

# AUTOSTEREOTYPIZATION OF ROMA IN CROATIA AS AN INDICATOR OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF MINORITY IDENTITY

## AUTOSTEREOTIPIZACIJA ROMA U HRVATSKOJ KAO POKAZATELJ RAZVOJA MANJINSKOG IDENTITETA

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### ABSTRACT

*The existence of different Roma groups in Croatia is the basis for the assumption that the Roma in Croatia do not have a unique view of their own community. At the same time, a different view of their own minority community may indicate a different level of development of their own minority identity. In order to confirm the hypothesis about the different perception of their own community and the diversity of development stages of their own minority identity, the paper analyses the results of the research of stereotypes of members of different Roma groups about themselves. A questionnaire on a sample of 202 members of the Roma national minority investigated differences in the self-perception of Bajash Roma in Međimurje County and members of the Roma national minority from Zagreb and Rijeka. Research results suggest that Bajash Roma have a much greater stereotypical view of Roma than other Roma surveyed. Although more numerous and concentrated in Međimurje County, Bajash Roma are more receptive to the imposed identity of otherness than other Roma included in the research.*

**Keywords:** Roma people, Bajash, Međimurje, Identity, Stereotypes, Autostereotypization

**Ključne riječi:** Romi, Bajaši, Međimurje, identitet, stereotipi, autostereotipizacija

### INTRODUCTION

Ethnicity is an important factor in preserving local diversity, especially in light of contemporary globalist trends. By reducing and removing many traditional social differences, ethnicity remains a strong distinctive social component. The issue of ethnicity in terms of multiculturalism of space is in line with the postulates of postmodern theory and as such is one of the interests of cultural-geographical research (Šakaja, 1999). With changes in cultural geography, it is precisely local differences as a spatial category that become the object of research through the preference for details, differences, fragmentation and heterogeneity (Šakaja, 2008). Cosgrove, on the other hand, points out that geography is becoming a key point of reference in the disciplinary convergence of social sciences and humanities that »privilege questions of culture, meaning, and identity over »scientific« theories« borrowed from other scientific disciplines (Cosgrove, 2004, 57).

The connection between ethnicity and local differences in Međimurje County is represented through the presence of Roma as the only minority ethnic group in the area with significant number of members. The Roma national minority in this area, represented by a group of Bajash Roma, mostly lives in twelve spatially segregated Roma settlements (Šlezak, 2009). Social relations with the majority population are marked by numerous prejudices, stereotypes, social distance and mutual mistrust. Due to the very specific demographic characteristics of the Roma population (Šlezak, 2010, 2013, Šlezak and Belić, 2019), the census recorded the number of 5107 persons of Roma ethnicity (Census 2011) in 2020 increased to about 7300 members of the Roma national minority. With this number, Roma in the study area reached a share of approximately 6.7% of the total population. The growing share of Roma in the total population of Međimurje County makes them more visible, and mutual contacts with the majority population are becoming more frequent and intense.

The Roma are a social group that has been difficult to integrate into the majority society from the very beginning of the settlement of Europe until today in the areas where they are present. Since their arrival in the European space, they have had in the sociological sense the status of the Other and different. The recognizability and prominence of certain Roma characteristics influenced the construction of a strong ethnocultural border between Roma and the domicile population. Barany states that since their arrival in Europe, the Roma have been »politically, socially, culturally and economically marginalized by the dominant populations of the region. On the other hand, the Roma themselves have cultivated their marginal status by preserving their distinctive identity and resisting recurrent attempts at assimilation and integration by dominant groups in the area« (Barany, 1994, 323).

In Međimurje County, where Roma have been significantly present since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century after immigration from today's Romania, the situation is no different. The integration process in this northernmost Croatian county is burdened with many elements characteristic for other countries in the region.

The stereotypical view of the Roma community is certainly one of the most important aggravating factors in their integration into Međimurje and Croatian society. Stereotypes are defined as »rigid and simplistic generalizations that people have about the social behavior of other people or groups, usually built on negative and sometimes positive prejudices« (Heršak, 1998, 261), or biased thinking, rigid and difficult to change perceptions of individuals and groups in society (Babić, 2004).

Šlezak and Šiljeg (2020) indicated a high level of generalization and stereotyping of Roma in the study area. At the same time, on the example of the Roma national minority, they partially refuted Allport's contact hypothesis of reducing non-acceptance by spatial proximity to the minority community (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2005; Colman, 2006, 167). Similar conclusions about the non-existence of a reduction in the non-acceptance of Roma by their spatial rapprochement were reached by Šlezak and Šakaja (2012) investigating the expression of social distance towards Roma in Međimurje County. High social distance and strong stereotypes towards Roma are uniform throughout the Međimurje County and do not depend on the possibility of more frequent social contact conditioned by spatial proximity.

For a better understanding of the social relations between the majority population and the Roma national minority, it is important to explore the self-perception of the minority community in the researched area of Međimurje County. The Roma's view of their own community in this particular case can serve as a corrective to the interpretation of the attitude of the majority population towards the Roma national minority.

Škiljan and Babić (2014) with their work point to the perception of Međimurje Roma about the reduction of prejudices about themselves in situations of their spatial integration. As Škiljan and Babić base their conclusions on a small number of respondents with whom a research interview was conducted, the question arises of the need to research the self-perception of the Roma community on a larger sample of respondents.

Part of the problem of Roma integration certainly stems from their very identity. »Since ethnic identity is associated with a culturally specific set of value standards« (Barth, 1969, 25), the Roma value system is a major obstacle to Roma integration and acceptance by the majority population. The set of

value norms of the Roma population that are culturally determined according to Barth differs significantly in many parts from the value system of the majority population.

