstand the continuous process of change through which communities challenge existing power relations and thereby change society. The alternative proposed here is the analysis of the role of multivoicedness in the process of cultural change, hybridation, and resistance. A set of conversations with members of a Spanish gypsy community give us a “text” where multiple voices contribute, showing a mixed culture where “traditional” voices are in a constant dialogue with “modern” voices. Minority culture cannot be interpreted as a “traditional” culture, for minority culture includes voices of the hegemonic culture in various different forms and provokes hybridation as differentiation, creating a complex framework for children’s socialization.

*Interviewer:* How would you explain what it is to be a gypsy?

*Ramón:* A gypsy is he who has no strange people. The more family one has, the more gypsy one is.

*Uncle Emilio:* It is so. Life, better said, the world is a handkerchief and we all need one another. This is our thing; it is in our roots . . .

### INTRODUCTION

Gypsies are a minority cultural group with a presence in a large number of countries. Members of this cultural group live with a higher proportion of social exclusion than those belonging to other ethnic communities. In Spain, where gypsies make up 2% of the population, members of this minority cultural group have restricted access to the resources that the majority group enjoys. Their levels of unemployment and poverty vastly exceed the average for the Spanish

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population. Despite this, where practices and links to their cultural tradition have been kept, members have benefited from the cohesion of the community and participate in collective projects. However, when these connections are lost social isolation, drug dependency, and lack of social structure have fed on them.

Gypsy children's access to formal education increased in the 1990s, at least in primary education (between 6 and 12 years of age). Unlike 20 years ago, many gypsy families now show interest in their children's school attendance. Still, levels of school failure, absenteeism, and drop out are higher than in any other community, including those whose mother tongue is other than the one used in school (something that does not happen among the Spanish gypsies, who express themselves in Castilian, Catalan, or Galician in their home environment). Families are still reluctant to respect the values promoted by the schools, the authority of the teachers, and the disciplining practices the institution imposes on students and families. Even though Spanish schools have become open to a more culturally diverse student body (because of migration), many teachers still show distrust of gypsy families (or even disdain and sheer racism; Poveda & Martín, 2004).

These difficulties in schooling are the basis for our study. Rather, the focus of our research is not the *difficulties* but the conflict the difficulties denote: the convergence of different developmental projects, of different models of the person to which the educational practices gypsy boys and girls are involved in are directed. In other words, to be able to respond to questions such as "What are the difficulties that gypsy boys and girls present to schools a result of?" (Better yet, "What are the difficulties the *school* encounters when it decides to include gypsy children"), we must first answer other questions such as "What are the hegemonic models of man and woman to which these educational practices are orientated in the heart of the gypsy communities?"

The objective of this article is to present the voices we can find in the statements of members of the gypsy community, voices that inform us about the developmental goals that guide the education of boys and girls. Our point of departure is the assumption that gypsy communities are immersed in a process of profound cultural change in which different voices are in dialog (not without conflict), some coming from the cultural tradition, others from the models of the dominant social group and its institutions, and others emerging as new hybrid voices derived from attempts to find a compromise between the first and the second voices. The framework of socialization of gypsy boys and girls is not easily explained as the back and forth of two separate monocultural world—on one side the gypsy community and on the other the school and other state institutions. Instead, this framework can be better understood as a field of play between the minority and the majority and its institutions in which movements of dialogue occur, as well as assimilation, resistance, the creation of new cultural differences, hybridization, and so on. That is, it is a scenario that is caught in a constant process of change. It is a scenario in which everyday practices must often respond to different, and even contradictory, objectives. It is a scenario in which different voices are intertwined in the process of constructing new possible identities.

## THE CONTEXT: CULTURAL PRACTICES OF SPANISH GYPSIES

To make sense of the voices that come from the gypsy cultural tradition we need to first consider some notions this particular cultural tradition. We do not pretend to present here an exhaustive development of the features of gypsy culture or its social organization; this task has been tried by many anthropologists (the main findings and theoretical developments can be found in San

Román, 1997, an excellent introduction to this field). We simply want to point out traits that can help us understand development in the *gypsy context*.

The gypsies, as an ethnic group distinguish themselves by means of cultural features that are considered ordinary (communes) and that, for them, distinguish Gypsies from the other groups they come in contact with. The variations among groups, geographical areas, and status do not stop the Spanish gypsies from having a basic consensus on these demarcating traits—traits that are required for the articulation of kinship, association and relationships, and territorialization. It is important to mention that although big differences are evident to an observer, they categorize themselves as the same, presenting themselves to *others* as a unity.

The elements that configure this homogenous image are, according to a well-known gypsy sociologist (Torres, 1991):

The belief in a common origin, a traditional nomadic social state, endogenous legislative judgment, language as medium of communication among members of the ethnic group, the existence and valorization of groups defined by sex and age, experience as a factor which produces power and enhances status, family organization in clans and lineages, work relations which can involve kin, deep respect for the dead and the possibility of their intervention in the life of the clan, lineage, or nuclear family they belonged to, endogenous cohesion and exogenous differentiation. (p. 15)

Of all these elements, we only briefly introduce four that are later useful for exploring the cultural frameworks of socialization: community and kinship, own law [*ley propia*], the organization of age groups, and the organization of roles according to gender.

The primary characteristic of traditional gypsy social life is *community* (its structure of relationships, its rules, and its forms of division of labor). The community not only defines the relationships among its members but also creates expectations about how they have to behave—how they *have to be*.

The gypsy community is not simply a group of individuals, but rather it is organized around kinship. The kinship system grants social personality to members of the gypsy group. For an individual to have full rights within the group he or she must belong to one of the kinship groups; these kinship groups allow individuals to be recognized as compromising part of the whole. Therefore, the kinship group an individual belongs to is a gypsy's basis for existence (Torres, 1991). In this *patrilineal* system, the nuclear family is the center of social life, around which all activities performed by the gypsies turn. Put another way, a gypsy boy or girl is raised to live in a community in which he or she will be, above all, a member of a family group.

