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The values of marginalized Roma in Slovakia

Streszczenie: W artykule zaprezentowano analizy uzyskanych wyników badań przeprowadzonych wśród marginalizowanych Romów słowackich przy użyciu systemu wartości ludzkich Shaloma H. Schwartza (1992). Rezultaty tych badań mogą być przydatne w wielu aspektach życia publicznego, w formułowaniu metodologii systemu szkolnego i w formułowaniu wytycznych dotyczących Romów, w opiece zdrowotnej i usługach medycznych, we wzmacnianiu prewencji problemów dla szczególnych terenów segregowanych. Rozpatrując różne typy społeczności romskich, wyniki badań w obrębie systemu wartości Romów i jego potencjalne zróżnicowanie mogą stanowić empirycznie weryfikowalne kryterium homogeniczności etnicznej i kulturowej badanej etniczności na Słowacji. Mogą one także przyczynić się do rozwiania stereotypów i uprzedzeń większości wobec ludności romskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: marginalizowani Romowie, system wartości, uprzedzenia, edukacja międzykulturowa, Słowacja

The Roma in Slovakia

According to professional demographic estimations and sociographic mapping, the number of Roma people living in the Slovak Republic is around 320 000¹. With this number, they represent the second most numerous ethnic minority in the country. The Roma people are at the same time the poorest and most socially excluded minority, mainly due to restricted access to education, healthcare, a disadvantaged position in terms of employment and a low level of housing. A significant part of this population includes all socially excluded sectors: 1. Economic exclusion as exclusion from living standards and abundant life opportunities in society, 2. Cultural exclusion in the form of the denial of

¹ *Atlas RK 2004*. [online]. 2010, [cit. 2010-11-03]. Online accessibility: <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/3553/atlas-romskych-komunit-2004.php>).

the right every individual or group should have, for example, to participate in a cultural society and to share cultural capital and education, 3. The symbolic exclusion connected with the stigmatization of individuals and groups, viewed by the majority population as different or even deviant and 4. Spatial exclusion, manifested in the concentration of individuals or already excluded social groups in the specific limited geographical space, usually some segregated settlements or town districts². According to demographic data, approximately 60% of the total amount of Roma people living in Slovakia live integrated with the majority population and the rest of the society, approximately 40% live in towns or municipalities, settlements located on the peripheries of municipalities and towns or in settlements, which are far away from them or separated by a natural or artificial barrier³. In these localities, the phenomena of double or multiple marginalisation can be persistently observed.

As Radičová⁴ states, this multiple marginalization concerns mostly Roma people living in marginalised regions and segregated marginalised settlements. In this case, the multiplied effect of disintegration and marginalisation appears as a long-term lack of material security and as life in poverty.

The basic element of the intensity of this poverty is the extent of Roma segregation and its concentration. The more segregated and wide the Roma community is in segregated settlement, the higher the extent of poverty. The extent of segregation represents an important element from the point of view of social stratification inside the Roma population itself. The status of segregated Roma people in marginalised regions is noticeably lower than the status of integrated Roma people and it also has the character of absolute poverty due to ethnicity. Thereafter, different forms of inequality can be observed which this section of the population has faced for a long time: income, status, consumption, lifestyle, labour market integration, education and attitude towards the education, privilege and power of social network inequality and the inequality of dividing political influence and legislative power⁵. In this context, the term “the poverty

² R. Džambazovič, M. Jurásková: *Sociálne vylúčenie Rómov na Slovensku*. In: M. Vašečka (ed.): *Čačipenpal o Roma: súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2002, Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

³ *Atlas RK 2004*. [online]. 2010, [cit. 2010-11-03]. Online accessibility: <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/3553/atlas-romskych-komunit-2004.php>.

⁴ I. Radičová: *Rómovia na prahu transformácie*. In: M. Vašečka (ed.): *Čačipenpal o Roma: súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2002, Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

⁵ Tamže.

culture” is becoming more and more discussed. This phenomenon is defined as absence of effective participation and integration of poor inhabitants in the main institutions of majority society, minimal social organisation exceeding the level of the nuclear and extended family, lack of childhood as especially long and a protected life period, a strong sense of marginalisation, infirmity, dependence and inferiority, fatalism with a low level of ambition⁶.