The term ethnic identity means »belonging or awareness of the belonging of an individual (group of individuals) to ethnicity, ie the self-awareness of a group about its particular ethnicity; this is also interpreted as (the most general) personal feeling of a person, ie the orientation of an individual towards his ethnicity« (Heršak, 1998, 80).

Csepele and Simon (2007) point out in their work that there are two theoretically possible ways of building a Roma identity. One is an imposed identity from outside while the other is an adopted identity through identity development within one's own community. The view of the majority population on the Roma is quite homogeneous. The majority of the population perceives the Roma community as unique, not recognizing or acknowledging the differences that exist within the Roma community itself. Štambuk states that Roma »are perceived and treated from the outside as an extremely recognizable ethnic and cultural entity, while, on the other hand, their image of themselves is very loose or at least insufficiently identifiable for all members« (Štambuk, 2000, 201). In this sense, the accepted imposed identity does not identify Roma according to ethnic characteristics, but primarily identifies Roma in a social sense, according to their marginal social position.

On the other hand, a rather heterogeneous self-perception of members of the Roma community through a process of self-identification based on mutual cultural differences is to be expected. The number of Roma groups with different linguistic and cultural-historical characteristics is the basis for the assumption of different views of Roma on themselves and the Roma community as a whole. Throughout a series of migratory currents and waves, the Roma ethnic corps is very fragmented in time and space. In the collective consciousness of the Roma, the area of northwestern India as the source area of Roma migration is almost non-existent. The stated temporal and spatial separation of the Roma ethnic corps conditioned a completely different awareness of the common Roma history. The presence of mutually different Roma groups is a consequence of the long temporal and spatial separation during which cultural characteristics developed independently. All three basic features of collective identity, namely the awareness of common space, awareness of common history and awareness of common culture among Roma are not well defined. These differences even result in mutual non-recognition of belonging to the Roma ethnic corps. In this sense, Babić states that the »problem of diversified identity is pronounced among the Roma, which is a consequence of mutual non-recognition, as well as conflicts of tribal character within that ethnic group« (Babić, 2004, 319).

The diversification of the Roma ethnic corps in Croatia is a stimulus to research the self-perception of members of certain Roma groups in Croatia.

In Croatia, there are significant cultural and linguistic differences between Roma Bajaš who speak Bajash Romanian, ie the Bajash dialect of Old Romanian (Olujčić and Radosavljević, 2007) and other Roma in Croatia who speak one of the versions of the »real« Romani language, the *Romani chib*. These differences, which indicate the impossibility of mutual understanding except in the language of the majority, in this case the Croatian language, suggest a difference in self-perception and ethnocultural self-identification.

The aim of this paper is to reveal the level of (auto) stereotypical view of Roma by members of the Roma national minority. At the same time, the paper tries to check whether there are spatial differences in the stereotyping of members of the Roma national minority between Bajaš Roma in Međimurje County and members of other Roma groups in other parts of Croatia where they are present in significant numbers. Međimurje County is a specific area when it comes to the Roma national minority. The peculiarity of Međimurje is reflected in the number of Roma, their concentration, belonging to the Bajaš ethnic Roma group, way of life and level of integration into the majority society. In order to check the possible existence of differences between Roma groups represented in distant parts of Croatia, the survey of Roma self-perception was conducted not only on a sample of Roma from Međimurje County but also with Roma from Zagreb and Rijeka, cities of significant number and concentration of Roma. The paper tries to find out whether these peculiarities affect the different self-perception of one's own community between different Roma groups.

As, according to the model of minority identity development (Atkinson, Morten and Sue, 1989), the view of individuals on their own community is one of the indicators of the stage of development of their own identity in which a particular minority community is, the paper tries to partially discover identity between the Roma groups surveyed. The results of the research on the self-perception of members of different Roma groups can be used to identify the stage of development of one's own identity of an individual Roma group in Croatia.

## RESEARCH COURSE AND SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS

The subject research was conducted in two phases. In the initial phase, on a sample of 64 respondents, of which 32 members of the majority population and 32 members of the Roma national minority in Međimurje County, a large number of stereotypes were collected with an open-ended question about the characteristics of Roma. Respondents of the Roma national minority were stratified according to gender and level of education, and the majority of the population according to gender, age, level of education and place of residence with regard to spatial proximity, ie distance from the nearest Roma settlement.

In this initial phase of the research, 95 different characteristics of Roma mentioned by the Roma respondents and 91 different characteristics mentioned by the respondents of the majority population were collected. After the phase of linguistic alignment, it was noticed that as many as nine common features appear among the fourteen most frequent in both groups of respondents. Another observed fact is that among the 20 most frequent traits in both groups of respondents, only a few of them have a positive connotation. In the majority population, only three traits were characterized as positive, and in Roma respondents only four.

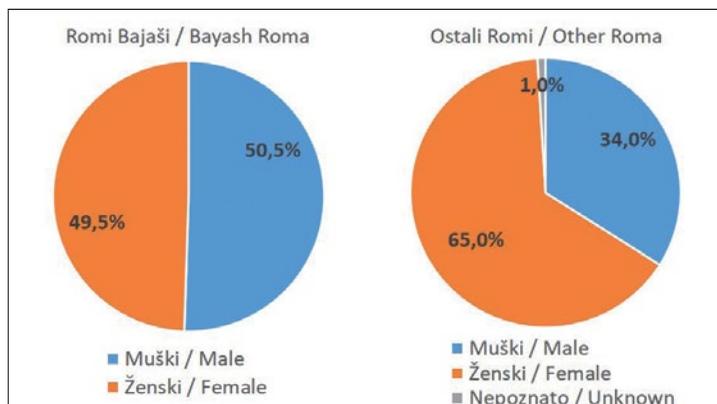
After the second phase of linguistic alignment, fourteen the most frequent features were singled out and incorporated into the survey questionnaire in the main part of the research. At this stage, two characteristics of significant frequencies were omitted, »good« and »bad« due to their vagueness and too broad meaning, the inclusion of which in the main part of the research could reduce the objectivity of the interpretation of the results.

