

Bounded: Comparative Study of the Italian Roma and the Navajo
American Indian

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Poverty 423, Winter 2014

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Introduction:

Upon immediate observation Navajo Indians and Italian Romas have little in common. One is in the United States, the other in Europe, and for the purposes of this paper, Italy. One is made up of a single ethnic background, the other of many. One is largely rural, the other urban or suburban. They hold different traditions, different values, and different cultures altogether. However, there is merit in comparing the two populations because they are, or were, in fact bounded. "Bounded" refers to the physical bounds under which these two populations were (and are) forced to live. For the Navajo, it is the reservation; for the Roma, it is immigrant camps. The state of being enclosed and isolated is in fact both a perpetrator of poverty and poverty itself, poverty being defined more broadly than simply a low income. The nature of their boundedness differs and an analysis of the effects on their impoverishment is illuminating. This paper compares the two groups through many different lenses as a broad introduction to the poverty of both groups. I draw upon scholarly research, public records, and personal experiences living on the Navajo reservation and in Bologna, Italy, where I visited Roma camps and interviewed people living in them.

First, I offer a brief history and background of each group, providing the reasons for their boundedness in the first place, a taste of their culture, and their origins as a group as we see them today. Second, I compare and contrast their location, mobility, and living conditions. Third, I compare their identities, both self-identity and their stigma in society, in relation to their boundedness and societal position. Fourth, I show how these two groups relate to public authority and how the government helps (and fails to help) them. Fifth, I compare the dynamics and forces that lead to their poor economic development as groups. Lastly, I discuss how all of these realms of life interact and perpetuate each other in an intermingled and complex system of

causes and effects. I also offer some recommendations of how poverty can be diminished in both the Navajo and Roma populations.

A discussion of Navajo and Roma poverty requires a working definition of poverty. Typically, poverty is measured in two ways, determined by how many people fall below a poverty threshold or line based on their resources. In order to determine if someone falls below the threshold to be declared impoverished, the Census Bureau examines a family's total pre-tax money income, excluding non- and near-cash sources, and compares it with the appropriate predetermined threshold for that family size. This absolute poverty approach is completely dependent on income, which is limited in that it fails to take into account cost of living, extra expenses, or in-kind benefits. Others prefer to follow an income-based relative poverty measurement rather than an absolute measurement, but this still fails to address crucial elements of one's true well-being, such as health, education, political agency, ability to participate in society, etc.

The most effective solution is to rely on capability to define poverty. Capability is the ability to appear in public without shame and to minimally participate in society (Capability 35). One's capability is the n-tuple set of functionings from which one can choose to do or be (Capability 38). In other words, it is the set of one's potential of participation. For example, persons who grew up in a ghetto are said to be poorer than persons from an upscale neighborhood not only because they earn less income, but because their capabilities are diminished by living in an area that does not offer the same set of choices and opportunities. Capability is affected by many factors including literacy, income, healthcare, prejudice etc.

Sen more specifically defines poverty in his book Development as Freedom as the lack of at least one of the following five freedoms: (1) protective security, (2) social opportunities, (3) political freedoms, (4) transparency guarantees, and (5) economic facilities (Development as Freedom 36). I will explain each of these freedoms applied to the Navajo and Roma populations. This will be the framework from which I will discuss their poverty and how their boundedness perpetrates it.

Section I: History and Culture

The history of Native Americans and of the Roma differ enormously, and knowledge of their historical and cultural roots is essential to understand their positions within society today.

Native American Indian Reservations are tracks of land designated for Native American tribes to use and live on. The establishment of reservations was adopted by the United States in 1786 during the great American push to the Western frontier to conquer and explore new territory. Officially, the purpose of the reservations was to grant the American natives land that was rightly theirs as the original inhabitants of the land. However, some claim the true aim was not to provide the Indians with land or livelihood, but rather to constrain them to a manageable and easily controlled area. The new white settlers and pioneers were threatened and intimidated by the Natives as well as prejudiced against them, so they forced them onto reservations to get them out of the way. American Indians have been living on reservations ever since. Although it is no longer mandated, many Navajo still live on the land they were given over 200 years ago.

The Navajo culture is marked mainly by their relationship with nature and land, their emphasis on the brotherhood of all people, and their agricultural and livestock based livelihood. Traditional Indian religion claims all beings are interconnected through a Great Spirit, the source

of life. Each person can take from every other being as long as it is followed by reciprocity. There is a give and take mentality, which ties them to their land as all beings of one Being. It also creates an extended family of followers of the Great Spirit. Family is not simply those related by blood, but those related in spirit. This relationship to the natural world led them to be agricultural people. They take from the land what they need and give back through sacrifices and services to the earth.

