Understanding Identity and Social Change through Narrative: With Special Reference to Roma Pentecostalism in Croatia and Serbia

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ABSTRACT

Romani groups—referred to in this thesis as Roma—originated in India over a thousand years ago and now form a minority population throughout Europe. Over the centuries, for complex socio-cultural reasons, 'host' societies frequently responded to Roma groups in ways that created marginalization through the mechanisms of forced assimilation, enslavement, death, and genocide. Today, despite vast international attention and allocated financial resources from governments, EU institutions, NGOs, religious entities, as well as the growth of Roma politicians, intellectuals, and grass roots organizations; steps and policies to minimize Romani social isolation continue to make only small or non-existent progress in Southeastern Europe.

Juxtaposed on this reality is the phenomenal rise of Pentecostalism in Roma communities beginning in both Western and Eastern Europe in the 1950s, a process which prior studies have demonstrated is linked to social change and a shift of identities. This thesis is concerned with how Roma work out their new Pentecostal identities within their daily life, and what impact this process has on their society. Thus, the study is guided by the central question: How do Roma Christians in Croatia and Serbia negotiate their identity in their daily lives and across their life course?

Grounded in anthropological studies of Christianity, this ethnography utilizes a narrative epistemology to investigate two Old Romanian speaking Roma communities—populations often referred to as Bayash amongst the scientific community. Making use of life stories, participant-observation, and extensive field work, this research is conducted from the positionality of being in a leadership role in one of the church communities. Through narrative analysis, this study investigates individuals' meaning-making structures and interpretative frameworks by analysing their claimed identity in their life stories. Prominent themes of suffering, hardship, and trauma emerge from their narratives, as well as Pentecostal claims of miraculous healing and tangible experiences with God. Interacting with both theology and trauma literature within the concept of 'rupture', the study provides insight into how meaning-making and therefore identities can be transformed through connecting embodied experiences to re-interpretations of stories in relation to Pentecostal theology. It discusses the extent to which Pentecostal identity and theology are embodied in daily lives, and the various socio-cultural, biological, theological, and psychological factors which may impede this. This analysis thus illuminates how Pentecostalism has been localized in two discrete contexts and further, points to possible directions for future research.

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DECLARATIONS

[In absentia, sign, date, scan (preferably into .pdf), and e-mail; or post or fax]

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed Melody Joy Wachsmuth (Candidate)
Date September 4, 2020

STATEMENT 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Where correction services have been used, the extent and nature of the correction is clearly marked in a footnote.

Other sources are acknowledged by midnotes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed Melody Joy Wachsmuth (Candidate)
Date September 4, 2020

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if approved, to be available for photocopying by the British Library and for Inter-Library Loan, for open access to the Electronic Theses Online Service (EthoS) linked to the British Library, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organizations.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to those who have never told their stories but would like to be heard. I also dedicate it to those Roma communities who have shared their lives and stories with me. I am inspired and challenged by your faith, broken by your tragedies, and forever enriched through our relationships. Lastly, I dedicate it to Marija and Josip, whose friendship has greatly influenced my life.

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This thesis has evolved slowly over a number of years; consequently, I am indebted to a number of people that assisted and encouraged me along the way. I am deeply grateful to my two PhD supervisors, Margaret Greenfields and Fiona Bowie, for their in-depth comments and critique, as well as staying invested in the project. Margaret also connected me to various people along the way, in an effort to further resource me. I am also grateful for my OCMS house tutor, Guichun Jun, who offered me key feedback and encouragement at critical moments.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	American Anthropological Association
ACE	Adverse Childhood Experiences
AoG	Assemblies of God
ASA	Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth
CEE	Central, South, Eastern Europe
DECADE	Decade of Roma Inclusion
EU	European Union
EC	European Commission
ECRI	European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance
ERTF	European Roma and Traveller Forum
FPRY	The Federative People’s Republic of Yugoslavia
FRA	European Agency for Fundamental Rights
GATIEF	Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship
IN	Identity Negotiation Theory
IRS	Indian Residential Schools
IRU	International Romani Union
NDH	*Nezavisna Država Hrvatska* (Independent State of Croatia)
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRIS	National Roma Integration Strategies
NRSV	New American Revised Version
OW	Operation World
PK	Pastor’s Kid
PTSD	Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

TCK	Third Culture Kid
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WWI	World War 1
WWII	World War II

FOREWORD

In May 2011, I moved to Croatia from the United States of America, having received a grant from a Christian foundation to undertake writing and research in Southeastern Europe focused on the Church amidst current socio-political realities. I planned to be in Croatia for two years. I knew very little about the Roma and I had no idea that the Roma would become extremely important for both my research and personal life. However, two matters soon attracted my curiosity: the derogatory statements about the Roma uttered by other majority groups in the region and the reality that the largest Evangelical church in Southeastern Europe was a Roma church located in Leskovac, Serbia.[1] This intrigued me, and I put out a call to the Croatian Pentecostal community that I was interested in meeting some Roma Christians. Soon, I received an invitation from a Croatian woman to accompany a Romani Pentecostal couple on their Sunday evangelistic visits to families in a Roma village.[2] This connection between the Romani couple and the Croatian woman, as well as the story of how the Romani couple began visiting this village, will be explored in Chapter Five.