The second basic characteristic is the existence of *gypsy law*. Gypsy culture has a series of structural dispositions to resolve conflicts of interest in an orderly way, preventing disturbing confrontations. Gypsy law is a custom or norm that organizes even the simplest acts of practical life. It is a way to defend the integrity of their cultural patrimony, expressed by Ferrer Benimeli (1965) as “Fidelity to the race (never turn your back on a gypsy); fidelity to the male (remain loyal to a gypsy man); fidelity to your word (pay gypsy debts religiously)” (p. 39). We can place the code of gypsy law in the context of relations among gypsies. It is preeminent to the laws of civil society and the state—it is a system that is recognized by authorities, has known sanctions, and is accepted by everyone.

The third basic pillar of gypsy social organization is *age groups*. An individual's age group defines his or her social position of within the clan, as well as outside of it. Each of these groups has its own rights and obligations. However, if a gypsy is old enough to enjoy certain prerogatives but behaves inappropriately, he can lose his age rights. For example, a gypsy may be 30 years old or more, but if he is unmarried he will still be seen as a *tchavo* (boy) in the eyes of the gypsy

people; despite being old enough to belong to an older age group he cannot join it since he has not fulfilled the corresponding duties. A married gypsy without descendents would be in the same situation.

The members of other age groups see each age group as a coherent whole, even though any particular group has its own internal divisions that diminish as the group grows older and acquires a new position in relation to the other groups. There are certain norms that have to be observed, which primarily affect members of the same age group (i.e., source of income, commercial competition, etc.) but also between groups (i.e., decisions made by older groups that frustrate younger groups and cause them to deviate from the norms or customs of the gypsies). Thus, members of the same age group are on an equal basis, meaning that they stay together; they play jokes on each other and act naturally; they associate both at work and in recreational activities, and so on.

All this is mediated by *gender*, the fourth pillar to which we refer. In the cultural gypsy system the dividing line between the world of men and that of women is very clear. Men and women play very different, yet complementary, roles. Men are public figures and are responsible for the reputation of their wife, children, and extended family. In contrast, women are expected to remain within the private space of the family. Traditional gypsy *patrilineal* kinship structure requires marriage to be arranged between families. From the moment an engagement is announced the bride-to-be becomes part of her future husband's family and her mother-in-law is in charge of teaching her "proper tasks" of gypsy women. A gypsy woman has to enter her husband's family free from outside influences. She must be open to being socialized into a new family, which is symbolized by her virginity. It is because of this that a gypsy wedding centers on what is called the "handkerchief ritual," which enables confirmation of the bride's virginity. Girls' education is focused on the importance of virginity and what it represents, as well as maternity.

The cultural features that follow from these *four pillars* would lead any cross-cultural researcher to define gypsy society as *collectivist*, but that would oversimplify a reality that is much more complex.

At first, it seems evident that we could categorize gypsy culture as collectivist compared to the clearly individualistic features of dominant cultures in Western countries. The *approximation* of collectivism versus individualism which Benedict used (Geertz, 1984) to explain Japanese culture as a coherent whole to the North Americans, has proven useful for explaining educational practices that differ from Western forms of instruction (Greenfield & Suzuki, 1998) that sustain different implicit developmental projects.

However, defining the gypsy culture merely as *collectivist* hides something essential for understanding this ethnic group: their status as a *minority group in constant interaction with other groups*. Cultures are not simply monologues interrupted by foreign elements from other cultures; instead they are an open dialogue, requiring conflict between and creativity among groups and subcultures, members and nonmembers. In a world where cultural contact, mobility, and exchange between communities are the rule and not the exception, impermeability of cultural limits must be questioned (Bhabha, 1994). Gypsies have lived in this situation from the times of their most remote collective memories. They have had to negotiate their identities in contexts of domination; their history has not followed a linear evolution, or an organized one. Rather, changes in gypsy culture have been in response to the particular context in which gypsies have had to survive: Gypsies strategically negotiate the critical elements of their identity

with other groups they live with and relate to. Following Clifford (1998), this means recognizing in culture a relational and political character that changes according to the surrounding ideological context. Only by analyzing cultural differences as resulting from the relations of power to which gypsies have been submitted can we understand gypsies' historical changes and transformations.

### THE OBJECT OF STUDY: MULTIPLICITY OF VOICES, IDENTITY, AND CULTURAL CHANGE

Similarly to what has happened with the Jews for 19 centuries, gypsies have been (for at least 600 years) a people without a state or a territory—a minority wherever they go. But unlike the Jews, gypsies do not have a written *text*, a printed *voice* to which they can turn to settle questions of identity, to legitimate individual or collective actions, to admonish behavior or lay out strategies for relating to other people. This does not mean they do not have a *voice*, in the sense Bakhtin (1986) uses the word—a collective reference of conscience. Thus, gypsy communities share accounts and rituals, which, although informed by multiple voices, form as a result *one voice*. This *voice* legitimates forms of kinship, types of authority, and different kinds of relationships among age groups and genders. This *voice* is present in the everyday accounts of gypsies, contributing to the creation of shared meanings. In fact, this *voice* is omnipresent, as it is the reference to gypsies rely on to resolve every type of situation. However, it is not a unique voice; it is constantly in tension with other voices that in some way transform it.