The main part of the research contained fourteen offered characteristics of Roma. Using five levels of the Likert scale: »I disagree at all«, »mostly I disagree«, »neither agree nor disagree«, »mostly I agree« or »I totally agree«, respondents expressed a level of agreement with the offered characteristics of the Roma. These five degrees were chosen so that in addition to one neutral, there are two negative and two affirmative degrees of different intensity. The arithmetic means of the response are the result of the calculation of the average response of the respondents based on the association of values 1 to 5 to each of the offered degrees of the Likert scale.

The main part of the research included members of the majority population, the Roma national minority in Međimurje County and members of the Roma national minority from the area of Rijeka and Zagreb. A total of 202 members of the Roma national minority over the age of 15 were interviewed. The sample of Roma in Međimurje County was stratified according to gender, age, level of education and place of residence. The data used to determine the sample were the 2011 census and the extensive demographic survey of Šlezak (2010) in the Roma settlement of Kuršanec. As on that occasion the survey covered the entire population, and bearing in mind that the population of Kuršanec makes up about 20% of all Roma inhabitants of Međimurje County, the data of this survey are assumed for the entire Roma population of the county.

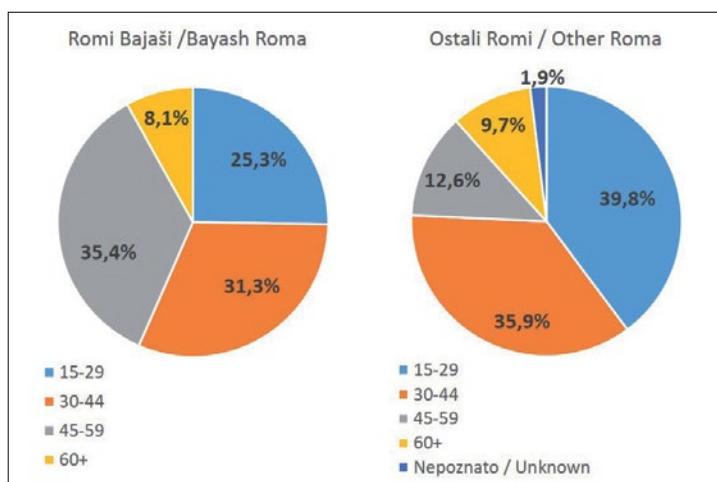
Given that there are no data that would indicate the characteristics of the socio-demographic structure of the total Roma population in Croatia, the survey included Roma belonging to other groups do not represent a stratified sample of their population. A random sample of this group of respondents consisted of 103 people older than 15 years.

The sample consisted of 50 men (50.51%) and 49 women (49.49%) from the area of Međimurje County and 35 men (34%) and 67 women (65%) from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka (Fig. 1). No gender was determined for one respondent from Rijeka.



**Fig. 1.** Gender structure of Bajash Roma respondents in Međimurje County and members of other Roma groups from Zagreb and Rijeka

Source: field research



**Fig. 2.** Age structure of Bajash Roma respondents in Međimurje County and members of other Roma groups from Zagreb and Rijeka

Source: field research

The average age of respondents from the area of Međimurje County is 39.8, with a standard deviation of 14.3. The minimum value is 1939, while the maximum value is 1999. Thus, the age difference between the youngest and oldest respondents is 60 years. About a quarter of the respondents, 25 of them, were in the age group of 15-29 years. 31 respondents (31.31%) were aged 30-44 years. The largest number of respondents was aged 45-59, 35 of them (35.35%). The smallest number of respondents, 8 of them (8.08%) would be in the oldest age group of 60 years and older.

If the data for the year of birth of the respondents from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka are analyzed, it can be noticed that the average age of the respondents is 35.7, with a standard deviation of 14.3. The oldest respondent was born in 1945, while the youngest respondent was born in 2000. The age difference between the oldest and youngest respondents is 55 years. As there are no available data on the age structure of the Roma population in Croatia, the age structure of Roma respondents from other ethnic groups does not represent a stratified sample. In the included sample, 39.80% of respondents were aged 15-29 years. These 41 respondents are the most represented age group of the surveyed respondents. The age group of 30-44 years is the second most represented with 37 respondents (35.92%). In the next large 15-year age group of 45-59 years, there were 13 respondents (12.62%). The least number of respondents was in the oldest age group, 60 and older, 10 of them (9.70%). No age was determined for two subjects.

The analysis of the place of birth of the Međimurje's Bajash Roma respondents reveals that 89 of them were born in Međimurje County, while ten of them were born outside Međimurje County (Table 1). Seven of them were born in Varaždin County (Varaždin, Ludbreg), two in Bjelovar-Bilogora County (Bjelovar) and one in Koprivnica-Križevci County (Koprivnica).