Many of these traditions have been lost, but remnants remain engraved in Navajo's lives. Much of their culture and religion has been stifled by capitalism and modernization. They continued to work the land, farming and raising sheep and cattle, until the 60s when wool prices plummeted and farming became obsolete on the reservations. This economic change left many Native Americans with little means to earn a living. Today, if unable to continue to raise livestock, many Natives work blue-collar service jobs in border towns or attempt to earn a living selling homemade rugs, pottery, and jewelry. They still hold a strong tie to land; it ceases to be a religious connection but rather one based on tradition and history. Their connection to family is no longer extended to all humans, but rather to others within their tribe. Today, the Native American culture is widely unknown by the rest of America, especially in areas of the country that see no influence by Native Americans. There is an apathetic attitude toward them as a people. Understanding Navajo history and culture is integral in understanding their poverty discussed in subsequent sections.

Romas are not a new phenomenon to Italy. There are reports of Romanian and other Balkan immigrants dating back many centuries to around 1000 AD (Ziegenfuss 1). They are historically nomadic people with no homeland. They were said to have no nationality and no

home, but chose to move around Europe in caravans. They were called “gypsies,” a word that now has a negative connotation. Sinti are of the same social caste and origin as Roma, but are Italian citizens by birth. Today, people called Roma are mostly from the Balkans and Romania, fleeing the oppressive communist regimes of their home countries. The large influx of Balkan immigrants in the 1990s following the Balkan wars created a problem much larger than the Italian government was ready to handle (Monasta 7). In research on the Roma and Sinti in Italy, Nando Sigona and Lorenzo Monasta summarize the immigration patterns nicely:

In the absence of official statistics on the Roma and Sinti population in Italy, we have to rely on the estimated figures of approximately 120,000-150,000 Roma and Sinti and currently living in Italy. The majority of which (approximately 60 per cent) are Italian citizens. The Sinti almost all fall into this last group. A small percentage of the Sinti have an economic activity which necessitates an itinerant lifestyle. Almost all of the Italian Roma are sedentary. The remaining 40 percent is made up of foreign citizens who have come to Italy in various migration influxes. The most substantial of which, dates from the '90's, with the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the fall of the communist regimes. The foreigners belong to various groups and originate mostly from: Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia, Serbia and more recently, Romania.

Sigona and Monasta

The Italian government did not have the institutions and infrastructure in place to handle such a large quantity of immigrants. Similar to the history of Native American reservations, the Roma and Sinti populations in Italy were placed in segregated camps although much smaller areas than reservations, in order for Italian authorities to control and regulate them. The statements and published quotations from Italian authorities attribute this action to ensuring the safety of Italian citizens and the Roma themselves (Monasta 10). They are “temporary” residences for Roma.

The culture of the Roma and Sinti is difficult to define. They are typically no longer nomadic, but prefer a sedentary lifestyle. They, like Native Americans, have a tradition of family importance. This has come to be defined by anyone who is in their same social position and circumstances rather than blood family. Because of their history of nomadic life, they do not feel

a connection to land or nature itself. Roma value loyalty to each other above all else and follow a Roma-law called “romaniya” (Ziegenfuss 3). Romaniya evokes much animosity toward the Roma because it is extremely counter-cultural to western values. For example, Romaniya does not ban theft as long as it does not victimize other Roma, does not cause bodily harm, and does not exceed what is needed to survive. This obviously goes against the grain of most, if not all, western ideas of property and personal safety. Today, Roma are marginalized and largely despised by Italians. They have many negative stereotypes and are not understood or accepted by Italian society. Again, to understand the poverty the Roma face, it is crucial to first understand who they are and where they came from.

Section II: Location, Mobility, and Living Conditions

The physical location and environment of people have a large impact on their lives. In both the Navajo and Roma example, their physical environment and location greatly disadvantage them in relation to the greater society they live in. This is a neglect of what Sen calls protective security freedom. Protective security is defined as “needed to provide a social safety net for preventing the affected population from abject misery” and includes access to emergency facilities, shelter, aid after a disaster, and arrangements for protection against extreme deprivation (Development 40). Although the physical natures of their lives contrast vastly, both the Navajo and Roma case exhibit blatant lack of protective security. Constraints on achieving protective security in these studies come about as lengthy and inhumane resettlement processes as well as a lack of access to networks of aid.

The location of the Navajo reservation is marked by isolation and emptiness. Reservations are most often in large rural expanses with little to no development. The reason for

this is two-fold. First, Native Americans were given isolated land, such as deserts, and large land areas, to inhabit. Moreover, as a society failed to keep up with development and modernization, the Navajo devolved into a deeper state of isolation. They are undeniably secluded from the rest of America. It often takes Navajos many miles and hours to reach a town of any significant size. Furthermore, there is no public transportation into or out of reservations. This creates a deep physical and in turn social separation between those who live on reservations and those who live off of it. It creates barriers to commercialism and industry as well. Companies do not want to build on reservations because of transportation costs. To reiterate, this lack of freedom is poverty because the Navajo do not have access to networks of people due to their isolation.