At this point we find Bakhtin's concept of "multivoicedness," as developed more recently by Wertsch (1991, 2002), very useful. Gypsy culture is animated by a multiplicity of voices, among which two are highlighted. First is the voice of tradition, which in Bakhtinian terms would be the *text*. In this case the text is oral, *distributed* among the diverse communities and helping form a collective *conscience*, that is, "the spoken conscience or general ideological perspective of the members of a collective . . . which provides narrated texts" (Wertsch, 2002, p. 6). Second is the individual voice, which enters into dialogue with the text when it constructs new accounts, establishing a relationship with the text that goes from reference to contradiction. In this voice one can appreciate the strong presence of the *text*, for individual voices (to varying degrees) embody texts. It is important to note that a voice's individuality is reliant on the incorporation of other voices often *nongypsy voices*) that are in tension with the text and that express themselves implicitly or explicitly through individual voices.

The relationship between the speaker and the text can be of different kinds. The text (understood as a cultural tool) can be interpreted in an authoritarian way, as something sacred, and the speaker can limit himself or herself to reproducing it faithfully. Or the speaker may approach the text in a creative way, qualifying, contextualizing, interpreting, and giving it different meanings. For this kind of relation, the speaker's voice appropriates the voice of the text as well as any other voices that enable him or her to express a personal voice.

We are interested here in the emergence of these voices, which are personal until they are able to develop identities and promote cultural change. For this we find useful Cole's (1998) understanding of *multivoicedness*: "Every form of human interaction contains within it many different selves, arranged in multiple, overlapping, and often contradictory ways" (p. 292). The idea of the presence of distinct identities that are expressed through personal voice is especially useful for understanding processes of change within minority communities, for in minority

communities we generally find tension between the voices that arise from the conventional minority cultural tradition and the outside majority cultural tradition. However, it is not simply a matter of establishing contradictions between an *outside* and an *inside*. Both voices form part of the identity of the members of the collective.

On a similar note, Verkuten and de Wolf (2002) used discourse analysis to investigate how multiple voices come together to form the identity of minority group members (specifically considering individuals who are second generation Chinese in the Netherlands). They demonstrate how different nuances of identity—such as *being* or *feeling*—show diverse ascriptions (in this case, Chinese or Dutch) and are often in conflict. These authors understand that “the object of investigation is not the identities and attitudes people may possess, but rather the way that identifications and evaluations are constructed and emerge from conversations” (p. 373). What we find especially useful in Verkuten and de Wolf’s approach is *the lack of pretense* to study constructs such as *attitudes* to focus on *contextual positions* of the subject in the framework of activity and conversation.

Having reached this point it is convenient to recall the objective of our project: to know the voices that form the new “developmental gypsy project,” that is, the accounts that legitimate the educational practices and the ideals of the gypsy men and women for whom these voices are orientated. These voices may be found within the community and without because they arise from gypsy traditions as well as from dissidences expressed (in a number of ways) by members of the community. For example, voices come from school discourse but also from resistances in the core of this institution; voices come from contradictory discourses presented by the media, press [*prensa rosa*], and even soap operas; voices come from the explicit and implicit values guiding the discourse of the social worker who determines financial aid should be given to certain individuals, but also from the values that guide those who fraudulently obtain such aid; voices come from the stories a gypsy tells about how he lives and struggles to survive with only sporadic work; voices come from the morals of one who has spent his life working hard and who has prospered as a *payo*.

Our project aims to unveil these voices in the canonic discourse of gypsy men, paying special attention to the dialogue that takes place among distinct voices — present in the same discourse and sometimes even in the same sentence. We look also at the conflicts that arise between the voices of tradition and the voices of the *payo* world, encounters that engender hybrid voices that orientate people’s development toward specific ends.

## THE METHOD: CONVERSATIONS FOR A TEXT

This work is centered on the analysis of a text whose very production is itself inscribed in a form of social practice: one where researchers must take a stand with respect to issues such as the exclusion of minority groups in social life, the contradictions that arise from the minority group’s interaction with the institutions of the dominant group, the conflicts that arise between communities, and the resistance of schools to change (Crespo, Lalueza, Portell, & Sánchez, 2005). We are following Cole (1998) in his definition of cultural-historical activity theory: “the acid test of the theory is its success in guiding the construction of new, more humane forms of activity” (p. 292). Here we deal with the construction of a text in the framework of collaboration between a team of researchers from the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona and the members

of a gypsy association who work in their own neighborhood—an enclave of Barcelona's metropolitan area with 12,000 inhabitants, half of which are gypsies.

To obtain the text we are going to analyze here we did not follow the classic division of tasks between the researcher who asks and records and the subject who narrates without being able to control how his narration is elaborated. In our case, the narratives are material generated in preparation for a book about gypsy culture that was coauthored by members by our team of researchers—hereafter referred to as we or us—and members of the gypsy association—hereafter referred to as they or them—on the request of the latter, who were active in the preparation and editing of the material and are recognized as authors.

We can understand the process as a *border activity* (Nilsson & Nocon, 2005) in which distinct collectives work together to achieve different goals—in essence, we entered into a negotiation with our speakers. On one hand, for *us* the goal was to gain access to the practices and discourses that orientate the development of the gypsy community. On the other, for *them* the goal was to try and vindicate their own voice with reference to the gypsy culture. For our speakers, the presence of a group of researchers was not something new. They expressed their weariness with anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, and educators who had approached them, *studied them*, and then left. As a consequence, from the outset our research project had to be set up as a job that needed to be negotiated—one that needed to offer concrete benefits to the community.

The process—analyzed in detail by Crespo, Lalueza, and Pallí (2002)—consisted of 19 conversations sustained throughout a 6-month period on a weekly basis. For each conversation there were at least two researchers present and three speakers of the local association. These speakers were (a) an elderly man of great prestige in the community named *uncle* Emilio, 70 years of age; (b) the most active member of the local gypsy association, Raimundo, who was in his 40s; and (c) another man in his 50s named Ramón. Other members of the community would join the conversation from time to time, mainly because the conversations took place at the gypsy association's facilities and people were constantly coming in and out. All the sessions were recorded and transcribed, and the texts were returned to and discussed with our speakers. The selection and organizing of the chapters was also negotiated with our speakers.