My first visit to the Roma village in June 2011 came at a pivotal moment in the community—after four years of debilitating mental and physical sickness which confined a Roma woman to her room, the woman had experienced healing and was restored to full health. She attributed this healing to the prayers of the Romani couple and a visiting Romani pastor from the Roma church in Leskovac, Serbia. All the houses we visited on that particular Sunday were talking about the healing, since everyone had expected the news of her imminent death. My early written thoughts reflect both my initial shock at

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[1] Although there are of course Roma integrated into churches made up of different ethnicities and cultures, and other ethnicities integrated in Roma churches, often there is a divide between 'Roma churches' and the majority culture churches.

[2] At the time, I did not realise this village spoke an Old Romanian, rather than Romani, nor did I understand the complexities attached to the identifier of 'Roma'. See section 1.2.

the social marginalization and poverty of the Roma people as compared to the surrounding Croatian communities and the fact that this woman's healing had so impacted the community. At the time, I had only a rudimentary understanding of the complicated socio-political situation of the Roma in Croatia, illustrated by my concluding comment written after that day: 'I am intrigued by these people who live in a different world, separated by choice from the Croatian culture. I will be going back' (June 2011). In part, my intention to return was inspired by the question of the future impact of the woman's healing on the community. As time went on, I began to realise my first assessment of separated 'by choice' was inaccurate and the phenomena of social isolation transpired through complicated strands of history and images of identity. In fact, these early themes of social exclusion, poverty, and the impact of Christianity motivated me towards beginning a PhD in 2013.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH STUDY

1.1 Introduction

When I first began gathering stories of Christian revival among the Roma in Southeastern Europe in 2011 for journalistic purposes, I focused only on the conversion story. I was motivated by reports and claims of growing churches, miracles, and changed lives; in particular, by the claim that the largest Protestant evangelical church in Serbia was a Roma church in Leskovac. As time went on, I became dissatisfied by the form, structure, and meaning of stories told within a conversion framework. Conversion narratives orient one's identity and story around the temporal dimensions of *before* and *after* the conversion (Dumanig et al. 2011), and scholars have noted the importance of the conversion ritual in Roma Pentecostalism (Fosztó 2009; 2019). However, I wondered what their conversion really meant for their everyday life; how it shifted their social and family relationships, behaviour, thinking, and emotions. As I turned to narrative research, I found that the process of telling a life story elicited a rich field of data spoken within temporal, thematic, and meaning-making constructions.[1] I discovered that the epistemological[2] foundations of narrative theory, to be explored in Chapter Four, allowed me to analyse these dynamics. Narrative is defined in this thesis as a 'distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a

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[1] Other scholars illustrate the usefulness of conversion narratives: Atanasov (2008) *Gypsy Pentecostals: the Growth of the Pentecostal Movement Among the Roma in Bulgaria and its Revitalization of Their Communities*; Altanov & Benovska-Sabkova (2010) 'The Protestant Conversion Among Roma in Bulgaria: Between Global and Local'

[2] Epistemology is defined in this thesis as the nature and scope of knowledge; its origin, limits, and sources. Epistemology studies the relationship between belief, truth, and justification concerning knowledge and knowledge formation (Martinich & Stroll 2020). Eriksen (2015:48–9) states that our epistemology 'defines how we understand truth, how we go about searching for knowledge, and how we justify our beliefs'.

meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time' (Chase 2011:421).

This thesis is about how Roma Christians interpret and negotiate their identity in daily life—the interplay between the reflexive 'self' and externally constituted identity categories. Narrative research conducted in two communities in Croatia and Serbia revealed part of the empirical terrain in which these identity negotiations take place: domestic violence, anti-Gypsyism, poverty, and exclusion. This terrain directly interacts with the ways in which Pentecostal identities were formed over time—a process that illuminates both how Pentecostalism is localized in the two contexts and the barriers that hinder Pentecostal identity from becoming part of an individual's interpretative framework. Namely, the experiential nature of Pentecostalism with its emphasis on miracles and tangible experiences of God is critical for conversion and can bring empirically assessable change or 'rupture', which has an impact on the individual, family, and community—this was most acutely seen in lives of the Roma leaders of the church communities. However, the biological, emotional, and spiritual consequences of complex trauma and stress, brought about by the socio-cultural terrain, may influence a person's ability to holistically integrate one's articulated faith. Therefore, the extent of holistic integration of Pentecostalism differs in daily lives depending on how an individual is able to shift interpretative frameworks in light of mitigating factors such as healing, gender, experiences with God, and unresolved trauma.

This study was organized around the central research question, which is:

> **How do Roma Christians in Croatia and Serbia negotiate their identity in their daily lives and across their life course?**

The secondary research questions assisted in addressing the central question:

- How do Roma negotiate their identity in a disadvantaged socio-economic context?
- What issues, including gender, are significant for Roma interlocuters in forming their Pentecostal Christian identity?