**Table 1.** Places of birth of Bajash Roma respondents

Mjesto rođenja Place of birth	Broj ispitanika Number of respondents	%
Bjelovar, RH	2	2,02
Čakovec, RH	74	74,75
Donja Dubrava, RH	1	1,01
Koprivnica, RH	1	1,01
Varaždin, RH	6	6,06
Ludbreg, RH	1	1,01
Orehovica, RH	3	3,03
Parag, RH	6	6,06
Piškorovec, RH	2	2,02
Podturen, RH	1	1,01
Sitnice, RH	1	1,01
Trnovec, RH	1	1,01
Ukupno / Total	99	100,00

Source: field research

**Table 2.** Respondents Bajash Roma according to place of residence

Mjesto prebivališta Place of residence	Broj ispitanika Number of respondents	%
Kuršanec	20	20,20
Parag	22	22,22
Pribislavec	12	12,12
Orehovica	10	10,10
Piškorovec	13	13,13
Podturen	4	4,04
Kotoriba	6	6,06
Gornji Kuršanec	2	2,02
Goričan	1	1,01
Domašinec	2	2,02
Sitnice	6	6,06
Donji Vidovec	1	1,01
Ukupno	99	100,00

Source: field research

As already mentioned, the sample of Bajash Roma respondents was also stratified according to their place of residence. The number of respondents from an individual settlement was determined in accordance with the representation of the inhabitants of a certain Roma settlement in the total Roma population of Međimurje County. In this way, respondents from 12 settlements with the largest number of Roma were included (Table 2). Most respondents are, as expected, from the largest Roma settlements in Međimurje: Parag (22), Kuršanec (20), Piškorovec (13), Pribislavec (12) and Orehovica (10).

The largest number of respondents belonging to other Roma groups was born in Rijeka, 33 (32.0%) and Zagreb, 32 (31.1%). In third place are respondents born in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 10 of them, half of whom (5) in Banja Luka. 6 respondents (5.83%) come from Kosovo, five of them from Serbia (4.9%), three from Italy (2.91%). Two more respondents are from abroad, from Slovenia, and one each from Macedonia and Slovakia. Overall, out of a random sample of 103 respondents, as many as 28 were born abroad (27.18%). Thus, more than a quarter of respondents belonging to other Roma groups were born outside the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Only 10 respondents come from other places in the Republic of Croatia except Zagreb and Rijeka (9.71%).

According to the place of residence, the number of respondents from Zagreb and its surroundings and Rijeka and its surroundings, more specifically the city of Crikvenica, is equal (Fig. 3). 50 respondents were included in the research from the area of Zagreb and 50 from the wider area of Rijeka. No place of residence was determined for three respondents.

According to religion, 98 respondents from the area of Međimurje County declared themselves Catholics, and one respondent a member of the Baptist church. The majority of respondents from the area of Rijeka and Zagreb declared themselves Muslims, 45 of them (43.7%). About a quarter of respondents consider themselves Catholics (24.3%). The sample of Roma who do not belong to the Bajash ethnic group included 10 Orthodox (9.7%). Six respondents (5.8%) are considered atheists, while 17 respondents (16.5%) did not declare their religion.

If we analyze the data for the survey question of the highest completed school of respondents, ie their educational structure, we notice significant differences between the observed examination groups. In the group of Međimurje's Bajash Roma, 21.21% of respondents state that they have never gone to school, 54.55% have not finished primary school, 17.17% have primary school, while 7.07% have secondary school (Fig. 5). There were no persons with a university education in the sample due to the fact

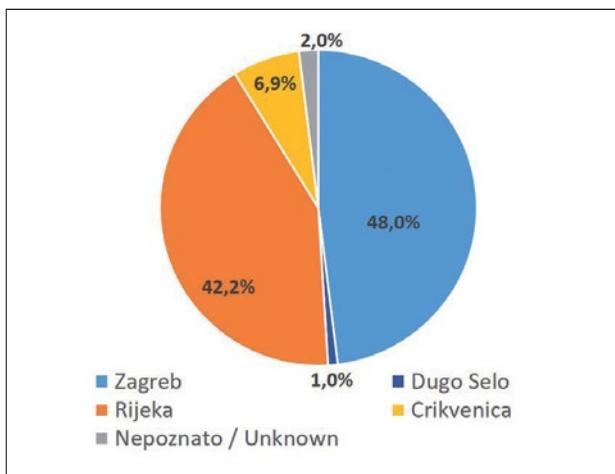
**Table 3.** Places of birth of respondents from other Roma groups

Mjesto rođenja Place of birth	Broj ispitanika Number of respondents	%
Banovići, BiH	1	1,0
Banja Luka, BiH	5	4,9
Rahić, BiH	1	1,0
Zavidovići, BiH	1	1,0
Bratislava, Slovačka	1	1,0
Crikvenica	1	1,0
Čakovec	2	1,9
Firenca, Italija	1	1,0
Italija	1	1,0
Modena, Italija	1	1,0
Karlovac	1	1,0
Koprivnica	1	1,0
Kosovo	2	1,9
Kosovska Mitrovica, Kosovo	1	1,0
Ljubljana, Slovenija	2	1,9
Mostar, BiH	2	1,9
Mursko Središće	1	1,0
Novi Sad, Srbija	4	3,9
Ozalj	1	1,0
Priština, Kosovo	1	1,0
Rijeka	33	32,0
Sisak	1	1,0
Slavonski Brod	1	1,0
Strumica, Makedonija	1	1,0
Titova Mitrovica, Kosovo	2	1,9
Varaždin	1	1,0
Zagreb	32	31,1
Zemun, Srbija	1	1,0
Ukupno / Total	103	100,0