In modern society, persistent tendencies appear to interpret this poverty culture as a characteristic and culturally related feature of Roma ethnicity. Not only the inhabitants of marginalised Roma settlements, but also the minority ethnicity of Roma people is perceived, by the majority population in the Slovak Republic, as the most problematic and it is not tolerated. The group persistently faces negative stereotypes and ethnic prejudice. The members of this specific group are usually labelled as socially maladjusted, living a chronically or culturally conditioned unsocial life and tend to perpetrate repetitive criminal activity. This situation is the consequence of the historical development of mutual relationships among Roma people and the majority population. In this case, Roma have always represented an unwanted, sometimes hardly tolerated group of the population. This also results from extensive social and economic changes which took place in Slovakia twenty years ago.

Due to the dissolution of socialism and its paternalistic policy and the transition to the market economy, Roma were transferred to the position known as economically inactive and socially dependent on the rest of the society. Nowadays this issue is well-known to the public and the public notices the necessity of solving the problem of poverty and social exclusion the large part of Roma people in Slovakia. The problem that has to be solved is significant in the segregated areas – in settlements. The multiple marginalisation of Roma, in association with the recent demographic trend, needs complex and persistent studies. The current circumstances provoke the development of research in this area, because it is obvious that without a better understanding of the entire Roma lifestyle, it is not possible to make progress in this trend. Roma people became the core of interest for the whole spectrum of social and humanistic disciplines. This is the same case in the present research, in which the focus is on the value system, mainly of marginalised Roma, their

⁶ I. Budil: “*Mexifornia*” a soudobá kritika multikulturalizmu. In: T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (eds): *Soudobé spory o multikulturalismus a politiku identit (antropologická perspektiva)*. Plzeň 2005, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.

value orientations and on potential changes (from the structural perspective) through the constituent types of Roma communities in Slovakia.

The values are essential in life. Especially, they are a source of motivation and they represent the aims which one wants to achieve. Values and the value orientation have always been one of the cornerstones of every culture and that is why many philosophers, writers, explorers and researchers have paid so much attention to them. When character is discussed, values are an interdisciplinary category, because they come to the foreground of many scientific disciplines⁷. The system of values is not only the order of their importance but also a complex unit created by relationships between constituent elements. The bonds between constituent elements create the value units which stand for value orientations. In this way it is important to apprehend them as a general notion which influences the preserving essence of a person, the person's position in nature and in society. The value orientation reflects the relative importance of individual values or the values of a social group⁸. According to Geist⁹, value is considered to be a specific relationship among the object and subject, stipulated by meaning and purpose that the object has for satisfying needs, attitudes, interests, etc. The subject is understood as a subject in its individual and social context. Průcha points¹⁰ out that the system of values is not solely characteristic of individuals, but it has bonds with social and ethnic groups, nations, while the values or value orientations stand for one of the most important aspects of their cultural particularities.

The majority of studies, connected with the values of Roma people in Slovakia, arise from theoretical knowledge and ethnical studies, cultural anthropology, culturology, etc. Even they portray some levels of the studied phenomenon. The most serious drawback is the fact that they are grounded on

⁷ M. Čižmárik, L. Ištvaníková: *Hodnoty a hodnotové orientácie v zrkadle dejín*. In: *Štúdie a články* [online] 2007, Issue 2 [cit. 2010-11-30]. Online accessibility: <http://www.saske.sk/cas/archiv/2-2007/cizmarik.html>.

⁸ S. H. Schwartz: *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries*. In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* [online] 1992, vol. 25 [cit. 2010-11-16]. Online accessibility: http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=z-9vHEy0osBAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=%22Schwartz+S.H.%22&ots=Pe-vAo9m_bF&sig=XtyNQ=-81ipVPZ6spiM7Iu0nzIA#v=onepage&q=%22Schwartz%20S.H.%22&f=false.

⁹ B. Geist: *Sociologický slovník*. Praha 1992, Victoria Publishing.