- How has Pentecostalism been transmitted, internalized, and practised in a specific context and how does this inform a Roma understanding of social change?
- What can participative ethnographic research and the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology contribute to the understanding of a marginalised community?

Chapter One will present the study by introducing the much-debated subject of Roma identity and clarify my use of terminology in the thesis. I will then place that discussion in historical context, discussing the socio-political landscape of the Roma in Europe today. Finally, I will summarize historical examples of Roma interacting with various religions and introduce present-day Pentecostalism among the Roma.

Chapter Two will provide a literature review of the anthropology of Christianity—the discipline in which this study is located—and Pentecostalism. However, the data elicited by narrative research necessarily required me to access literature beyond these two fields. Accordingly, in Chapter Five, I include trauma literature to broaden the analytic lens by which I am approaching the narratives. In Chapters Six and Seven, I bring in theological concepts in order to understand how Roma Pentecostals are interpreting their lives on their own terms.

Chapter Three will narrow the socio-historical terrain introduced in Chapter One by summarizing the history of Roma in twentieth century Yugoslavia. Chapter Four will ground the fieldwork in the methodology of narrative inquiry and present the concrete methods utilised in this study: participant observation, interviews and narrative analysis, and my own reflexive observations. Finally, Chapters Five through Seven will present the empirical data from two different, but related Roma communities in Croatia and Serbia, before Chapter Eight presents the central findings in light of the research questions. The rest of Chapter One will introduce the background behind these questions in more depth.

1.2 Who are the Roma?

Roma identity refers to 'real' people; however, its meaning signifies different people in divergent contexts. The European Roma and Travellers Forum (ERTF) defines Roma in their Charter as someone who: 'avows oneself to the common historical Indo-Greek origin, who avows oneself to the common language of Romanes, who avows oneself to the common cultural heritage of the Romanipe' (2009, Article 1).[3] The Council of Europe defines Roma as 'Roma, Sinti, Kale, and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as "Gypsies"' (2012a, Matras 2013). The European Commission (EC) in their communication of 'An EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020' uses the identifier 'Roma' in the broadest possible way for communities with related cultural characteristics who may either be sedentary or non-sedentary, therefore including communities who may not self-identify as Roma (for example, groups who refer to themselves as Travellers, Gens de Voyage, Sinti, and so on) (2011:2).[4]

In fact, the term 'Roma' started becoming a preferred inclusive political term after the first 1971 World Romani Congress in London. This was to move away from terms such as Gypsies and *Zigeuner,* which had pejorative connotations and were often the terms used by non-Roma (Guy 2001b:19). This landmark conference attended by representatives from 14 countries adopted an anthem and flag and was a movement to

[3] Various oral traditions govern values and practice in Roma societies, and in some Romani speaking communities, part of *Romanipe*. Some Roma groups make distinctions between what is 'pure' or 'clean' and 'impure' or 'defiled'. This applies to things like food, cleanliness, the body, gender distinctions, and topics for conversation. In some societies this is applied strictly whilst others, less so (Matras 2015:86). Of course, cleanliness codes exist in other societies and cultures as well (Kovats 2013).

[4] There has been a long debate in both older scholarship and popular understanding as to the connection between nomad and Gypsy, as opposed to Roma being a distinct ethnic minority (Matras 2013:211). Hence, outsiders have labelled groups such as the 'Irish Travellers' as Roma simply because they are nomadic, although they claim no shared ethnic heritage.

foster a common Romani identity, although not all groups accepted it (Vermeersch 2001:373).[5]

The above radically conflicting definitions demonstrate that the Roma are not a monolithic group, but scattered minority communities who live within a wide range of different societies and cultures, diverse in terms of cultural practices and language (Kovats 2001:7). Sociologists and anthropologists classify Roma on the basis of indicators such as language, ethnic affiliation, religion, historic profession, settlement period in the country, and so on, with disagreement regarding boundaries (Marushiakova & Popov 2001a:12). Endonyms and exonyms may correlate, intersect or merely parallel each other (Marushiakova & Popov 2013).[6] Vermeersch & Ram argue that even their categorization as a group is the 'result of a complex process of labelling, categorization, and counter-categorization by political authorities, cultural elites, self-proclaimed representatives and the wider population' (2009:62). The efforts to ascribe a singular meaning to an identifier can, as Kovats (2013:113,120) notes, be attributed to the 'politicised discourse of Roma identity', which, he argues is used to mediate socio-political debate and decisions, both for the state and Roma activists.