Source: field research

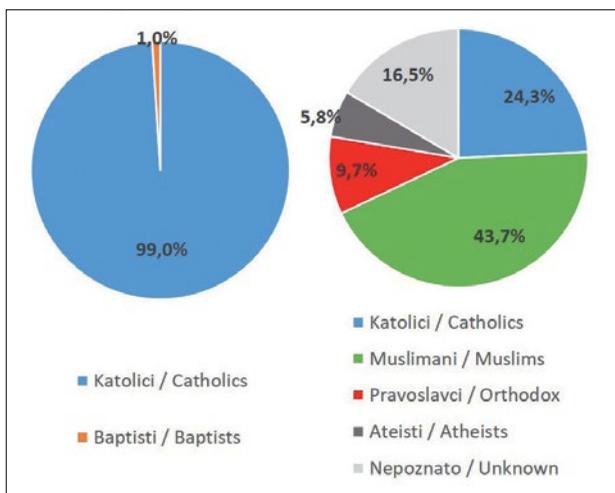
**Fig. 5.** Educational structure of Bajash Roma respondents in Međimurje County

Source: field research



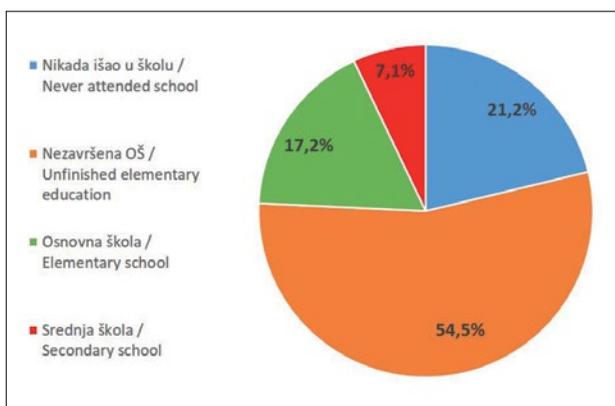
**Fig. 3.** Places of residence of Roma respondents of other ethnic groups

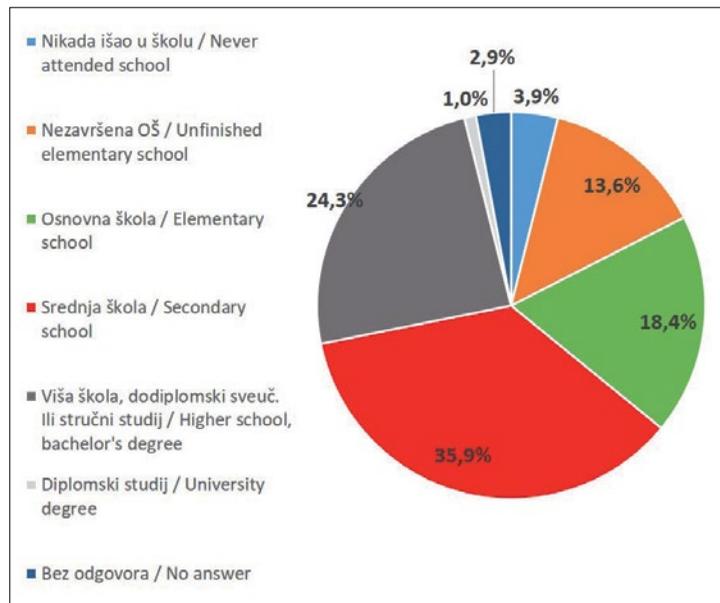
Source: field research



**Fig. 4.** Religious structure of Bajash Roma respondents in Međimurje County and members of other Roma groups from Zagreb and Rijeka

Source: field research





**Fig. 6.** Educational structure of respondents of other Roma from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka

Source: field research

that at the time of the research in the entire Međimurje County there were only two persons of Roma nationality with a university education.

According to the level of education of a part of the respondents from other Roma groups from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka, the most included are respondents with completed high school. 37 respondents (35.9%) completed secondary education as the highest level of education. In second place are people with a higher school diploma, bachelor's degree or professional study. 25 respondents (24.3%) had the stated level of education. 19 respondents (18.4%) stated that their highest level of education was completed primary school. Fourteen respondents (13.6%) are in the category with incomplete primary school. Four respondents (3.9%) never attended school. Interestingly, only one respondent was found in the sample in the category with a college, art academy, or university degree. The level of education was not determined for three respondents.

## ROMA STEREOTYPES ABOUT ROMA

Roma self-perception was investigated with a questionnaire in which respondents were offered a series of fourteen stereotypes for which they expressed the degree of agreement with the help of the Likert scale.

In the case of Bajash Roma, two character traits have an arithmetic mean of responses above 4.00: »Roma are happy« (4.56) with the lowest standard deviation of 0.59 and »Roma are resourceful« (4.21). All other character traits record an arithmetic mean between 3.09 and 3.68. The standard deviations of these responses range from 0.81 for »Roma are liars« to 1.29 for »Roma are violent« (Table 4). In the twelve proposed characteristics, the Roma respondents in the largest percentage chose the neutral answer »Neither agree nor disagree«, while for the two characteristics in the largest percentage they chose the answer »I completely agree«.