The living conditions on the reservations are among the worst in the United States. One traveler states, "... In my lifetime I have been to many places around the world and have experienced many terrible living conditions. What is so shocking is that the social and economic conditions for many Navajos closely resemble those of people living in Third World countries" (Census). In Klagetoh, AZ, a small town of 300 within the borders of the Navajo Reservation, only 50% of the families have running water in their homes. The community relies on the well placed in the center of town for clean water, but as the area is often in drought, it can be unreliable. Children play in garbage piles and sleep in overcrowded, dilapidated, one bedroom homes with their extended family. Many homes do not have electricity or air conditioning. On a positive note, most families live in sedentary houses with foundations and permanent infrastructure. Additionally, there is typically a lot of space between homes with each family owning a significant tract of land. This living arrangement too is poverty as they depend on unreliable water sources and live in unsuitable housing, both constraints of protective security.

The location of Roma camps could not be more contrasting to the location of the Navajo reservation, although it still exemplifies a lack of protective security. While reservations are large rural tracts of land, Roma camps are small often fenced areas in the outskirts of major Italian cities (Sigona). They are almost always outside of city walls in industrial zones in the outskirts of town. They are placed away from where most Italians live and work. Although not as physically isolated as reservations, they are just as much socially isolated. One man expressed his desire to integrate into Italian society, but the location of the camp restricted him from doing so. Again, access to networks is unsteady. However, in contrast to the Navajo reservation, there usually is public transportation into the main city center from Roma camps.

The quality of living conditions on the Navajo reservation can be compared to the squalid conditions of the Roma camps. In 2000, the European Roma Rights Center reported that “only about three-quarters (of camps) have running water and electricity, and all have significant sewage problems” (Monasta 12). This creates sanitation problems making sickness a pandemic problem, especially among children. I examine health in a later section. The homes are usually mobile homes or trailers located very close to one another. Each family has very little space to itself. One Roma man said, “We are living on top of one another.” One Roma camp outside of Bologna is located directly under a large power line. People in the camp are convinced it is causing cancer among them as a few of them who have lived there many years have recently been diagnosed. Sen’s freedom of protective security is limited by the poor living conditions and low access to water. By definition, this is a lack of freedom and poverty. `

Section III: Identity

Identity is crucial in understanding the Navajo and Roma condition. When speaking of identity, I am referring to two distinct forms of identity: how others perceive them and how they perceive themselves, which I will call self-identity. In both the Navajo and Roma case, identity given by others and identity of self only serve to perpetuate their deprivation and marginalization. Although this is most directly connected to Sen's freedom for social opportunities, identity influences and perpetuates almost all aspects of one's life, including economic opportunities and political efficacy (included in Sen's economic facilities and political freedoms conditions). Social opportunities are the "arrangements society makes which influences the individual's substantive freedom to live better" (Development 39). A healthy and positive identity- both held by others and self- encourages effective participation in society and achievement by allowing people of all backgrounds equality. It perpetuates the building of capability, and therefore diminishes poverty.

Boundedness has a monumental impact on both the Navajo and Roma identity. Small, Lamont, and Harding's study on culture and poverty examines the effects of boundaries on a population. They claim:

The concept of symbolic boundaries recognizes that schemes of social categorization are culturally constructed. Symbolic boundaries are the conceptual distinctions that we make between objects, people, and practices. They operate as a "system of rules that guide interaction by affecting who comes together to engage in what social act" (Lamont and Fournier 1992, 12). In short, symbolic boundaries constitute a system of classification that defines a hierarchy of groups and the similarities and differences between them. They typically imply and justify a hierarchy of moral worth across individuals and groups. Symbolic boundaries are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the more readily visible social boundaries of residential and occupational segregation, racial and class exclusion, and patterns of intermarriage.

Small, Lamont, and Harding

In effect, boundaries (social and/or physical) establish a hierarchy of moral worth that affects identity as perceived by others and by self. Native Americans and Roma have been socially and physically separated for so long that they no longer see themselves as a part of the greater American or Italian community, respectively. They are different. This difference comes with a moral implication. Segregation and separation inherently come with value judgments. This moral/value judgment plays into discrimination and prejudices against the two groups. I will discuss first others' perception and then move on to self-identity of both the Navajo and the Roma in turn.

Currently, the Navajo population experiences prejudice and inequality from their white neighbors. They are treated with anger, degradation, and inequality, especially in border towns-towns on the edges of reservations. They are seen as drunkards, poorly educated, violent, unhealthy, and lazy freeloaders abusing the welfare system. In interviews of friends and acquaintances who grew up near reservations, if they did not openly express these same stereotypes, they at least expressed an avoidance of the reservation. Rarely had any of them ever entered the reservations, even though they lived within a few dozen miles. It seemed to have a connotation of somewhere you only pass through on your way to somewhere more desirable and you try not to stick around.