In addition, sometimes the way in which groups self-identify are at odds with how the larger society or researchers identify them. This is illustrated in the complex identity negotiations of the group foregrounded in the present study. Along with different groups of Romani and Sinti in Croatia and Serbia, there are groups who speak different dialects of older forms of Romanian—hereafter they will be referred to as Old Romanian speaking

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[5] For example, in the Third World Romani Congress in 1981, Sinte asserted their own identity label (Acton & Klimová 2001:161). Further Congresses, organized by the International Romani Union (IRU) established in 1977, took place in 1978, 1981, 1990, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2013, and 2015 (Acton & Klimová 2001).
[6] In Eastern Europe, the identifier *Cigáni, Cikáni, Cyganie, Cigonai, Cigani, Cigany, Tigani* can be used by different Roma groups to self-identify and by researchers to connote a 'clearly defined and ethnic community, an "inter-group" ethnic formation known in various countries by similar names whose ancestors migrated from the Indian subcontinent to Europe more than a millennium ago' (Marushiakova & Popov 2013:61). It can also be a social classification and a slur in particular locations, such as Southeastern Europe.

groups. They have long been part of the populations in Croatia, Serbia, Hungary, Bosnia, and Bulgaria with some smaller populations living in Macedonia, Greece, Ukraine, Slovakia, and Slovenia since the nineteenth century. Historically in Croatia and Serbia, these groups were puzzling to outsiders and often grouped in with other Roma or Gypsy groups because they shared certain physical characteristics or socio-economic situations (Acton 2000:161). Some of the scientific community today uses the term *Bajaš* (Croatian) or 'Bayash' to refer to these Old Romanian speaking groups. Linguist Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković defines the Bayash as 'small Roma-like communities speaking different vernaculars of the Romanian language' (2008:174; 2011:45).[7] According to Sorescu-Marinković, south of the Danube in Serbia, other ethnonyms are employed both by outsiders and the communities themselves, such as: *Cigani Rumuni* (Romanian Gypsies), *Vlaski Cigani* (Vlach Gypsies), *Karavlasi* (Black Vlachs), *Tigani* (Gypsies) (2013:5; Sikimić 2005). In other words, identification is related to *place* in relationship to how majority cultures named them.

Croatians and Serbians identify the Old Romanian speaking group as *Cigani* (Gypsy) or *Romi* (Roma). The communities in Eastern Croatia may not even know the word Bayash, unless someone has told them, and would rarely refer to themselves by this name (Sikimić 2005:7; Sorescu-Marinković 2008:174). In the context of my study, communities identify as 'Romanian', 'Gypsy', or 'Roma'. However, they still differentiate between themselves and Romani-speaking Roma, calling the other groups the 'real Roma' and referring to them in Old Romanian as *Lăcătari* and their language *Lăcătăreașce* (Škarić-Jurić et al. 2007; Sorescu-Marinković 2008:180). Sorescu-Marinković presents Bayash identity in her study of Serbia as:

[7] Sorescu-Marinković (2008;2011) notes, however, that Romanian-speaking Roma are also known as *Karavlasi* (Black Romanians/Vlachs) in Bosnia-Herzegovina, *Rudari* in Bulgaria, and *Koritari* in Eastern Croatia.

a system with four coordinates, namely the way they are seen by: 1. Serbs whom they live with; 2.) Roma, whom they are usually assimilated with; 3) Romanians (from Serbia and Romania) 4. the way they define themselves (2005:200).

A few discussions from my primary research below illustrate this complexity.

The president of the Roma council from a region in Croatia, Vladomir [pseudonym], who refers to himself as 'Roma Bayash' explained to me:

> We are all the time Gypsies… [where I grew up], they call us Gypsies all the time. We knew who we were, but maybe we didn't know the terminology of the reality. I had heard it [the term Bayash] maybe before but we were just the Roma people. Even today, there are some tensions. Sometimes it is used very wrong; if people want to be united, they would say, we are all Roma we just have different dialects/languages. But sometimes if they want to say something bad, they say, "Who are you, you don't speak Romani but Romanian." If some professor in France says, You are not Roma, you don't speak Romani Chib, what can you say? If we are looking at our history, maybe because the way we lived, we were called Gypsies. We are from India originally. We were doing DNA, I was helping one group, to see who was Roma or not (2018).[8]

One of my interlocuters in Serbia expressed her frustration with how her community has been identified:

> But here in Serbia, in Serbia it's different. They do make a difference. Between the nations. You understand? For example, we are the Roma nation. Alright, we are not Roma, we are Romanians. I don't know, I just don't know how it came to this that this is a Roma village, and we don't speak Roma… And we, when they [Roma] sit with us like this and talk Roma we don't understand them at all. And they don't understand us… We know Romanian. Alright, we don't know their real dialect a 100 percent, but we mostly know Romanian very good. And I don't know how, who decided to call this a Roma village. It's really lame. This is supposed to be called [a] Romanian village. (Elena, interview 2017)

Elena clarified her initial identification with the 'Roma nation', identifying with Romanians over Roma, based on the shared commonality of language. She expressed her frustration with the 'they' who decided how to classify her village; in fact, this is the constitutive categorization of the state at work—it has the power to name, thus determining what rights the Roma have and how they will be viewed by other people. The identity of this community is on one hand, 'imagined' by both the Serbian state and other ethnicities, and this imagining constitutes the community identity into the already reified image of the 'Roma' in Serbia. On the other hand, while the community operates

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[8] Vladomir's father and 'that generation' had described themselves as Romanian, because they could not speak Romani and felt that to claim Roma identity you needed to speak Romani. He adopted the label in 1999 after the Romani on the Roma council in Croatia questioned his presence since he was identifying himself as 'Romanian'. The Roma president told him to go by 'Roma Bayash' which Vladomir immediately accepted because 'he [the president] had been the Roma president for ten years and had read lots of books' (2018).

