
*“Gypsy” in Romanes, the universal Gypsy language, which is based on a Sanskrit dialect, and which has established their origins in northwest India. Romanes is heavily overlaid with words borrowed from other countries of the western hemisphere through which they passed on their migrations during the last 1,000 years.

Critique

“Alternative Education for the Rom” concerns a little written about ethnic group, the Gypsy, and concentrates on the dilemma of cultural resistance on the part of the Rom and cultural change for their survival in the U.S. Leita Kaldi discusses an educational alternative the Rom in Seattle, Washington find acceptable to bridge the gap between traditional Rom culture and the U.S. social structure.

What makes this paper unique and important for ethnic scholars is Kaldi’s view of cultural resistance and change as an ongoing process. The Rom, unlike most ethnic groups residing in the U.S., have refused U.S. institutional, governmental, and social support. Gypsies are attempting to continue their traditional lifestyle in the midst of and in spite of an everchanging social fabric. However, it is apparent from Kaldi’s work that Rom survival as a culturally resistant group is questionable. A solution to this problem, Kaldi believes, is in the educational alternative which is apparently succeeding in Seattle, Washington.

The account of this educational alternative is fascinating as Kaldi points out the push-pull effects of cultural change and cultural resistance for the Rom adults and non-Gypsy teaching staff. New viewpoints and broader perspectives meet with initial skepticism in the Rom community. Rom adults are beginning to think about the long-term advantages of this Seattle elementary school for their children; however, the Rom community insists that Rom traditions and language must continue. Kaldi illustrates that cultural traditions flow between the Rom community and the school as a dual process. The school, non-Gypsy teachers, and Gypsy children are learning Rom traditions as a result of the cultural exchanges. A cultural bridge is formed.

Kaldi's article lays the initial groundwork for further research on the Rom and the inner dynamics of cultural change and cultural maintenance. A longitudinal study of the Rom in Seattle will provide much needed information on Rom culture as well as illustrate how alternatives in education can provide the cultural sensitivity so necessary in contemporary public schools.

Will the Rom continue with public school education? What will happen to the Rom's unique educational alternative if institutional support is curtailed? Are the Rom children benefitting from going to school? Are cultural gaps forming between Rom adults and Rom children? What are the long term effects of cultural changes on the Rom population? What kinds of syncretisms and cultural blends are taking place in the Rom community and in the school? There are many questions as yet unanswered. What occurs in the next ten to twenty years for the Rom in Seattle will be enlightening.

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