In a briefing before the US Commission, William J. Lawrence cites many explanations for these stereotypes. He attributes the drunken stereotype to the fact that Navajos must drive off-reservation to purchase and consume alcohol because it is illegal on-reservation (39). This forces alcoholic consumption to be more blatant and public. It must be noted that rates of alcoholism are much higher on reservation than off, but this does not mean that all Navajo are alcoholics. This assumption is where the stereotype becomes discriminatory. Lawrence also cites the special

privileges given to Indians, such as free medical care, schooling, and broader hunting and fishing rights as sources for animosity between Natives and border town residents. He acknowledges Indians' high dependence on welfare as another explanation for poor relations.

In a recent appeal before the United States Commission on Civil Rights, many community members stepped forward to voice their concerns for racial discrimination in border towns (Briefing). They gave example after example of discriminatory behavior in the towns closest to the reservation. The prejudice covered all realms from education, to politics, to employment. Because of their stereotypes, citizens of border towns do not like Native presence in their towns. According to a study of Indian development during the economic boom of the 80's, Native Americans have lost ground in terms of annual earnings, annual hours worked, and earnings per hour. Indian men moved down the income ladder (more concentrated in the bottom 10% than top). Indian women moved up, but not as much as white women. Native Americans work fewer hours and get paid less per hour than whites (per hour is worse for men). Variables such as education, work experience, and family attributes play into the income dependent variable. Although, regardless of education level, Native Americans earn less per hour and work fewer hours than white counterparts (Gregory 27). This is outside of Indian's control and can be used as evidence of prejudice.

Native American's self-identity is multidimensional and has many faces. The first is their identity as the first inhabitants of America. They have a strong pride in their land and country because they were there first. They see themselves as grandparents of America. However, this comes with some resentment. White settlers came into their homes, took their land, and ruled over them. Animosity still exists between Indians and white Americans. The second factor in their identity is their boundedness. They feel different from other Americans. They have a

distinct identity as “others.” Growing up, they know no different. It is perpetuated generation after generation. Others’ view of them, the identity they place on them, contribute to this “otherness” that they feel. The social constructs for positive self-identity is limited by the prejudice and discrimination discussed above. The third is of their community. They feel great pride in their tribe, whether it be Navajo, Cherokee, or Apache. They can relate to others of their own tribe.

Similar to Native Americans, the Roma population is seen by Italians as truly a second-class. Roma stereotypes include beggars, thieves, exploiters, and liars. Sigona quotes, “47 per cent (of Italians) see Roma and Sinti as thieves, delinquents and criminals, and 35 per cent associate them with marginalization, degradation, poverty and homelessness” (Sigona 43) The main image of a Roma is one of a beggar on the street, using their children to exploit tourists and locals alike for money. They are ignored and scoffed at in all the major Italian cities, including Rome, Florence, Venice, and Bologna. This prejudice comes from a culture clash between the Roma and the non-Roma, European culture discussed above. Roma values obviously go against the grain of most, if not all, western values which feeds into the animosity felt toward the Roma¹.

For example, in 2008, a white woman accused a Roma woman of trying to steal her baby from her apartment (Ziegenfuss 1). In reaction, the locals set fire to a Roma camp while onlookers cheered and applauded. The authorities condemned the action, but did little to stop it. The camp was set ablaze multiple times in the months following the initial incident. This is only one example of the abuse and discrimination felt by Roma. Ziegenfuss quotes, “In May 2008, 81% of Italian respondents in a national poll said they found Roma ‘barely likeable or not

¹ It must be noted that some of these cultural differences are in fact illegal and have heavy moral weight, such as thieving discussed above. I am not excusing this action, but rather discussing its impact on how others view and treat Roma.

likeable at all.’ Another national poll found 68% of Italians want all Roma expelled from Italy, even those that are Italian citizens” (Ziegenfuss 6).

Roma’s self-identity is very different from that of Native Americans. The Roma do not have a “homeland.” They exist in a country where homogenous nationality is a value and pride, but they do not claim a nationality. They do, however, have strong solidarity among their camps and others in the same position as they are. They band together as “others.” Again, it is evident that the effect on how they relate to greater Italian society is drastically influenced by their boundedness.

The Sinti are in a precarious situation. They are viewed by Italians as the same as Roma, but they view themselves as Italians. They have citizenship, but are deprived of many of the rights and privileges of such because of their stereotypes. It is difficult to say how their identity is passed down through generations.

In both the Navajo and Roma situations, identity- held by the self and by others- is a pervasive and strong force in limiting their freedoms. It limits social opportunities by creating a dichotomous “us versus them” mentality. Their identity through others’ eyes, most notably discrimination, both direct and indirect, affects how much political voice they have (see section IV), their ability to access to job markets (see section V), and their access to health and education (section V). I discuss how identity affects these three aspects of life in subsequent sections.