as 'Roma' in public while engaging with Serbians, within the community itself, they self-identify as Romanian. In these dynamics, we can see hints of both the politics and social processes involved in categorizing people, and how people without power must negotiate their self-identity with their 'imagined' identity to survive. However, they also retain power in their own 'group-making' by rarely using Serbian in their own community and self-identifying proudly as 'Romanian'. This telling interview extract also reveals Elena's attempted negotiation to move the 'value' of her community up the hierarchical ladder—if Roma/Gypsy identity is at the bottom, to successfully self-identify as Romanian puts the community at least at a psychological advantage over and above the Roma. On the other hand, Vladomir reformulated his identity as 'Roma Bayash' to keep both its uniqueness and to share potential benefits of a wider identity marker.

Clearly, there are no simple and agreed upon methods of identification and categorization for this group. For the purpose of this study, I refer to people in accordance with how they themselves identify. In general, I use 'Roma' in the thesis, indicating a wider umbrella of groups, although noting a different term if a group does not identify as Roma. Sometimes, I use 'Romani' to specifically indicate Romani-speaking people when appropriate, and 'Gypsy' for groups who self-identify as such, or in historical reference to intentionally indicate external perceptions and how it is associated with negative tropes.

1.3 The Roma in Europe

The above discussion illuminates how social relations link to identity, as an individual 'recognizes his identity in socially defined terms and these definitions become reality as he lives in society (Berger 1966:107).[9] In this case, there is a mutually reinforcing

[9] Tajfel (1974:69) defines social identity as part of person's self-concept, which comes from both the knowledge and emotional connection of their group. He argues that group characteristics attain most of their significance in light of differences from other groups and the accompanying valuation of those

relationship between action and attitudes (whether official policy or a localized relationship) and the ways in which Roma identities are conceptualized, represented, and categorized (Mayall 2004; Marsh 2007; Csepeli & Simon 2004; Kovats 2001). The question of how and why this tumultuous relationship between Roma and other peoples in Europe developed is distinctly related to how their identity has been imagined and formulated by others and themselves throughout the centuries (Schneeweis 2018; Tremlett 2013).

Over a thousand years ago, groups of people whose descendants would later identify as Romani, migrated from northwest India and to Anatolia and the Balkans (Taylor 2014:20).[10] By the fourteenth century Romani groups were firmly established on the Balkan Peninsula; in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, large populations were in Central and Eastern Europe (Kenrick 2007:xix; Crowe 2007; Fraser 1995; Hancock 2002). Interpreting the history of the Roma in Europe is complex, particularly because it involves sifting through documents that mention encounters between Roma and non-Roma with little recording of history by the Roma themselves.[11]

Early encounters were often portrayed positively; they were depicted as 'wandering pilgrims' whose ancestors were from 'Lesser Egypt', and they were atoning for returning to paganism (Fraser 1995:62–7); societies capitalized on their various skills and trades (Fraser 1995; Crowe 2007; Hancock 2002). By as early as 1450, however, Roma migrants from Eastern Europe to Western Europe attracted the suspicion and hostility of the state and the church because of their dark skin colour that distinguished them from surrounding

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differences (71). Therefore, he states that one's social identity can only be 'defined through the effects of social categorizations, segmenting an individual's social environment in to his own group and others' (72).

[10] The early history of the Romani in Europe is somewhat speculative because of sparse documentation. For example, scholars debate whether early accounts in the eleventh century, such as a reference to 'Adsincani' people in Constantinople are related to those early Romani groups (Taylor 2014:23).

[11] They were referred by different names as time went on: Egyptians became Gypsy, Tsigane, and Gitano. Different groups in different contexts became known differently, such as the Manouches in France and the Sinti and Jenische in Germany in the sixteenth century (Taylor 2014:11).

groups, and the fear that they might be 'Turkish spies' since they came from the Balkans (Kenrick 2007:xxx–viii; Fraser 1995). In addition, wider socio-political factors contributed to how they were viewed. For example, in *Masterless Men: The Vagrancy Problem in England, 1560-1640,* Beier (1987) contextualizes vagrancy regarding Gypsies and other groups within the larger social issues of poverty; thus, the persecution of vagrants connects to their social status and the perceived challenge to social norms of authority. Petrova (2003:120) concludes that the perceived criminality of the 'Gypsy' in Central and Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries 'must have been the catalyst of the lasting image of the Roma as parasitic nomads, fraudulent fortune-tellers, incapable of producing work …'. Indeed, it was in the fifteenth century, she claims, that the 'poisonous tincture of anti-Gypsyism was concocted' (Petrova 2003:128). Roma groups, therefore, often became included with objectionable social groups, including 'vagabonds, vagrants, errants, nomads, those of no fixed abode, travelling people—in order to control, assimilate or remove them from society' (Taylor 2014:12).