¹⁰ J. Průcha: *Interkulturní psychologie: sociopsychologické zkoumání kultur, etnik, ras a národů*. Praha 2007, Portál.

the concept of the traditional culture of Roma and its constituent elements, while applying the concept into the current issue remains unanswered. Many authors¹¹ point out that due to the historic events of the last century, the assimilated political proceedings from socialism, the socio-economical changes during the last twenty years and many other factors, the traditional Roma culture in Slovakia and neighbouring states cannot be mentioned any more. This traditional culture is no longer present or only a few elements have been preserved, in a rather modified form and in the geographical area covered by segregated Roma communities in the East of Slovakia.

Nowadays the concept of traditional Roma culture is becoming more often the source of ethnic stereotypes and prejudices of the majority population against Roma people, whereas many current issues related to these communities are construed as the result of ethnic and cultural dissimilarities. In that context, the above mentioned term "poverty culture" is more often discussed as the meaning of the characteristic ethnic feature of the Roma population. Uherek and Novák¹² state that even if the poverty culture is characteristic of large Roma groups living in socially and spatially excluded areas, the majority inappropriately generalise the image of Roma, due to their lifestyle, and without realising the co-responsibility for this situation. On the other hand, they do not realise that this way of behaviour towards Roma or ethnic identification have no bonds and it is valid for all people affected by extreme poverty and social exclusion. Simultaneously, this concept of traditional Roma culture, in particularly the case of the ordinary public, goes with the assumption of ethno-cultural homogenisation of particular groups of Roma people and it does not account for the current situation¹³. Silverman¹⁴ points out the

¹¹ E. Davidová: *Romanodrom – cesty Romů 1945–1990*. Olomouc 1995, UP; T. Hirt: *Romská etnická komunita jako politický projekt: kritická reflexe*. In: M. Jakoubek, T. Hirt (eds): *Romové: kulturologické etudy*. Plzeň 2004, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.; I. Budil: *"Mexifornia" a soudobá kritika multikulturalizmu*. In: T. Hirt, M. Jakoubek (eds): *Soudobé spory o multikulturalizmus a politiku identit (antropologická perspektiva)*. Plzeň 2005, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.

¹² Z. Uherek, K. A. Novák: *Etnická identita Romů*. In: M. Vašečka (ed.): *Čačipenpal o Roma: súhrnná správa o Rómoch na Slovensku*. Bratislava 2002, Inštitút pre verejné otázky.

¹³ M. Kovats: *Politika romské identity: mezi nacionalismem a chudobou*. In: M. Jakoubek (ed.): *Cikáni a etnicita*. Plzeň 2008, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.

¹⁴ C. Silverman: *Vyjednávání cikánství. Situační strategie*. In: M. Jakoubek (ed.): *Cikáni a etnicita*. Plzeň 2008, Vydavatelství a nakladatelství Aleš Čeněk, s.r.o.

interrelation of values and culture of Roma ethnicity and states that Roma people share the elementary cultural values, but their cultural forms are not unified. According to the author, it is possible that the elementary cultural life pattern of Roma is consistent, but its manifestations are not, because Roma culture is a situational contingent. On the basis of the above mentioned facts it can be assumed that even if there is a correlation between values, lifetime strategies and the culture of particular ethnic Roma groups, it is not the right way of solving a problem to deduce the value system and the value orientations of Roma people on the basis of understanding lifetime strategies. This can be seen as a form of acting by coercion due to external circumstances not resulting from the concept of traditional Roma culture that does not suit the situation in which the Roma population appear in Slovakia. The authors' research is based on the knowledge of intercultural psychology – in this way the aim should be achieved of its complete design and methodological level.

Methods

The theory of the presented research comprises the concept of the circular value system according to Shalom H. Schwartz¹⁵. He assumes from this system (which is typical of all the value theories and supported by empiricism, even if it states that people are different in their value orientations) that the structure of the value system is universal. According to Schwartz's model of universal human values, the values consist of 10 human value types: power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, universalism, benevolence, conformity, tradition, security. Among these 10 types there is a correlation according to two bipolar dimensions, whereas individual poles under the terms of every dimension represent a particular type of value orientation: self-transcendentalism vs. self-emphasis and the protection of the status quo vs. openness towards change.