The result was a coauthored book (Cerrueta et al., 2001) in which the fundamental features of gypsy culture were explored through conversations and accounts about family, law, mourning, and everyday life; values and norms and their corresponding sanctions; and the difference between men's and women's conceptions of life stages. The content of these long conversations with our gypsy speakers held a presentation of their cultural world, which was given in narrative form to some outsiders. The conversation (not only its contents but the conversational activity itself) offered access to the speaker's symbolic universe in an accessible mode for foreigners.

Some have been critical of the lack of representativeness of *actual* cultural practices in this kind of narrative (Matsumoto, 2006), but this position fails to see narration itself as a social practice that has its own rules and contributing to the order of a culture. As Bakhtin (1986) maintained, any discursive practice is historically rooted, containing the ideology and the formal resources of the speakers of a community. We are interested here in analyzing discourse as a social practice that connects the resources of gypsy oral tradition with the act of representing a cultural text for an audience (in this case *payo* readers).

With this we see that an audience is part of the definition of the narrative genre. In this way we can trace both the gypsy and *payo* voices (the interviewers and the audience of potential



readers of the book) in a dialogic game of words and *counterwords* (using Bakhtin's expression). Thus, the presentation we are given of the gypsy culture is *sesgada*—it can be understood “correctly” or it can be interpreted as condemnable. This does not oppose an assumed “true description” of their culture. Narrating the familiar to strangers explicates what is believed to be different—“what differentiates us”; narrating describes what is *nearly* [*casi decir*] “our identity.” What is nearly our identity *implicitly includes* “our image of them.” When our own speakers tried hard to explain [matizar] or deny “the image that you have of us,” they were offered us an essential aspect of their identity, formed in the mirror of the dominant group: “Even though I reject what I think you think of me, as unfair or mistaken, it forms part of my identity.” Last, by establishing a game in which differences are exaggerated, “others” are attributed (however unfairly or in exaggeration) with that which “we would like to deny of ourselves” and the things that an individual would like to claim for himself are denied of the other. It is in this way that the ideal image of oneself is shown. This ideal image is largely the model that orientates educational action and childrearing practices.

Another thing to consider about the particular context in which these conversations took place is that we desired establish both the perspective of a researcher—the *etic perspective*—and the perspective of a subject—the *emic perspective* (Geertz, 1973). As paradoxical as it may seem, the way in which the gypsies presented themselves exaggerated the difference between their group and ours while searching for consensus—to show what is shared by the two cultures, to show to what extent members of this cultural group (or more specifically, some adult male members of a gypsy community) were willing to share interpretations of reality with the dominant group (which was represented as much by us researchers as by our potential audience). *Emic* and *etic* perspectives not only had to be cultivated by the researchers a posteriori during “laboratory” work, but they come to the surface explicitly in the emergence of the audience as object: *We*, who ought to *understand* what is said, need to let go of the prejudices that *they* attribute to us, and the readers of the book to whom the *gypsy facts* were to be told so that they could understand their coherence despite being strangers. Our interlocutors, by entering into an intercultural dialogue, had to paid attention not only to their own perspective but also to the perspective of the *payos*; they had to make an effort to understand “how their voices were going to be heard,” which requires a speaker to adopt the audience's perspective.

Here we ought to point out two very different stages in our analysis of the interviews we collected: the categorization of themes and the analysis of voices. The first stage was done to organize our thoughts for the publication of our book. Our interlocutors helped with this stage. The following categories and subcategories emerged, allowing the material to be organized for expository purposes:

**The gypsy family:** “Betrothal.” Marriage scams. The wedding. Marital problems. Raising children. Differences from the *payos*.

**Mourning:** The wake. The burial. Mourning. Signs and customs of mourning. Who doesn't deserve mourning and who is exempt from mourning. Widowhood. All Saint's Day.

**Gypsy law:** Conflict. Council of Elders. The Uncles as mediator. Exceptions to the Law. Minor facts and minor laws. Women's issues. Some clarifications.

**Being gypsy:** Respect and who is respected. Hospitality. Sorrows and consolations. Depression and psychiatrists. The practical meaning of life. The good use of money. Ostentation and the hiding of wealth.

The second stage corresponds exclusively to the work developed by the authors of this article, and it is orientated toward the narrative analysis of the texts. This categorization is based in the identification of three types of voices: the community type, which corresponds to the gypsy tradition; the personal arising from community discourse; and the *paya* voices that are more or less implicit in the narrative of the gypsies. The following categories arose from our analysis:

**Communitary voices:** Human nature, Gypsy Law

**Personal voices:** Commitment, Distinguishing oneself, Dissent

**Payan voices:** Ventrilation, Hybridation, Counterword, Translation, Differentiated identity.

## ANALYSIS OF TEXT: GYPSY VOICES AND PAYAN VOICES

### Voices of a Choral Discourse

What is the genre of the text obtained? *Talking* of the form of the text, while talking of their universe, our interlocutors used a narrative style appropriate to the elderly who give “a lesson about the world.” In fact, in all the conversations there was a reference, explicit or implicit, to wisdom accumulated through the passage of time, knowledge that was, and is still, profoundly dependant on experience.

Just as an elderly farmer showed us that to tame nature one must seduce it and accept its rules rather than forcefully transform it, our speakers warned us of the ductility and unpredictability of *human nature*, letting us see the skillful use of their psychological tools. Their discourse was abundant in details about the subtlety of human conduct, relationships, and persuasion. Their accounts of events were the basis for a know-how that is applied daily. Their style of reasoning is based on facts, metaphors, and concrete knowledge about ways of living that can only be obtained through decades of participation in the social life of the community. Our speakers offered us accounts that interpret people’s behavior and that hold “good counsel” for action in the social milieu. Stories of confrontations, mediations, pacts, ceremonies, elopements, weddings, conflicts, and celebrations—*gypsy facts* as they say—that explain the reasons for everyday conduct.