Section IV: Relationship to Government

A large factor in Navajo and Roma poverty is their relationship with the authorities that govern them. The stories vary greatly. Navajo’s face apathy at worst from politicians and

legislation, although they are neglected in the realms of education and healthcare. The Roma face open discrimination and hatred from politicians as well as legislation that directly opposes their well-being and participation as a population. In both cases they face a lack of political freedom as described by Sen as “opportunities that people have to determine who should govern and on what principles” (Development 38). Components of political freedom include, but are not limited to, access to political discussion and the law services, the existence of elected bodies, citizen participation, and facilities to scrutinize authorities (38). The Navajo and Roma populations face an open and abhorrent restraint on their political freedom, most notably through prejudice from authorities.

Although most directly discriminatory legislation toward Navajo has been eradicated, there still exist many indirectly unfair and unequal laws and institutional establishments against them. The majority of such establishments have to do with on-Reservation property and housing. For example, residents are at complete mercy of the local governing body, the tribal municipality, over their ownership of housing and livestock. The authorities have control to seize cattle or horses and evict residents with very little constraint or cause. One of my friends on the reservation almost lost her land and horses to the local authorities. She would let her horses out of her gates to find water as she had none due to the drought, and she would gather them at the end of the day. Most people did this during drought or their horses would die. The local authorities seized the horses and charged her a hefty fee to get them back. They decided arbitrarily whose horses they would take and whose they would allow to graze. The local authority has very little oversight from state or federal authorities as they are solely an on-reservation institution.

Apart from unregulated tribal discrimination, there exists other restrictions to political freedom. There is a lot of red tape to get help and support from the federal government. I drove a friend of mine to the welfare office so she could register her grandchildren, who she was raising, under her name. They turned her away because the blue ink she used on the forms was not dark enough. The Navajo do have most freedoms the average American does. They can vote, they have access to political and public discussion, and they can oppose and challenge authorities through proper channels. However, there are limits on their effective political freedom through unfair authority action and difficult processes to get help.

Not only do many Italian citizens hold negative racist views on the Roma and Sinti as discussed above, but so do many politicians and authorities. They actively exercise racism and abhorrent discrimination against the Roma. One mayor of a town outside Milan offered a reward of 2500 euro to any farmer who would spray manure over Roma camps (Ziegenfuss 5). In his *International Law Review on Roma discrimination*, Ziegenfuss tells this story,

In 2001, after six members of the right-wing Northern League party signed and distributed a leaflet demanding the expulsion of all Roma from Verona, they were arrested and convicted under an Italian law forbidding distribution of racially discriminatory propaganda. But in July 2008 an Italian appeals court overturned their conviction, finding that the dislike of the Roma was not "based on a notion of superiority or racial hatred, but on racial prejudice."

Ziegenfuss 5

Many politicians have incorporated Roma hatred into their political platforms and propaganda. They make promises to crack down on illegal immigration and street crime which is associated with Roma. They often use diction such as ensuring "safety of Italian citizens" and "documenting all residents" as disguised racist anti-Roma platforms (Sigona 6).

Unlike the Navajo, the Roma face many legal barriers to societal and political participation. A large number of these barriers revolve around their lack of permanent residence. When Roma arrive in Italy, they are often sent to live in camps by the authorities while they apply for refugee or asylum seeker status. The problem arises when these camps do not have legitimate residential status, which many camps do not qualify for (Monasta 9). Proof of residence is needed for a number of things in Italy, including getting a driver's license, applying for citizenship, applying for jobs, buying property, etc. One can see the inherent problems with this system. How is one supposed to buy their first home if proof of residence is necessary but they are forced to live in a place without legitimate residency? It is impossible. They cannot earn money legally because they do not have an address. This pushes them into informal sectors of the economy which can be unstable and at risk for conviction.

The Roma are without any nationality. They cannot own passports and have no ties to any country. This presents a severe lack of political freedom. They cannot vote in local or national elections. They have no form of representation in any government. There is no system for justice or law within their worlds. As seen in the example above, the courts and police will most always side with Italians, even when clearly in the wrong. There is no more extreme example of a lack of political freedom than that of the Roma. Even the Sinti, who are born in Italy and do have Italian citizenship, often face the same restrictions the Roma do through *de facto* discriminatory policy against them.

Section V: Economic and Community Development

There is a train of thought held by many scholars and politicians that the poor are in the conditions they are in because of choices they have made and their lack of responsibility for their

life. There is some merit in this opinion; at times people squander opportunities given them. However, when analyzing the economic and social positions of the Navajo population and the Italian Roma and Sinti population, it is clear that this view is not applicable. Both of these populations are in the state they are in because of forces beyond their control; there are economic institutions that present them with an unfair and disadvantaged lot in life. Sen categorizes these unequal institutions as both lack of economic facilities, defined as “the opportunities that individuals enjoy to utilize economic resources for the purpose of consumption, or production, or exchange”, and also social opportunities as defined above (Development 39). These institutions are unfair education systems, inadequate health, the limitations on freedoms already discussed above, and the market-driven labor market. This section examines broad economic development of both the Navajo and Roma in relation to their boundedness. It also addresses education, health, and the market, and shows how these things work together to keep these people in the grasps of poverty.