The research committee consists of at least three target groups which we have chosen because of the aim of the research. The selection framework is

¹⁵ S. H. Schwartz: *Universals in the Content and Structure of Values: Theoretical Advances and Empirical Tests in 20 Countries*. In: *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* [online] 1992, vol. 25 [cit. 2010-11-16]. Online accessibility: http://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=z-9vHEy0osBAC&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=%22Schwartz+S.H.%22&ots=Pe-vAo9m_bF&sig=XtyNQ=-81ipVPZ6spiM7lu0nzIA#v=onepage&q=%22Schwartz%20S.H.%22&f=false.

defined on the basis of the data from the database “Atlas rómskych komunít na Slovensku 2004”¹⁶. Due to potential participants from the target groups, one universal and one specific criterion (hereinafter called “criterion”) related to a particular target group has been specified. The universal criterion of these target groups is understood as: The participants are Roma, who are inhabitants of the settlements mentioned in the “Atlas rómskych komunít na Slovensku 2004” database. In this document, the Roma community is defined as a group of people, subjectively defined by the majority as Roma people, on the basis of anthropological features, cultural identity, lifestyle, living space in the positive and negative sense.

The specific criterion is identical with the characteristic features of individual target groups, whereas a particular target group represents a particular type of Roma community. Among the characteristic features of individual target groups, there are: 1. The localisation of the settlement, 2. The position of the settlement. The given characteristic features of individual communities constitute the fundamental criteria in the category “characteristics of settlements” within the framework of the “Atlas rómskych komunít na Slovensku 2004 / *Atlas of Roma communities in Slovakia*” database. The other classification in this database consists of the infrastructure in the settlements of Roma people, the infrastructures of the majority, dwellings and the inhabitants of the mentioned settlements or their number. For example the “characteristics of settlements” category or its criteria: 1. The localisation of settlements and 2. The position of the settlement, are perceived as the most important elements in the typology of the Roma communities in Slovakia. As Radičová (2002) states the above mentioned criteria correspond with the fundamental factors of the poverty and marginalisation of individual Roma community members.

From the methodological point of view, a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods has been chosen in our research. The quantitative level is represented as the basic instrument of data collection and that is the *Human Value Scale* – HVS questionnaire. Moreover, it is used as an additional questionnaire in terms of every study within the European Social Survey nowadays as the instrument of surveying the fundamental value orientations of the inhabitants of countries included in the research.

The HVS questionnaire consists of 21 items, under which it describes 21 human personalities. It represents a condensed version of the older method-

¹⁶ *Atlas RK 2004*. [online]. 2010, [cit. 2010-11-03]. Online accessibility: <http://romovia.vlada.gov.sk/3553/atlas-romskych-komunit-2004.php>).

ology *Portrait Value Questionnaire* – PVQ, created by Shalom Schwartz in accordance with his theory of values. PVQ, as the original, is constructed of 40 items linked with 29 human profiles and it is an advanced version of the original Schwartz's *Schwartz Value Survey* – SVS, in which the respondents' task was to consider a subjective importance of 57 values as the key principle of lives from 1–9 on the Likert-type scale.

This method was regarded as difficult because it required ability to think abstractly and because of its onerous subject matter and time management. This posed the risk that it could lead to misinterpretation and inaccurate administration¹⁷. Constituent items or portraits in the HVS are created in such a way that two profiles represent one of ten values within Schwartz's theory, except the universality value. The respondents' task is to evaluate the resemblance of a profile with themselves on a scale of 1–6 (where 1 means – complete resemblance and 6 – resemblance is not present). There are two versions of the questionnaire created – for men and women. Every item is created by two declarative sentences. The first states the importance of the value and the second informs about personal hobbies. It is important to realize the difference between the imposed values of a person and the real behaviour of a person. Thus, what is measured is the importance of a particular thing which is given more emphasis by the respondent¹⁸. From the point of view of the data collection, the decision was taken to choose an alternative face-to-face interview. Even though this method is time-consuming and expensive, it is a high imperative to familiarize the participants with the aim of our research and the method of questionnaire processing. That is because it can be assumed that the majority of participants have not undergone such a questionnaire or any other questionnaires before. At the same time, we presume that in this method the participants will be more responsible during the questionnaire processing than in the case of the independent processing of the questionnaire by the respondent without a researcher and subsequent sending it.