**Table 4.** Analysis of the response of Bajash Roma to the offered character traits of Roma

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su nekulturni Roma are uncultured	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	10	10,1	3,24	1,07
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	3	3,0		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	53	53,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	19	19,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	14	14,1		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su alkoholičari Roma are alcoholics	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	1	1,0	3,57	0,94
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	5	5,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	53	53,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	17	17,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	23	23,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su nasilni Roma are violent	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	10	10,1	3,10	1,29
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	25	25,3		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	29	29,3		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	13	13,1		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	21	21,2		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su neuredni Roma are messy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	6	6,1	3,26	1,02
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	7	7,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	57	57,6		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	13	13,1		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	16	16,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su drogeraši Roma are drug users	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	5	5,1	3,41	1,12
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	11	11,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	44	44,4		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	16	16,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	23	23,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su lijeni Roma are lazy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	6	6,1	3,30	1,08
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	11	11,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	47	47,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	17	17,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	18	18,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su lopovi Roma are thieves	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	2	2,0	3,49	1,04
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	10	10,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	48	48,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	14	14,1		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	24	24,2		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su bezobrazni Roma are arrogant	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	7	7,1	3,19	1,23
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	24	24,2		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	32	32,3		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	15	15,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	21	21,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su neodgovorni Roma are irresponsible	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	1	1,0	3,41	1,00
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	14	14,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	47	47,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	17	17,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	20	20,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su snalažljivi Roma are resourceful	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	3	3,0	4,21	1,00
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	3	3,0		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	14	14,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	29	29,3		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	50	50,5		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi ne održavaju higijenu Roma do not maintain hygiene	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	4	4,0	3,31	0,93
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	3	3,0		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	67	67,7		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	8	8,1		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	17	17,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi su veseli Roma are happy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	0	0,0	4,56	0,59
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	1	1,0		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	2	2,0		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	36	36,4		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	59	59,6		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su lažljivi Roma are lying	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	0	0,0	3,68	0,81
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	2	2,0		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	47	47,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	31	31,3		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	19	19,2		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		
Romi ne brinu o djeci Roma do not care about children	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	9	9,1	3,09	1,10
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	11	11,1		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	55	55,6		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	6	6,1		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	16	16,2		
	Bez odgovora / No response	2	2,0		
	Ukupno / Total	99	100,0		

Source: field research

Although Bajash Roma chose a neutral answer for most of the proposed traits, the number of respondents who generally agree or completely agree is higher than those who generally disagree or completely disagree with the proposed traits. Therefore, as can be observed, the average degree of agreement for all proposed traits is greater than the neutral 3.00. This points to the conclusion that Bajash Roma, although they chose a neutral answer in most of the traits, see themselves more as they are described in the proposed traits than they do not see themselves as such.

Members of other Roma groups from the Rijeka and Zagreb areas also gave answers on the degree of agreement with the offered character traits of Roma (Table 5). Similar to Bajash Roma, the highest values of the arithmetic mean of the answers are recorded by the characteristics »Roma are happy« (3.91), with SD 1.22 and »Roma are resourceful« (3.66) with SD 1.39. Although the same characteristics come to the fore, much lower values are noticeable compared to Bajash Roma responses. These are the only two characteristics with an arithmetic mean above 3.00.

In respondents from other Roma groups, much lower arithmetic means of response are noticeable. There are five characteristics with an arithmetic mean of the response below the value of 2.00, while seven are in the range of 2.07-2.36. Standard deviations are in the range of 0.97 -1.39.

Unlike the Bajash Roma, members of other Roma groups in the twelve listed characteristics of Roma mostly chose the answer »I disagree at all« in which the Bajash Roma mostly expressed a neutral position. The only two characteristics in which members of other Roma groups, as well as Bajash Roma, mostly chose the answer »I totally agree« are the characteristics »Roma are resourceful« and »Roma are happy«.

**Table 5.** Analysis of the response of Roma of other Roma groups to the offered character traits of Roma

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su nekulturni Roma are uncultured	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	42	40,8	2,15	1,15
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	18	17,5		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	30	29,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	9	8,7		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	3	2,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su alkoholičari Roma are alcoholics	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	52	50,5	1,83	0,97
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	19	18,4		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	28	27,2		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	2	1,9		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	1	1,0		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su nasilni Roma are violent	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	49	47,6	1,95	1,04
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	14	13,6		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	34	33,0		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	2	1,9		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	2	1,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	2	1,9		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su neuredni Roma are messy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	49	47,6	2,09	1,19
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	10	9,7		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	31	30,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	9	8,7		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	3	2,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su drogeraši Roma are drug users	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	57	55,3	1,78	0,97
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	13	12,6		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	30	29,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	1	1,0		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	1	1,0		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su lijeni Roma are lazy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	51	49,5	1,99	1,19
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	15	14,6		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	25	24,3		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	5	4,9		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	5	4,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	2	1,9		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su lopovi Roma are thieves	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	49	47,6	1,91	1,04
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	20	19,4		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	29	28,2		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	1	1,0		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	3	2,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su bezobrazni Roma are arrogant	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	45	43,7	2,07	1,14
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	17	16,5		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	30	29,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	5	4,9		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	4	3,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	2	1,9		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su neodgovorni Roma are irresponsible	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	39	37,9	2,27	1,25
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	15	14,6		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	31	30,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	7	6,8		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	7	6,8		
	Bez odgovora / No response	4	3,9		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		
Romi su snalažljivi Roma are resourceful	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	14	13,6	3,66	1,39
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	6	5,8		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	16	15,5		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	28	27,2		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	36	35,0		
	Bez odgovora / No response	3	2,9		
	Ukupno / Total	103	100,0		

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Stupanj slaganja s tvrdnjom Degree of agreement	Broj ispitanika Number of resp.	%	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi ne održavaju higijenu Roma do not maintain hygiene	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	41	39,8	2,36	1,30
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	8	7,8		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	36	35,0		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	9	8,7		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	8	7,8		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
Ukupno / Total		103	100,0		
Romi su veseli Roma are happy	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	8	7,8	3,91	1,22
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	3	2,9		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	23	22,3		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	24	23,3		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	44	42,7		
	Bez odgovora / No response	1	1,0		
Ukupno / Total		103	100,0		
Romi su lažljivi Roma are lying	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	39	37,9	2,18	1,14
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	16	15,5		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	32	31,1		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	8	7,8		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	3	2,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	5	4,9		
Ukupno / Total		103	100,0		
Romi ne brinu o djeci Roma do not care about children	Uopće se ne slažem / I disagree at all	40	38,8	2,14	1,17
	Uglavnom se ne slažem / Mostly I disagree	19	18,4		
	Niti se slažem niti se ne slažem / Neither agree nor disagree	26	25,2		
	Uglavnom se slažem / Mostly I agree	8	7,8		
	U potpunosti se slažem / I totally agree	4	3,9		
	Bez odgovora / No response	6	5,8		
Ukupno / Total		103	100,0		