Researchers attribute Indian reservations’ poor economic development to a few causes. The most universally accepted one is culture barriers (Ruffing, Adams, Mushinski). Basically, Native American’s deep-rooted culture prevents them from thriving economically because the two appear to be in conflict. To understand their economy, one must attempt to comprehend their culture. Their culture is extremely communal. The family is the most important social and economic unit within their society. They prefer a quiet, slow paced lifestyle, holding their traditional ways of life very sacred. This includes how they earn their living.

Native Americans have had three main resources for hundreds of years: land, labor and livestock (Adams 23). They have been earning their living through these means for generations,

mainly through sheep raising on the reservation; however, with the move from agriculture and livestock raising, the fall of wool prices, and the increase in service sector jobs in the United States, the reservations have been left without a means to support themselves (Ruffing 17). Their resources are diminishing; however, their cultural values and social structure resist the shift from subsistence work.

Native Americans value staying on the reservation with their family doing the same work their ancestors have always done far more than earning money. When looking at Native Americans, once a basic standard of living is achieved, one cannot assume economic rationality. For example, many Native Americans have the opportunity to leave the reservation to work on railroads (18). It is a much higher paying occupation than sheep rearing, farming, or weaving, yet even the unemployed refuse to accept the jobs. They would rather live in poverty, to a certain extent, than leave the reservation for work. The calculated social cost of leaving the reservation is around \$2000 (18). In other words, Native Americans would forgo \$2000 in wages in order to stay and work on the reservation. Most men prefer to work many different subsistence-type jobs (diversification) over working one job off the reservation (specification) because of the perceived social costs and reliability (20). Although Native Americans tend not to act economically rational when looking at occupational options overall, they do choose rationally within the confines of the reservation, but good work is extremely rare on the reservations because of the barriers to commercialism.

Commercialism is very limited on the Navajo reservation. There is generally one general store with a post office and grocery section in each village within the reservation. The reason for this is a combination of isolation, existing poverty, and anti-modernization within the culture.

Corporations are not wanted because of the threat to traditional culture nor are they incentivized to invest on the reservations because of the little promise of profit.

Another reason for the lack of economic development is the dependence on welfare. The absolute poverty rate on the reservations is 32%, which leads to many people being dependent on welfare. Over 7% of Native American income is welfare and nearly 25% is other in-kind assistance (Adams 5). Some scholars argue this subsidy has increased the moral hazard of staying unemployed on the reservation as opposed to leaving to find work. In other words, it gives them the means and incentive to stay unemployed when they may have worked, albeit off the reservation, otherwise.

There is more to Native Americans staying on reservation than a cultural tie to family and land, although those are important factors. There are three other valid reasons for their resistance and inability to develop along with the rest of the United States. First, they have been separate from society for so long that there is a sociological barrier to assimilation (see Section II). Simply being bounded has caused many economic and social problems rooted in their identity at “others”. Second, there is prejudice and a resistance against Native Americans in border towns disabling them from finding jobs (see Section III). Third, there are direct and indirect governmental and institutional barriers to society, namely through poor education and healthcare.

The education system is in a poor state of neglect on the reservations. The graduation rate of Native Americans is a disheartening 11% in some communities (Briefing). The schools on reservations are often staffed with unqualified and poor quality instructors. It is difficult to get the best teachers to move to the reservations. Only Indians are allowed to live on reservations. When Native Americans “break out” of the reservations and get a quality education, they often do not return. This leads to the poorly educated teaching the poorly educated. Additionally, the

school systems are strapped for resources. They are grossly underfunded and the budgets are only getting smaller. Poor education leads to low earnings which leads to poverty. The lack of a quality and equal education is a constraint on social freedom as Sen describes it.

In addition to the education system, the general health is in a state of need on most reservations. Native Americans face suicide rates 85% higher than the US average (Snipp 5). They also have higher death rates at a younger age. Alcoholism is a shocking 630% higher on reservations than the national average (6). Disease is more common, an example being the diabetes rate that is 230% above average (8). Even though disease is huge problem, about 30 percent of the population live without health insurance (8). Also, the infant mortality rates are much higher on the reservations than off. Native Americans can receive emergency care but often fail to receive preliminary and preventative care. The healthcare system does too little too late when it comes to the epidemics of diabetes, alcoholism, and suicides on reservations. This too is a constraint of social freedom as defined by Sen. Not only does the healthcare system fail the Navajo, but the social system does as well. I cannot dismiss personal responsibility as a contributing factor of the Navajo's health problems; however, I also cannot dismiss social determinants of health. I believe personal responsibility and social determinants of health are linked, or at least interactive. As discussed, the Navajo have a lot working against them in their attempt at health, including but not limited to poor living conditions, destructive self-identity, prejudice, discrimination, and poor education.