1. UE: Because when a girl loves a boy and a boy loves a girl there is no way for them. You can put a mountain between them, and the girl says she is leaving. And that she is leaving with her boyfriend and that she loves him and that she wants him. Let’s see who places that . . . Can I place it? . . . or else, I grab my daughter, leave my home, leave everything and disappear off the map. And don’t go to Andalusia, because he would go to Andalusia for her . . . As soon as he finds out he goes for her. Or she goes there. When a woman loves a man, there is no solution: it’s an illness. A wanting, a loving . . . she is in love . . .

Most of the statements offered to us, like the one just presented, were made as assertions. Our speakers used vocabulary and forms of expression that refer to a social language shared by the members of many gypsy communities. This kind of expression appeals to a consensus, to those who have a knowledge of things—things shared.

This social language is often manifested as a *choral discourse*. Throughout the conversations, the statements were linked in such a way that the different gypsy speakers interrupt each other,

not to disagree but to affirm their agreement, to gloss the last comment made by his partner, to exemplify or enhance what was said. In these choral discourses, the voice of tradition, of gypsy law and of community consensus, emerges strongly. Despite the fact that the turns to speak, often interrupted, were presented as various individual voices, the interjections express the voice of the community. Individual voices behave as the voices of a chorus, and the variations they introduce do not oppose the harmony of the whole but underline it instead. They are fighting to express the voice of the community, showing to what point they have appropriated it. In the following example, two of our speakers explain some implications of mourning in a gypsy community.

2. UE: . . . the first thing they say is: "Look what's-your-name, on day 4 or day 5—let's suppose—I am going to have a wedding, of one of my daughters. If it seems ok with you we will have it in the barrio, if it seems ok with you. If you see it well, if it's ok . . . if not . . . well we'll just hit the road and head in another direction to have the wedding." First, being gypsies they understand the reasons: "Before you head off to another place, I will leave as is my right." And that family disappears, understand me? Until the wedding is over. And once they've finished the wedding, they return home. All in all, there is respect. Something positive, and something *orderly* of a lifetime, don't you get me, it comes from our roots,
3. Rai: They are very old traditions!
4. UE: Centuries old, years. Still all this is disappearing a little, because of the youth that have other. . . . These are our laws and that is it (*hits the table with his knuckles*) And these have to be respected . . . as I say . . . eh . . . (*to Raimundo*) how do you say this?
5. Rai: Tradition
6. UE: Mourning, it is mourning. Even though mourning is for respect, mourning is carried in the heart. As Raimundo has said there are creatures who in the moment of the death of a relative are emotional, but then they do something silly, small though this silliness may be . . .
7. Rai: Then the uncle, the brother of your father. . . . Or someone in the family . . .
8. UE: Or any close relative, first thing they say is: "Look son, you are young and you shouldn't mourn." So they end the mourning . . .
9. Rai: That's it.

This *choral voice* faithfully reproduces the oral *text* of the voice of gypsy tradition in circumstances that require consensus; dissent is not allowed.

Our next example works to define appropriate conduct for a particular gender and age.

10. UE: That's it. I will give you an example of a woman in her forties, not forties, fifties, who is a woman with children 18, 20 or 22 years old. She is a stable woman, thoughts never occur to her at all, despite the fact that these days there is everything in life. But by real law, gypsies, catalogue this: that a woman in her forties is a woman stable enough to continue mourning all her life. Now, we're going to measure another topic, the same but another topic: imagine a young woman, instead of being forty years old is . . . Well, I'll say 25, and who has a child, or two. . . . This woman is young, but she is a widower, and she has 2 small kids. . . . She has the right to live life again, if you understand me. While she mourns, this woman is the queen of the house. She is **keen**. If before she was already admired, now she is, how shall I say?, Now the respect has multiplied 14 times more,

and this woman is seen with all the respect in the world. I know a girl who wears her clothes down to her feet, and she was a widower at the age of seventeen or eighteen. She has been mourning some seven or eight years. Honest, every time I see her I respect her and say, "God bless you." I feel like greeting her and lower my head (*saying this he bows*), I do this because she deserves it all.

11. Rai: Sure, but you have to take one thing into account, that this woman who is mourning, the family doesn't know where to put her: if before they loved her, now they love her thirty thousand times more.
12. UE: If they respected her before, now, while she is a widower, she is a revered woman, in every sense. They hold her in the palm of the hand, and anything she needs, she gets, everything. And they treat her with enormous care. These are our customs.

In this case, as in many others, there is no **sign** *atisbo* of the personal voice of the speaker. Instead the *ventriloquism* of voices shared by the community speaks explicitly. This is reinforced by the use of the personal pronoun, generally third person plural – the subject being *gypsies*. This generic subject is combined with abundant examples of actions performed by a male or female gypsy—real examples or inventions ad hoc—that illustrate typical behavior and the consequences of deviant behavior that is not congruent with the laws. It is important to note that the characters in these stories are never isolated subjects. They are always *members of a family*, to the point that the family becomes the protagonist in many story. The previous transcript is an example of this.

### Personal Voices

Within this choral panorama, there are various ways in which the self emerges. In the first, the individual voice is incorporated into the voice of the community, contributing experience and applying the general law to particular situations. The self emerges not to oppose the choral discourse, not even to differentiate itself, but to express its commitment, exemplifying through the personal what it recognizes as knowledge, tradition, and community law. Here, a dialogue between the voices of the community and a personal voice compresses the choral discourse into a statement. For example, the next comment by Uncle Emilio illustrates the moment in a gypsy wedding when the blooded handkerchief shows that the bride's hymen has been perforated.