Source: field research

Comparing the answers of all three test groups, interesting facts can be noticed. In 11 of the offered fourteen characteristics, the highest value of the arithmetic mean of the respondents' answers is in the majority population, slightly lower among Bajash Roma, and the lowest among members of other Roma groups. The stated distribution of response values is not present only in the characteristics »Roma are drug addicts« where the arithmetic mean of the response is higher among Roma Bajaš than in the majority population. It is also in the characteristic »Roma are resourceful« where the value of arithmetic mean response of Roma Bajaš is higher than in the majority population, and the characteristic »Roma are happy« where the lowest value is among the majority population, slightly higher among other Roma, and the highest among Roma Bajaš.

From the above analysis, it can be seen that the majority of the population mostly has a stereotypical view of members of the Roma community. The total average arithmetic mean of all majority population responses is 3.99. Bajash Roma recorded only 0.5 lower overall arithmetic mean of all answers on Roma characteristics. Members of other Roma groups record the arithmetic mean of all answers in the value of 2.31.

The presented data suggest the presence of a significant stereotypical view of the Roma community by the majority population (See more in Šlezak & Šiljeg, 2020). In 13 of the 14 features offered, the majority of the population agrees more with the above statements than disagrees with them.

**Table 6.** Comparison of responses to the offered character traits of Roma

Karakteristike Roma Roma characteristics	Većinsko stanovništvo Majority population		Romi Bajaši Bayash Roma		Romi ne Bajaši Other Roma	
	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation	Aritmetička sredina Arithmetic mean	Standardna devijacija Standard deviation
Romi su nekulturni Roma are uncultured	4,18	0,97	3,24	1,07	2,15	1,15
Romi su alkoholičari Roma are alcoholics	3,62	1,04	3,57	0,94	1,83	0,97
Romi su nasilni Roma are violent	4,07	0,92	3,10	1,29	1,95	1,04
Romi su neuredni Roma are messy	4,26	0,87	3,26	1,02	2,09	1,19
Romi su drogeraši Roma are drug users	2,89	1,18	3,41	1,12	1,78	0,97
Romi su lijeni Roma are lazy	4,18	0,97	3,30	1,08	1,99	1,19
Romi su lopovi Roma are thieves	4,07	0,94	3,49	1,04	1,91	1,04
Romi su bezobrazni Roma are arrogant	4,27	0,94	3,19	1,23	2,07	1,14
Romi su neodgovorni Roma are irresponsible	4,31	0,92	3,41	1,00	2,27	1,25
Romi su snalažljivi Roma are resourceful	3,98	1,13	4,21	1,00	3,66	1,39
Romi ne održavaju higijenu R. do not maintain hygiene	4,24	0,90	3,31	0,93	2,36	1,30
Romi su veseli Roma are happy	3,56	1,09	4,56	0,59	3,91	1,22
Romi su lažljivi Roma are lying	4,13	0,91	3,68	0,81	2,18	1,14
Romi ne brinu o djeci R. do not care about children	4,05	0,95	3,09	1,10	2,14	1,17
PROSJEK AVERAGE	3,99		3,49		2,31	

**Source:** field research

Despite the fact that in the twelve offered characteristics the Bajash Roma mostly chose a neutral answer, it is interesting to note that the Bajash Roma in all 14 characteristics agree to a greater extent than they do not agree. For all offered characteristics, the average value of the answer is above 3, which

indicates that the Roma themselves from Međimurje agree more with all the characteristics than they do not. Accordingly, on the one hand, a conclusion can be drawn about a kind of autostereotyping of the Roma community in Međimurje. The views of the majority population and the Roma community in Međimurje on the Roma themselves are much closer than those of other Roma groups. In many characteristics, mostly of negative connotation, Međimurje Roma to some extent confirm such a view of themselves.

Members of the Roma community from Zagreb and Rijeka have an average value of less than 3 in all stereotypes of negative connotation. This suggests that members of other Roma groups see themselves much less stereotypically than Bajash Roma or the majority population.

While Roma from Međimurje confirm stereotypical views of themselves in these characteristics as well as the majority population of Međimurje, surveyed members of other Roma groups from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka have a different view of the Roma community. In only two offered characteristics, both positive connotations, in their answers they agree more than they do not agree with the stated statements. In all twelve offered characteristics that have a negative connotation, the answers are more focused on disagreement than agreement with the offered statements. The possibility that different Roma communities cultivate completely different value systems, behave differently, behave in the community and see the Roma community differently, looking at it from their own perspective, certainly represents a thesis that also deserves further research.

### IMPOSED OR BUILT IDENTITY?

The results of the research undoubtedly indicate that different Roma communities in Croatia have a different view of themselves. The existing linguistic, cultural, historical and geographical differences between individual Roma communities in Croatia have influenced the fact that Roma have a different view of themselves. The assumed heterogeneity of self-perception of different Roma groups was confirmed by this research.

Bajash Roma from the area of Međimurje County have quite strong pronounced autostereotypes. Consistent with the model of minority identity development (Atkinson, Morten, & Sue, 1998), such a stereotypical view of oneself is consistent with the first, initial stage of minority identity development. It refers to a Conformity stage with self-depreciating attitude towards self. In conformity stage one identifies with dominant culture, learns and assuming stereotypes and has no inkling to identify or learn about their own ethnic heritage (Atkinson, Morten & Sue, 1998). On a similar example of the racial minority model of identity development Arumugham states: »At this stage, the life styles, value systems, and cultural or physical characteristics of the White society are valued highly by the racial minorities; constantly bombarded by views that Whites and their way of life is superior and all other lifestyles are inferior; they also develop self-depreciating attitudes and beliefs and thus tend to have low internal self-esteem »(Arumugham, 2017, 24). »Individuals in the conformity stage of identity development express an unequivocal preference for cultural values and behaviors associated with the dominant group over those associated with their own minority group« (Morten & Atkinson, 1983).