The qualitative research level represents semi-structured communication. The application of the method precedes data collection with the assistance of the HVS questionnaire and this is implemented with the participants from

¹⁷ M. Čižmarík, L. Ištvaníková: *Hodnoty a hodnotové orientácie v zrkadle dejín*. In: Štúdie a články [online] 2007, Issue 2 [cit. 2010-11-30]. Online accessibility: <http://www.saske.sk/cas/archiv/2-2007/cizmarik.html>.

¹⁸ J. Ilgová, A. Ritomský: *Hodnoty mladých Čechov a Slovákov – komparatívny empirický výskum*. "Socjálne a politické analýzy" 2009, Vol. 3, No. 1.

individual research target groups. The composed questions are formulated in such a way so that they are able to correspond with the individual items of the questionnaire. The main aim of this part of the research is to find out if the individual items are comprehensible for potential participants or how they understand its content. What has been taken into account is the possible necessity to translate some sentences into the Roma language, because a language barrier among participants may occur. With such a necessity, it may be important to verify this language variety. This situation does not seem probable because of easiness and lack of abstract terms in the HVS questionnaire that could cause a language problem for the participants.

Expected research benefits

Some research benefits are mostly expected in the social work implemented in Roma communities, through the creation and planning of local strategies and the development and reconstruction of problems in this environment. The potential of research findings can be also seen at the level of intercultural communication. This communication is defined as a process of interaction and transmission in various types of communication where interlocutors come from different language areas or cultural ethnicities, nations, they are people of different race and religion. Such communication is determined by language, culture, mental specificity and the value systems of communication partners¹⁹. However, what should be taken into account is the fact that in the case of majority interactions and interactions of Roma ethnicity in Slovakia intercultural communication is surely dealt with.

It is assumed that the understanding of values or value orientations of Roma, chiefly those living in marginalised conditions, may contribute to the increasing quality of mutual communication and co-existence. From the perspective of the value aspect of a particular national group, the oriented research can point out real differences. That is why it is assumed that the values or value orientations are one of the main cultural attributes of individual nations and ethnicities²⁰, present in every area of society at the same time. The psychological and sociological values constitute the regulatory mechanism of human behaviour significant for a specific society and appearing in

¹⁹ J. Průcha: *Interkulturní komunikace*. Praha 2010, Grada Publishing.

²⁰ J. Průcha: *Interkulturní psychologie: sociopsychologické zkoumání kultur, etnik, ras a národů*. Praha 2007, Portál.

shared standards, attitudes, opinions, preferences. The values of national and ethnic communities are constant, because they are passed down from one generation to another and they are resilient towards the outside world²¹. The understanding of the value structure of Roma and its potential differences within individual types of Roma communities can – in the future – initiate more extensive factors, some conditioned differences, the detailed monitoring of problems examined in different Slovak regions, the comparison of the value structures of Roma and the majority population, etc. The knowledge acquired in the research may have an impact on the formation of national strategies, the instruments of social inclusion and the development of Roma ethnicity in Slovakia.

Conclusions

The research results of this study may be applied in many aspects of public life, moreover – in the formation of methodology in the school system, the formation of educational directives of Roma people, in healthcare and health service, and in improving the prevention of diseases typical for a specific segregated area. They can serve as an useful source of information for many state authorities and institutions.

All things considered, these research results concerning the value structure of Roma and its potential differences, with account for various types of Roma communities, may pose the empirically verifiable criterion of ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the mentioned ethnicity in Slovakia. First of all however, they may contribute to dispelling stereotypes and prejudices of the majority population towards Roma.

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²¹ J. Průcha: *Interkulturní komunikace*. cyt. wyd.

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The values of marginalized Roma in Slovakia

Summary

The paper presents a study among marginalized Slovak Roma, carried out using the universal human value system of Schwartz (1992). The study and its results may be applied in many aspects of public life, in the formation of methodology in the school system and also in the formation of the education directives concerning Roma people, in healthcare and health service, and for the enhancement of the prevention of diseases typical for a specific segregated area. The research results within the value system of Roma people and its potential differences, with account for various Roma communities, may constitute the empirically verifiable criterion of ethnic and cultural homogeneity of the mentioned ethnicity in Slovakia. They may contribute to dispelling stereotypes and prejudices of the majority towards the Roma people.

Key words: marginalized Roma, human value system, prejudices, intercultural education, Slovakia

Translated by Hristo Kyuchukov