13. UE: Man, of course, please! You know, they have crowned your sister! a sister who has been virtuous, and who they lift up in the air; well your love comes to you. That real love comes to you, my sister! Like a daughter. You have to cry, I have *cried*! There with my daughter who has *married* and I have *cried*! Because it's like this, because it hits you.

A second manifestation of the self is given through a voice that is singularized, expressed in the first person singular to differentiate it from the whole of the community. It is not an expression of dissidence; on the contrary, it underlines its particular position within the order of the community's discourse. It is normally used to claim a power position. To singularize *within the law* supposes a rank, and, to a certain degree a privilege. In the following two examples, Uncle Emilio explains how justice is imparted, through the account of his own actions as the leader of the community in the mediation of conflicts.

14. UE: Let's see. I, what I do to whoever is right is take away that right, I strip him of his rightness, because if I agree with him, what we have here is overcome. We can't look for

reasons, what we need to look for are parallel facts, which are there and avoid compromise, to avoid ruin. Here reason can't be looked for. Even if you are completely right, I can't give it to you, nor him, nor you, but look for an agreement so that it doesn't happen. Because the first thing I say is "Let's see what's-your-name, how many children do you have?—well look here I have four or five.—and how many siblings?—well see here I have three or four siblings right here.—What do you want, their ruin just because you want to? Why don't you want to avoid this compromise? Look behind you, don't only look after yourself" Never, never, never, never can you agree with anyone.

A third modality emerges more explicitly from the personal voice when dissidence is expressed. It is necessary then to resort to reasoning or to personal tastes since we cannot resort to the law, for it is questioned or qualified. The following is the only example of open dissidence between two speakers in our 19 interviews. Raimundo makes an effort to justify her position about the age of marriage, which is contrary to the customs but represents a position emerging in the community.

17. UE: . . . And a 16 year old girl doesn't know what one of 22 does. They prepare the girl and take her, the parents-in-law and the mother-in-law grab her and make her their way. Understand me? They have another life. And the 22 year-old says no; she messes things up. How does she mess things up? She wants to live apart; she wants her own apartment; she can't live there. And in this teenager, as she doesn't know much, they get her to their way of seeing. That is why we gypsies want younger girls. Do you get me? Because when a woman is 22, well I see her as old, an antique.
18. Rai: Sorry. That is your opinion.
19. UE: (*Nodding*) That is my opinion.
20. Rai: And I respect it. I differ . . . I also give mine. I don't agree, and I wouldn't agree to that. I have a 13 year old girl, my *Bizqueta*, for example, my Maria . . . I disagree because of that. She has me in 13 or 14 *pieces*; she is like a woman; she is as big as I am. But she is still a child. And the way I see it this is an atrocity, because my mentality is not that of before. Tio Emilio, and I would not be very happy if they asked me.
21. UE: Yes, we agree. But you know with the gypsy people . . .
22. Rai: Yes but, understand, the gypsy people are evolving . . .
23. UE: (*A bit impatient*) ok, ok . . .
24. Rai: It's evolving. We young people are changing . . .
25. UE: (*Sentenciously*) What's good is good.
26. Rai: Yes. But younger people are changing in this matter . . .
27. UE: We are not going to take out all the good and mess it . . .
28. Rai: No, but we are changing in this matter, the youngsters.
29. UE: (*Talking to the interviewer*) That is why, I will tell you something. . . . It doesn't change, this doesn't change. Because they are our things, and they are beautiful. Raimundo sees it one way and I see it differently. I have no children because they are all married. But if I had kids to marry, I would find them a daughter; instead of bringing me a 23 year old woman, get me one of 16 years.
30. Rai: But yes in that case I agree with you, because you have a mentality. . . . I am much younger than you, you are some three or four generations older than me. . . . Listen, listen. Let's see . . . I am with you on this. But this is now and times have evolved. Younger

generations, like us, think that a girl at 13, imagine, when she is 18, 20 or 22 she will have two or three kids, they leave her behind. It is as if she were an older woman. (*Talking to the interviewer*) See? Then we see . . . well, I, for example. I put myself so I don't put any other one. I for me I see that it's an atrocity. . . . With all due respect.

31. UE: (*Protesting*) Well, eh, eh . . . hey! . . .

32. Rai: (*Insists*) With all due respect, with all due respects for my people. . . . Because it is so.

As can be seen in this example, there is a confrontation between a personal voice of adherence and a personal voice of dissidence. The dissident voice, which is expressed as an individual subjectivity, includes other voices, and therefore other subjectivities. In an obvious way, the description of the marriage of a young woman of 13 or 14 years as an *atrocity* corresponds to a *payan subjectivity*: a conception of adolescence—a stage in the life cycle that did not traditionally exist in gypsy society—as a stage inappropriate for adult responsibilities.

### The Voice of the Audience in the Counterword

There are other presences more subtle than these *payan* voices. Thus, reference to cultural change through the generations, associated implicitly with an idea of *progress*, does not correspond at all to the voice of traditional gypsy discourse, which could be expressed in the following statement (contrary to *payan* perspective):

33. UE: No, it's all purity. And we have never changed the law that comes from afar, a 600 year road, and the government changes the law every five years.

New voices appear *with* the interruption of the point of view of the audience, in this case a *payan* audience. In the even statements between number 17 and 32, Raimundo's voice is actually a ventriloquation of the *payan* voices. As much as these statements are set within traditional gypsy discourse, when Raimundo utters them they are a *hybridization*.

Such hybridized statements are also present in Uncle Emilio's utterances (odd numbered statements) because his arguments take the *payan* voices as *counterwords*. He not only argues with Raimundo but also argues with the *payan* words (as seen in statement 33).

Now then, if this last statement proves sufficiently explicit in the preceding statements, it is implicit in many others. Many times, the voice of the audience is present in the replies to nonexplicit statements. The voice of the audience takes the form of a potential argument, which is not explicit and needs to be countered.