The stated initial stage of development of minority identity also presupposes group-depreciating attitude towards others of the same minority, discriminatory attitude towards others of different minority and group-appreciating attitude towards dominant group. Taking into account the results of research on social distance from the work of Šlezak and Šakaja (2012) in which they state the non-existence of social distance of Bajash Roma towards Croats with high social distance of Bajash Roma towards other minority communities and other Roma groups, we can present the results of self-perception to say that the Međimurje's Bajash Roma meet all the above criteria of the initial stage of development of their own minority identity. In terms of precision, it should be noted that the initial stage also includes minority communities that have in no way even begun the process of building their own minority identity. This could also apply to the Bajash Roma from Međimurje.

The presented results indicate that Roma build their opinion of themselves on the perception of the surrounding majority population with whom they share living space. According to Owens, autostereotyping can be an effective subversion strategy. On the example of the North American Indians, he points

out that in order to be recognized and seen from the center, »the Indian must obey an identity imposed from outside« (Owens, 1998: 13). In a similar way, the Međimurje Roma seek the possibility of their own visibility and recognition by the majority population. At the same time, the autostereotypical view of one's own community represents an acceptance of an externally imposed identity.

It is interesting that the Bajash Roma in Croatia, unlike most Roma communities from Central and Eastern Europe who speak Romanian, according to certain indicators still strive to create their own distinctive minority identity in relation to other Roma groups, but at the same time identify as a distinctive but also inseparable part of the overall Roma community (Marushiakova and Popov, 2016). The Bajash Roma accepted the imposed minority model of identity of otherness in which the majority population perceives the Roma as a single community based on cultural differences and social status. At the same time, within the Bajash community in Međimurje, but also elsewhere in Croatia, there are sporadic tendencies to build a separate distinctive minority identity under the wider umbrella of Roma identity. As proof of this, it is worth mentioning the organization of Roma individuals in non-governmental organizations, which already in their own name indicate the stated duality of identity. Eg. Bajash Roma Association Kutina, Bajash Roma Association of Sisak-Moslavina County, Bajash Roma Association, Association for the Protection of Bajash Roma Rights - trough.

The attempt of a small number of Bajash Roma in Međimurje County to accept the Romanian identity based on the language they speak should not be ignored. This attempt is supported by census data, where in certain local Roma communities a smaller part of the population declared themselves Romanians (2011 Census).

One of the possible explanations for the autostereotyping of Bajash Roma may be a significant tendency to assimilate into the majority society without the desire or need to build their own minority identity. Assimilation means »abandoning original customs and habits by adapting behavior to the values and norms of the majority« (Giddens, 2007, 256). During the process of assimilation of members of a certain minority community, there is a renunciation of one's own social and cultural elements, whereby the cultural patterns of the majority society are taken over. The basic problem of the assimilation process, whether voluntary or forced, is the abandonment of certain fundamental determinants of one's own identity and complete cultural absorption into the majority society. In this process, members of the minority community view the dominant group, in this case Croats, as a »reference group, ie a society to which the Roma community aspires to find a way out of discriminatory and segregated relations« (Šlezak and Šakaja, 2012, 101). At the same time, in this aspiration, they look at their own community as seen by the majority population.

The surveyed members of the Roma community from the area of Zagreb and Rijeka, based on the presented results, have a much less stereotypical view of themselves in relation to the Bajash Roma and the majority population. Non-acceptance, ie disagreement with the offered stereotypes may indicate a different phase of building one's own minority identity. Other Roma clearly do not accept the imposed identity based on the view of the majority population. The very socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents of other Roma, primarily their educational structure, suggest a much higher degree of integration into Croatian society. A less stereotypical view of oneself and members of one's own minority community is consistent with a higher degree of integration. Certain indicators are missing to identify the specific level of development of the minority identity of members of other Roma groups in Croatia. This shortcoming can certainly be a stimulus for further research that will provide answers to the question asked.

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**SAŽETAK**

Postojanje različitih romskih skupina u Hrvatskoj osnova je pretpostavke da Romi u Hrvatskoj nemaju jedinstven pogled na vlastitu zajednicu. Istovremeno, različit pogled na vlastitu manjinsku zajednicu može ukazivati na različit stupanj razvoja vlastitog manjinskog identiteta. S ciljem potvrde hipoteze o različitoj percepciji vlastite zajednice i različitosti razvojnih faza vlastitog manjinskog identiteta, u radu se analiziraju rezultati istraživanja iskazivanja stereotipa pripadnika različitih Romskih skupina o sebi samima. Anketnim upitnikom na uzorku od 202 pripadnika romske nacionalne manjine istražene su razlike u samopercepciji Roma Bajaša u Međimurskoj županiji i pripadnika romske nacionalne manjine s područja Zagreba i Rijeke. Rezultati istraživanja ukazuju da Romi Bajaši u znatno većoj mjeri imaju stereotipan pogled na Rome nego što to imaju ostali Romi obuhvaćeni istraživanjem. Iako brojniji i koncentriraniji u Međimurskoj županiji, Romi Bajaši u više prihvaćaju nametnuti identitet drugosti za razliku od ostalih Roma obuhvaćenih istraživanjem.