Low economic development on the Navajo reservation is a result of all the lack of freedom they experience discussed above in conjunction with a market-based competitive labor market. In a market system, there is limited government intervention for the protection of workers (Freeman 7). The market demand and supply for labor determines the employment rate

(Freeman 8). In such markets, there is high horizontal mobility, low stability/job security, and a low minimum wage (Freeman 13). It comes down to a dog-eat-dog competitive labor market. The problem on the Navajo reservation is a combination of low capability and the market-driven labor market. People who are disabled in their capability or freedoms, whether it is physically, politically, educationally, socially, or emotionally, cannot compete in such a competitive structure. Mario Luis Small, David J. Harding, and Michele Lamont define capability, quoting Swidler, as a repertoire: “A repertoire is a cache of ideas from which to draw rather than a unified system of values or norms (Swidler 1986). Swidler argued that the poor do not possess different values from the rest of society but rather have access to a different repertoire from which to construct their strategies of action” (Harding 54). Navajo’s repertoire is limited by their history, location, identity, relationship to government, education, and health. They are lacking in almost every category of Sen’s established five freedoms. Sen’s freedoms are endogenous in that a lack of one can cause a lack in another and vice versa. In this case, the limitations of political freedom, social opportunities, and protective security causes a lack of economic facility. There are serious inhibitors to their access to and participation in the labor market.

The Roma and Sinti story of economic development is very different from the Native American one. While the Native American’s have a long history of poverty and neglect in the United States, the Roma “problem” in Italy is relatively recent (since the 1990s) and its nuances are still being discovered. However, similar to Native American poverty, Roma and Sinti people are kept in poverty by market forces and discrimination, but additionally by institutions and official policy to a greater extent than Native Indians.

In a similar situation to Native Americans, the Roma and Sinti are trying and failing to compete in the labor market in Italy. They are immigrants who came to Italy often with little or no possessions. Their education has little value to Italian society. I know a woman who was an educated and practiced veterinarian in Albania, but is working as a maid in Bologna because her credentials hold no weight. The Roma have a difficult language barrier to overcome when they first arrive, making it difficult to communicate and work. If they grew up in Italy in the camps, odds are they experienced a less than standard education and fought poverty and discrimination their whole lives, making them more likely to be impoverished themselves. Roma children are allowed and required to attend schools, but their success is marginal. The education of Roma children is often jeopardized by poor school systems near the camps and/or biased teachers who do not give them proper attention. Roma dropout rates are high and even elementary aged students have attendance problems (Sigona 16).

Roma's healthcare only covers emergency procedures. Similar to Native American healthcare, preliminary or preventative care is unheard of. They are excluded from the socialist healthcare system present in Italy. Their living conditions cause many health problems including cancer, infections, and viral diseases. Little data is available on the health and education of Roma in Italy as their presence is relatively new and studies have not been done to investigate these problems. Similarly to the Navajo, the Roma's restriction of freedom and capability severely disadvantages them from competing in the labor market in Italy. Again, all responsibility does not fall on individuals, but also social determinants, such as racist stereotypes, physical separation, and political restrictions. All of these perpetuate their inability to compete in the labor market in Italy, effectively diminishing their economic facility as defined by Sen.

In both the Navajo and Roma examples, there are multiple forces working in conjunction with one another to perpetuate their poverty further. Most, if not all, are closely tied to their physical boundaries. Mario Luis Small and Katherine Newman claim “Socialization mechanisms tend to conceive of individuals as (relatively passive) recipients of powerful socializing forces, suggesting that neighborhoods mold those who grow up in them into certain behavioral patterns” (Newman 33). Their separation from society and their treatment from society limit their ability to because it consistently reinforces their subjected position.

In his study of Chicago ghettos, Loic Wacquant reveals many truths about people living in conditions very similar to reservations and Roma camps². We can use his study to further explore Sen’s freedoms and how they are limited for the Roma and Navajo. First Wacquant warns scholars to avoid analyzing these types of groups as lacking social order and civilization (Wacquant 345). This judgment holds a moral implication that is outside the jurisdiction of this research. These communities do not lack social organization; they simply have a different form of social organization. He then goes on to explain that this society within ghettos (and in our case, reservations and camps) is “organized according to a different set of principles in response to a unique set of structural and strategic constraints that bear on the racialized enclaves” (Wacquant 346). Their society is organized in response to certain constraints present in their lives. His definitions of these constraints are nearly identical to the ones discussed by Sen and throughout this paper and can be used as further support of the destructive nature of boundedness.