This counterargumentation to *payan* voices takes two forms. The first, a very subtle one, consists of the speaker being obliged to introduce justifications or qualifications to what he is saying, or to express what he is saying in a code different from the social language dominant in the conversations. The voice of the audience—the *payos*—is recognized by the speakers, who are very competent in intercultural relationships and, therefore, are capable of anticipating the objections, corrections, and/or disagreements the majority group—the interviewer or the potential readers of the book—might have [2]. These voices are never explicitly stated, but they are answered nonetheless; they are taken into account in the construction of what is said, and therefore, these voices are indeed present. In the following transcription, Uncle Emilio's orthodox discourse—in the use of social language—contrasts with the shaded, didactic language of

Raimundo, who maintains a dialogue with an implicit *paya* audience, *translating* the statements of Uncle Emilio into another code:

34. UE: He was raised more *payo*, let's see if you understand me, he has nothing gypsy. His mother and father are, but for him this means nothing; if he can't get the gypsy thing this tells me nothing. It's that it's so difficult to know how to be gypsy: to know the conditions, the laws, our rules, our roots. I mean, it's so hard to understand the gypsy people. Don't think that ninety percent understand. There's like ten or twenty per cent who get it. That is why we have the elderly: when there is a problem, any event, anything, the first thing they do is to call these people.
35. Rai: I would like to make a point here. This doesn't mean that we don't understand our laws, it's just that not everybody is capable of negotiating.
36. UE: Negotiate, exactly, that is the word.
37. Rai: To be between two groups so these two groups can get to a point and say "that's it."
38. UE: To be able to dominate them.
39. Rai: To tell them: "this is what you have to do and you have to do it." And that is very complicated. Imagine that to be a lawyer or judge you need a bundle of years. Well then, to be Uncle it's a lifetime, it's a lifetime. . . . This is it, not everybody has the gift, the honor to say "I am Uncle, I can intervene to settle peace here". No, stop, not everybody can do it. You could be old, you could be respected, but no good for this, for this cause. That is the essential base of being gypsy, for example Uncle Emilio and the other elderly.
40. UE: It's that we can never give reason to anybody. Because if this man comes here and has all the reason in the world, if I agree with him, well, that puts him on top. Then, what happens? One can't arrange anything. One shouldn't agree with anyone. in a racket, in a ?? *deslengue*, in whatever movement, without avoiding obligation.
41. Rai: Anyway, Uncle Emilio will, one way or another, let him know he is right. Just not openly, but in some way.
42. UE: "He who has an ass is afraid." This is to say that those relatives, despite being right, what do you think? Well they also want to solve it; they want to get rid of the compromise. Winning war is losing. Even when you win, you're going to lose, because it is going to be a disgrace, a disaster.
43. UE: What it's always all about in the gypsy community is sharing. And understanding. Gipsy law has two things. One, look for points to avoid; and two, enforce the law, and that's it. Right or not right, when you commit a felony, you pay, as real as two plus two is four. Same as it makes justice, it condemns.
44. Rai: And we enforce the law, from the youngest to the oldest. Despite the saying that the law is done, cheating is done, amongst us we don't cheat.

This long transcript makes evident the use of two social languages. The first is used by Uncle Emilio and corresponds to the gypsy community. It is built from pieces of previous dialogues (either involving Uncle Emilio or other *uncles*)—dialogues that took place in an earlier time. Drawing from these dialogues, Uncle Emilio talks with the multiple voices of the gypsy community, which has its own system of arguing and legitimization. The second is used by Raimundo, who, instead of remaining with in the genre of choral discourse, as in the previous example, adopts another genre (which covers two functions one didactic and the other legitimator) and

addresses the *payan* audience. Using this genre she tries to *explain*, to make understood, in the double sense of clarify and justify, maintaining a dialogue with *payan* voices that are not explicit but are easily recognizable. The apparent monologues of Raimundo that are sprinkled in Uncle Emilio's discourse actually denote a *hidden dialogue* between voices of two cultural universes.

We can identify another kind of *hidden dialogue* that consists of a series of statements that collect the voices of the community as a response to *payan* voices, becoming part of a process of constructing a differentiated identity. This has nothing to do with qualifications, justifications, or the mere use of a different social language. Gypsy identity is here forged *in front of* the *payan* identity. That is, a gypsy subject is constructed by differentiating it from a *payan* identity, either by giving oneself specific qualities that are denied or questioned in *payan* communities, or by identifying in the *payas'* behavior ways of being that are denied by the gypsy community.

The following examples illustrate this game of voices. The first vindicates what various conversations have argued is the main feature of gypsies' *identity*: the role of the family. References to *payan* individualism are explicit here:

45. UE: Look, when a *payo* gets married, he leaves his home forever; he goes and gets his own place, I see that very well, he has his own house, his job and has to struggle to survive. But it's just that the gypsy people—whether we have or not—we are always together. The one here and the one there . . . they all come. To raise a family, to build a roof is something big. Because every time I walk into my daughter's house—and she has 8 sons, and 12 or 14 grandchildren—and we start to eat there, do you know what we eat? Ha, ha . . . She takes out two kilograms of kidney beans, beans, two kilograms of rice and we all eat there. Among us that is pride. . . . And we see each other every day, at all hours, and when one of the kids who is married and has children isn't there, someone asks "So where is so-and-so? . . . We gypsy people are very sentimental, very benevolent, and very close. That is why we are different to the *payos*."
46. Rai: It's the same when—for this or for that—the mother or father disappears or the marriage is dissolved, and the kids are abandoned. Instead of going to live in one of these shelters, or homes, well the family keeps them. . . . Or for example, in the house we find out that someone isn't doing so well, for whatever circumstances, we are affected by their problem. . . . Well then all the family gets together, we get money, give it to them, they take it and get a job, Go and find a life! Other groups don't do this. They say: it's your problem; solve it! We gypsies don't tolerate that. We can't stand that one of ours lacks.