In recent centuries, the relationship marked by suspicion has often been characterized by government/state strategies designed to force the Roma to fit into mainstream society (Marsh 2007; Acton 2014). For example, decrees in the seventeenth century in different parts of Europe allowed the death penalty or banishment for Roma found within boundaries of a kingdom (Taylor 2014:65); whilst in the eighteenth century, provision existed to separate children from parents to disrupt cultural transmission (Taylor 2014:87, 100), and enslavement in the Romanian principalities from the fourteenth century until the nineteenth (Achim 2004:94-6). In fact, van Baar (2011a:15) connects the way Roma groups became 'problematized in minority terms and as a people with its own, supposedly non-European culture, origin, and language' in the late eighteenth century to changing governmentality and 'epistemological paradigms' (148). Brutal governmental policies culminated in genocide in the twentieth century during World War II (WWII).

1.3.1 Poverty and Social Exclusion

Today, the majority of the estimated ten to twelve million Roma and Gypsies in Europe typically have higher rates of illiteracy, unemployment, and health problems than the majority population amongst whom they live, facing severe social exclusion (European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) 2017a). In 2017 FRA report assessed the implementation of mandatory, European Commission (EC) required, National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) for European Union (EU) member countries in the areas of employment, education, housing, and health. The report found that little progress had been made when compared to earlier reports, beginning from 2006 (2017:103).[12]

The poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma are particularly acute in the Western Balkans (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia, Macedonia, Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro), where an Open Society 2010 report estimated around one million Roma live (Müller & Jovanovic 2010:17). This report acknowledges the difficulty in obtaining comprehensive data as a result of paucity of records and a reluctance for Roma to self-identify. However, it argues that the available data shows that in the last 15 years, there has been a deterioration of living standards in Roma communities and a widening gap of standard of living between Roma and non-Roma. Contributing factors to this situation are cited as the post-1990 declining socio-economic situation in the transitioning capitalist economies, as well as the ongoing consequences of the wars in former Yugoslavia (Fundación Secretariado Gitano 2010; Müller & Jovanovic 2010:17-18; Ivanov 2006:14).[13]

1.3.2 Discrimination and Anti-Gypsyism

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[12] Noting the lack of the progress at local state level, the Council of Europe attributes this to ‘insufficient cooperation between stakeholders, lack of commitment by local authorities, the ineffective use of available funds and continued discrimination against Roma’ (2017:103).

[13] This report builds on and liberally uses data from various older reports, including the 2006 UNDP Report: *At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe* (Ivanov 2006); 2007 UNICEF Report *Breaking the Cycle of Exclusion: Roma Children in Southeast Europe* (Belgrade); 2005 UNDP Report *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope* (Bratislava);

As noted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Council, there is a connection between poverty and social exclusion as well as discrimination and anti-Gypsyism. Anti-Gypsyism or Romaphobia is defined in this thesis (in alignment with Council of Europe terminology), as a 'specific form of racism' that is persistent, systematic, and often accompanied by violence' (Council of Europe 2012b:12).[14] Discrimination is defined as variant treatment in a way that disadvantages an ethnic group, based on race, ethnicity, or 'inadequately justified factors' (Blank et al. 2004:39). In fact, discrimination and anti-Gypsyism both contribute to perpetuating the myths and images that lead to the 'legitimization of their eviction, expulsion, substandard housing, education, and healthcare' (van Baar 2011b:205).

A Council of Europe Report (2012b:11), entitled *Human rights of Roma and Travellers in Europe,* called the human rights abuses against Roma and Travellers in the Council of Europe member states 'severe' and noted that anti-Gypsyism is 'deeply-rooted in Europe'. [15] This discrimination and anti-Gypsyism can manifest in numerous ways, for example, through people who have no contact with Roma describing them in stereotypical ways, leaders publicly stigmatising them, the rise of extremism on the internet, stereotypes perpetuated by the media, and a lack of historical recognition of past suffering in atrocities such as the Holocaust (2012b:11–12). Beyond explicit discrimination or anti-Gypsyism, there are ripple effects on Roma families and communities, as illustrated by negative relationships between police and Roma communities, an overrepresentation of

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[14] Mirga-Kruszelnicka (2018:11) adds that it is a racism based on stereotypes and prejudice, and that it not only includes racism based on biology, but a 'differentialist racism', delineating cultural difference with an 'us' and 'them' paradigm.

[15] In this context, when discussing the 'human rights' situation of the Roma, I am referring to the United Nations 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which states that all individuals are born 'free and equal in dignity and rights' without any distinction. Thus all people are entitled to all the rights and freedom the document outlines in social, personal, political, legal, familial, education and economic spheres. The UDHR states that pursuing these universal rights promotes social progress and are intended to be legally and morally binding to states that adopt this framework.

Roma children in foster care, and the assessment that Roma are highly vulnerable to being trafficked for criminal activities or into sex work (2012b:12–18).

The results from the FRA *Second European Minorities and Discrimination Survey* (2017b:2), which demonstrated exclusion and discrimination experienced by Roma were declared to be 'strikingly and frustratingly persistent'.[16] Seventeen years after the EU adopted laws prohibiting discrimination, minority ethnic groups, in particular the Roma, continue to face widespread discrimination.[17] The report also stated that little effort can be seen in relation to addressing the problem at a systematic level, with 20 of the member states having no mention of anti-Gypsyism in their national integration strategies (112). The results also draw a connection between poverty and discrimination—for example, discrimination is most evident in regard to employment, where the Roma were observed to show the largest employment deficit between any ethnic community in member states and the majority population (2017b:96).