² We cannot dismiss Janet Abu-Lughod’s warnings of Wacquant’s study. She stresses that he studied a very specific and unique neighborhood and that applying his findings to all people groups is inconsistent (Abu-Lughod 1). However in this case, I am confident we can apply his basic theory of deprivation to Native American’s and Roma populations with full integrity

The first constraint is the “press of economic necessity and material deprivation caused by deterioration of wage-labor economy” (346). This is consistent with my explanation of the Native American’s and Roma’s inability to compete in the labor market because of their situational limitations. A second constraint on their lives is their “physical and social insecurity fueled by public sector failings” (346). Again, we can apply this to both Native Americans and Roma. Their physical locations and placement within the social hierarchy limit their ability to engage and thrive. A third constraint that is obviously applicable to our case studies is “racial antipathy and acute class prejudice truncate life chances and conduits of opportunity” (347). This is seen in border towns and greater Italian societies against Native Indians and Roma respectively. His fourth constraint is that “territorial stigmatization contaminates all social endeavors” (347). This is related to the second and third constraint in that it basically explains how their placement in segregated areas automatically applies a moral inequality relative to greater society. This is related to my discussion of identity in section II. His fifth and final constraint is that there exists “bureaucratic empathy and administrative ineptness” in opposition to alleviating the problems of ghettos (348). Again, we saw many examples of this sort of behavior from authorities in charge of reservations and Roma camps. He concludes by explaining that people in such conditions are responding rationally to their environment. There are no other responses we can expect than the responses they provide. This supports the idea that the poverty evident on the Navajo reservation and in Roma camps is socially determined and not because of squandering opportunity.

In sum, the existence of boundaries and living within a structured state of separateness creates a system that necessarily restricts Sen’s five freedoms (political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security), limiting

capability, and perpetuating poverty. Being bounded is poverty in and of itself. Not only is boundedness poverty itself, but it creates other disadvantages that limit opportunity and encourages poverty.

Section VI: Recommendations

The situation on the Navajo reservation is not without hope. This poverty is not irreversible or irreconcilable. Concrete steps can be taken to improve capability of Navajo's, enabling them to participate and succeed in the labor market. The first of this is to invest in education. Something needs to be done about the high school dropout rate. Scholarships should be made available for tertiary education to incentivize graduation. Additionally, there are currently no incentives to return to the reservation if one does succeed outside. Bringing back the most educated to live and work on the reservation would offset the brain drain that is sucking their resources out.

In order to encourage educated people to move on reservations, commercialism needs to grow. The government could subsidize industries to move on reservations providing employment opportunities to Navajos. Additionally, the local authorities should lift the ban on non-Navajo residents. This will render the boundaries less restrictive and less effective and foster dialogue and interaction between Navajos and non-Navajos. The residency restriction is only furthering the separateness. This will help build social opportunity and economic facilities.

Lastly, in order to build human capital the government needs to address the health problems that run rampant on the Navajo reservation. Alcoholism, diabetes, and nutrition awareness needs to become a priority for the local, state, and national government. Health is necessary for a productive population. The government should provide a basic level of healthcare

to low-income citizens. This is addressing protective security as well as social opportunities and economic facilities.

The Italian government needs to address the existence of Roma. They cannot get by on simply hiding them away in camps. Ignoring them only creates more problems such as high healthcare costs, theft, tax evasion, etc. The first thing that must be done to help alleviate the poverty of the Roma is to eradicate the camp system. The government should allow them to either find their own housing or provide them with a supportive arrangement if they are seeking asylum status. They should be allowed to have an address so that they can legally work, obtain identification, and move into better housing if available. This address economic facilities, protective security, and social opportunity by allowing for better living conditions, the ability to participate in the labor market, and integrating them physically and socially into society.

Additionally, the government should ensure that Roma receive a fair and equal education and healthcare. Investment in schools with Roma should be a priority. Basic healthcare should be provided to Roma citizens. If they have a legal job, they will be paying into the socialist system through income tax so should have access to education and healthcare.

Conclusion

The Navajo and Roma people face serious poverty because of their boundedness on reservations and in camps. Their boundedness is both poverty itself and a perpetuator of further impoverishment. Freedom and capability are severely limited by living in a state of separateness and by forces exacerbated by such separation. More specifically, the five freedoms that Sen identifies as necessary for full and fair participation in society and requirements of a life free

from poverty are jeopardized by boundedness. These unfreedoms work in conjunction with market-based labor markets to put the Navajo and Roma at a severe disadvantage in participating in the workforce. The poverty of these two groups are different and unique, but in comparing them, we find insight into how physical boundaries can and do affect the outcomes and opportunities of the people within them. Boundedness can be reversed by addressing social determinants of health and education, as well as amending discriminatory laws and policies. There is hope for integrated and fair societies in both the Roma and Navajo case, but much must be done before that is realized.

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