The affirmation of emphasis placed on the family by gypsies implicitly supposes a discourse about the *payan* family, which in this case is made explicit in the last sentence. A narrative on what it is to be a gypsy is built around family links, which includes the denial of certain traits or qualities that are present in *others*. Thus, the narrative adopts the form of a dialogue with these *others*, whose arguments are anticipated and used to build the gypsy narrative.

The voice of *payan* rationality lends, then, the *counterword*, which enables a dialogue about gypsy identity to be established. The voices of the community are expressed throughout a dialogue with the voices of the *payan* world, allowing the differentiation of the group. Gypsy identity, despite being presented as the product of *tradition*, is actually the product of an *autopietic dialogue*, built precisely in this game of differentiation.



## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of this text allows us to *understand culture as a dialogue* in which alterity (otherness) plays a fundamental part in defining identity. In the concrete case of the culture of this gypsy community, we see how what at first is intercultural dialogue is appropriated as intracultural narrative in which the traditional voices are integrated and others emerge in the controversy.

In the beginning of the dialogue the voices of the members of the gypsy community are related, in one way or another, to one particular voice: the oral *text* that narrates the canonicity of the *gypsy tradition*. Whether it is looking for shelter, looking for legitimization, or looking to point out a critical distance in the name of modernity, the traditional gypsy narrative is present as an unavoidable reference when an individual attempts to describe his or another's behavior.

This discourse sustains a symbolic construction of reality, which is shared by the community of speakers. By means of the *choral discourse*, the speakers reconstruct a set of articulate meanings that support the legitimate forms of life in their community. Statements about family, gypsy law, or mourning intertwine in the conversation with such fluidity, denoting the omnipresence of the voices of a shared gypsy cultural narrative.

This narrative organizes a universe and provides this universe with its own rationality, that is, an articulate and coherent system of meanings that allow the issuing of judgments and the evaluations of actions according to the general laws shared by members of the community. The narrative includes presuppositions, definitions of what is canonic, justifications, assessments, and ideal models (more or less implicit of men and women) that constitute the goals of development.

This supports the "ethnotheories" of development and education that guide practices of child rearing, as well as scripts that describe how to handle relations with the educational institutions of the dominant group. Thus, this shared narrative explains some of the educational guidelines for this group: scant individualization, identity construction linked to family membership, strong gender role differentiation, collective responsibility, assimilation of knowledge into experience, and so on.

But the analysis of the text shows us a more complex and contradictory narrative, one that is necessarily the product of a hybridization—meaning therefore that *payan voices* are present within it. The conversations we analyzed help us to see that gypsy culture is a dialogue made up of multiple voices, not a pure, *traditional*, homeostatic way of being in the world. In this sense, it is a mixed culture (something we could probably say of most cultures) [3].

In spontaneous conversations with other members of the community that are not described in this article, especially those between women and children, this mixture is much more evident, as more hybrid values and conceptions clearly emerge. But we need to underline that in this article we present an analysis of interviews designed to introduce the *gypsy culture*, that is, what is canonic according to our speakers (whose legitimization is recognized by members of their community). And it is within this *text* that we have encountered traces of the *payan voices* and the mixing of dialogues, despite that fact that one might expect to find the orthodoxy of the traditional here (especially in the voice of the highest guardian of orthodoxy participates, the most respected elder or "uncle"). The dialogues we recorded were not simply *intercultural*, *rather they were* appropriated now for the community as *intracultural* dialogues.

Presenting gypsy culture as simultaneously traditional and mixed may seem contradictory. *Mestizaje* involves dynamics of change, of negotiating identities, something that opposes the concept of *traditional*, generally associated with the idea of invariance. However, the presence

of hybrid voices in a cultural narrative is inevitable in a group that has been—as far back as their collective memory stretches—a minority. Gypsy tradition can be, at best, understood as constantly negotiating its relationship with the majority, and consequentially gypsy tradition is always subjected to the changes in this relationship.

These hybridizations illuminate the necessity for revision to the traditionalist conception of the gypsy community as a context of development. The *payan voices* introduce into the traditional gypsy narrative elements that point in contradictory directions. On the one hand, individuality emerges, giving consideration to the subject as a central position, having their own values aside from those they share with the community. And with this emerges the notion of a personal *future*, which is important in the acceptance and justification of schooling for gypsy children. But also, in the opposite direction, resistance to the *paya* narrative shows up. *Gypsy voices* emerge in opposition to the implicit *payan voices*, reaffirming traditional values, such as membership of family and community in opposition to individualization. As we have seen, these argumentations not only are supported by tradition but take hold of the counterword, forging an identity that is in opposition with an understanding of *payo* as those values that are contrary to the gypsies'. Often masked by the tradition, they are actually *modern* gypsy voices—voices that try to provide solutions to the problems posed by modernity, voices that try to incorporate, necessarily, even if it is in the form of a counterword, the *payan* voices of an audience that is said to stand “outside” the community but is actually already incorporated into gypsy narrative.

Returning to our primary concern: To understand incidents in the schooling of gypsy children it is necessary to study the dynamic relations between the narratives of the gypsy community and those of the dominant institutions. We have tried here to show how gypsy communities are undergoing a process of cultural change with strong tensions and contradictions between traditional narratives and modern narratives, integration and segregation, and deculturalization and reinforcement of identities. Our next step is to analyze voices from institutions, such as schools, that also have attempted to narrate for us who the gypsies are. Whatever they may be, the result is not a dialogue between two diaphanous voices, along the lines of “tradition versus modernity,” but a polyphony of words and counterwords that orientate practices, oscillating between integration and segregation, acceptance and imposition, and agreement and conflict.

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