

A scholarly analysis of the Roma people in Eastern Europe; my personal note on Ukraine

This book is a scholarly analysis of the Roma people in the countries in which they are most heavily represented: Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia. It provides a history of the Roma, starting with their arrival in Europe around 900 years ago. It describes their reception by the host populations. At times they were welcome for their skills as metalworkers and their willingness to do work that others would not. Generally, and recently, they have been increasingly unwelcome.

The heart of the book is an r/K analysis of the type used by Philippe Rushton in his study of African, European and Asian populations. The thesis is that r-type reproduction involves having many children and making less in book investment in each of them. The Gypsies certainly fit that pattern. Per this study, The average gypsy woman bears four children, three of which reach adulthood. They do not get much of an education or even much parental care. However, as members of a tightly knit community they seem to get enough attention to become thoroughly socialized.

There are chapters on Roma health and intelligence. Their health is dismal, with an average life expectancy about 10 years less than that of the host societies. Average intelligence varies from country to country, study to study. The figures for the studies cited in this book range from the low 60s to the low 80s. This puts the Roma just about on a par with native Africans, below African Americans, American Indians and middle Easterners.

The Gypsies were the first dark-hued minority to arrive in Europe, and they have been the subject of the most attention. The United Nations, the Soviet Union and the European Union have each made extensive efforts to attempt to bring the Gypsies into the mainstream. They have attempted to get them to settle down, attend school, and hold regular jobs. All efforts have been conspicuous failures. The Gypsies are highly inclined to stick with each other rather than integrate into the mainstream society. They show no aptitude for school, and no interest even if they did.

The Gypsies have become a particular problem for Western European nations. Attracted to the generous welfare benefits offered by the likes of England and France, the Gypsies have moved westward as the European Union removed impediments to migration. They are a drag on governmental resources everywhere. Efforts such as that by the Dutch to get rid of them by giving them airline tickets home didn't work: they created a carousel, with the same faces coming back time and again.

The case of the Gypsies should be of interest to social policy makers dealing with any minorities. It is a matter of evolution. When nature, or in this case society, creates a niche, organisms will emerge to fill that niche. This particular niche is money without working, and the Gypsies are only one among many social groups which have proven adept at filling it.

A personal note: Gypsies have taken up residence in abandoned houses along the right-of-way for a new Metro line half a mile from my house. The houses are run down, unheated, and unkempt with trash and laundry in the yards. The Gypsies earn their living collecting plastic and old bottles and selling flowers in the city. They indeed have large families. So far as I can see they treat the kids fairly well.

Our neighborhood mothers move their kids elsewhere when the Gypsies show up on the beach. The mom-and-pop storekeepers don't trust them and treat them with a certain disrespect. Yet, in the three years we have lived at this address I have yet to hear of any theft. They express gratitude when we bring plastic and bottles to be recycled. We often sit next to them on in the back of the little bus that serves our neighborhood. They ask me politely about my son, and I ask about their kids. My conclusion is that although they are certainly a drain on Ukraine's underfunded healthcare system, our particular population of Gypsies generally do not display the less desirable traits usually

attributed to them. I wryly add that Ukrainians are a hard-nosed bunch; if they did they might find themselves looking for new quarters.

Here is the chapter outline:

Chapter 1. Introduction 1

Chapter 2. Overview of the Roma in Europe 11

Chapter 3. Country Reports: Central and Eastern Europe 29

Chapter 4. Country Reports: The Balkans 41

Chapter 5. Country Reports: The former Yugoslav Republics 63

Chapter 6. Demographic Comparison of Muslim and Orthodox Roma in Serbia 107

Chapter 7. Variables 131

Chapter 8. Roma Education and Intelligence 149

Chapter 9. Roma Health 165

Chapter 10. Nouveau-riche Roma 179

Chapter 11. Conclusion 185

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