1.3.3 Evolving Transnational and National Frameworks

These recent assessments of poverty, social exclusion, and discrimination are conversely related to the recent attention directed toward the Roma. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the EU, state governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academics, Roma activists, and religious bodies have increasingly begun to reflect on the situation of Roma in Europe in terms of their socio-economic situation, discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, migration, and identity, among numerous other

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[16] This survey (which focuses on minority groups including Roma) was conducted with around 34,000 people living in nine EU member states, and is the second time the survey was undertaken, with the earlier research being published in 2009.

[17]The FRA 2017b study found that one out of five Roma claimed that they had been the victims of threatening or offensive comments in the last 12 months, although only 12 percent reported this to the police, or filed a complaint (112–13). In addition, while 4 percent of Roma surveyed had experienced a physical attack in the last 12 months, 70 percent of those attacked did not report it. In fact, 82 percent of Roma respondents were unaware of to whom they could report such assaults, and only 36 percent were aware of EU laws that prohibits discrimination based on skin colour, ethnicity or religion (113).

themes (Fundación Secretariado Gitano 2010). An ever-growing volume of research, reports, recommendations and allocated funding reflects this trend.

Various factors contributed to this increase in focused attention. Kovats (2001:3) attributes it, at least in part, to the growth or perceived growth of Roma populations across Europe, increasing five-fold since WWII. Therefore, there is a subsequent increased demand on public institutions as the Roma grapple with modernization. Second, the growth (or the perception of growth) of Roma migration from East to Western Europe contributed to an increase of media reports and public attention (Vermeersch 2013:347; Matras 2000, 2013; Önsoy & Tuncel 2017).[18] Third, as previously noted, there have been rising levels of anti-Roma remarks and violence toward Roma individuals and communities (Vermeersch 2013:347; Stewart 2012).

This growing transnational attention reflects the realization that the fate of the ten to twelve million Roma in Europe is inextricably tied to the fate of Europe as an open, democratic society and that continuing exclusion augments inter-ethnic tensions in Europe (Council of Europe 2012b:28). A relatively early study conducted by the UNDP in 2002 already foresaw the exponentially detrimental impact of marginalizing the human rights for Roma: 'The human security costs of exclusion will spiral, potentially resulting in political extremism and setbacks for the democratic process' (Ivanov 2002:5).[19] This connection between a flourishing democracy and equal access for all its citizens reveals a shift in the way Roma have been identified and 'minoritized', changing the language to integration, social inclusion, community development, human rights, empowerment, and

[18] Western European response to Roma migration has often been exaggerated and prone to more extreme measures to 'curb' the problem. This can be seen in various scholarly analyses of the media and migration in Western Europe. See Clark & Campbell (2000) 'Gypsy Invasion': A critical analysis of newspaper reaction to Czech and Slovak Romani asylum-seekers in Britain, 1997.

[19] An example of this is the Council of Europe's warning about the increase in racist and intolerant speech and rising nationalism in Croatia, particularly among the younger generation. Such hate speech targets Serbians, Roma, and LBGTQ communities (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Secretariat 2018:9). In Serbia, an ECRI report (2017:9) also noted a rise in hate speech and use of explicitly nationalistic language.

a recognition of the necessity of including the Roma as actors in the discourse regarding programmes and strategies (van Baar 2011a:2ff).

The beginning of this shift in approach can be traced to the development of the UN adoption of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000. A 2002 UNDP report, citing the lack of reliable data in Central, South, and East European (CEE) countries pertaining to the Roma, claimed to be the first comprehensive quantitative study of Roma in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia (Ivanov 2002:1).[20] This was based on a human development perspective, [21] that is, that people as the 'wealth of nations' hold the means and ends to their own development, and this is fundamentally linked to human rights.[22]

Following the report's publication, at a 2003 conference entitled 'Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the future', stakeholders such as the World Bank, George Soros, Roma activists and NGOs decided to launch the 'Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015' (Decade), in an attempt to coordinate international and national efforts. Twelve countries, including most states in Southeastern Europe, joined the initiative (Brüggemann & Friedman 2017:2).[23] The Decade focused on fighting discrimination and working toward 'closing the gaps' through a focus on education, employment, health, and housing (2017:3).

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[20] The survey was based on 5034 questionnaires and claimed to represent the whole region, not just the countries surveyed (2002:1).
[21] The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines the human development approach as '…the expansion of people's freedoms to live long, healthy and creative lives; to advance other goals they have reason to value; and to engage actively in shaping development equitably and sustainably on a shared planet. People are both the beneficiaries and the drivers of human development, as individuals and groups' (Klugman 2010:2).
[22] Accordingly, the Roma minority must have equal access to choices existing for other populations (Ivanov 2006). The UNDP study found Roma unemployment averaged to be 40 percent, high rates of poverty and dependent on social welfare, high percentage (19 percent) of segregation in education, declining health compared to reports from the last decade and chronic lack of access to health services, and a willingness to engage with government political structures (2002:2–4).
[23] Joining the Decade offered countries such as Slovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the Czech Republic the opportunity to fulfil EU accession criteria and possibly receive EU funding. In other words, they may have had motives beyond enforcing human rights laws (Jovanovic 2015).

As the lens of human development and rights was increasingly applied to policy towards, and conceptualization of the Roma, European bodies recognized the gap existing between the rights Roma *should* have and the actual situation in local contexts. In 2008, the Council of the European Union, after meeting to discuss Roma integration, concluded that 'although the Roma within the EU and its neighbouring countries have the same rights and duties as the rest of the population, they in fact form a group that is disadvantaged in several respects and is particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, poverty and discrimination…' (European Council 2008:2).

This gap between policy and the reality at the grassroots level dampened the Decade's early enthusiasm.[24] The 2015 results of the Roma Decade of Inclusion (2005–2015), while noting minimal gains in certain areas of education and health, concluded that poverty for Roma was increasing, although certain discriminatory experiences have declined (Bojadjieva 2015:19).[25] Among other things, three factors contributed to the Decade's failure to make significant progress on the level of local communities (Brüggemann & Friedman 2017; Rorke et al. 2015). First, although Roma experts, activists, and NGOs were involved, there was a substantial lack of involvement and even knowledge about the Decade within Roma communities. Second, lack of accountability and requirements of state governments to adopt and implement proper data measurement processes made assessing changes very difficult (Brüggemann & Friedman 2017:3-4; Bojadjieva 2015). Third, there was a lack of political will among local and regional authorities (Vladomir, interview 2018; Mate, interview 2018). Despite these failings, Brüggemann & Friedman (2017:7) note that the Decade was a critical component in

[24] In the words of one Roma activist quoted in a report by Rorke et al.: 'Unfortunately as each year passed by the flame grew dimmer, went down, and down. By the end of the Decade, there's no flame, the flame went out!' (2015:6).

[25] In 2018, conversations I had with the Roma representative of a town in Eastern Croatia and the president of the Roma council representing a region in Eastern Croatia confirmed this perception in Croatia as well. In their estimation, very little happened during the Decade (2018).

bringing international attention to the Roma in society and institutionalizing Roma integration, with particular emphasis on education.

Inspired by the Decade, the EU framework for 'National Roma Integration Strategies to 2020' was developed. Although the framework states that it does not 'replace Member State's primary responsibility' to integrate their Roma populations, the EC requires states to adopt or further develop the framework to meet the local context (EC 2011). These requirements continue the Decade's focus on housing, education, employment, and health. However, critics note that this policy drive has failed to learn from the mistakes of the Decade, and member state strategies have been repeatedly critiqued for the lack of 'measurement and indicators, the absence of budgeting and provisions for making effective use of EU funds, and their little attention to issues of discrimination in general and the multiple discrimination faced by Roma women in particular' (Brüggemann & Friedman 2017:5).[26]

In October 2017, the High Commissioner for the United Nations Human Rights Office published a mid-term review of member state integration strategies. Reflecting on the lessons learned thus far, it located both the problems and the solutions solidly in a human rights framework—stressing that comprehensive integration, recognition and fighting of anti-Gypsyism can be attributed to a failure of human rights implementation or access, and subsequently the solution lies in the accountable application of EU human rights law.[27]

This report is significant in several ways. First, the report recognized the divergence of results in various contexts instead of monolithically assessing the situation. In addition,

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[26] An ECRI (2018:9) report noted that Croatia has not yet fully implemented their national integration strategies, and Roma communities continue to be characterized by social exclusion. Another ECRI (2017:10) report noted that only certain areas in Serbia had implemented their national strategies.

[27] The report notes: 'The European Union now has sufficient awareness of the scope and nature of the type of human rights abuses to which Roma are exposed to be able to craft frameworks to end such abuses' (Office of the High Commission 2017:2).

it acknowledged that identified successes are due to serious efforts at both state and local levels to address exclusion (2017:4). Second, it called for a greater understanding and recognition to the ways anti-Gypsyism is linked to exclusion, and how stigma contributes to human rights abuses (2017:5). Third, it recognized the need to highlight local creative efforts and bring these into the data pool (2017:9). Finally, it acknowledged that the EU's progress in its overarching development agenda is inextricably linked to its success in fostering Roma integration (2017:10).

1.3.4 Implications

Three primary issues emerge from this broad portrayal of the reality of life for many Roma today. First, there is a marked gap between writing and adopting policy at a centralised level, and the reality of implementation at the local level, despite EU and/or state pressure (van Baar 2011a:4). [28] This problematic gap is particularly significant when applied to the UN's 2017 confident assertion (see above) that they are able to 'craft frameworks' to end human rights abuses, despite the stigma and discrimination that is enacted on a local level from majority populations to Roma communities.

Second, there are different reasons that are contested by organisations as to why there is such a prominent gap between policy and local implementation. The lack of progress has variously been attributed to misused finances, corruption and lack of accountability; prejudice, anti-Gypsyism, and discrimination; the weakness of Roma politics; and the failure of state and local actors (Vermeersch 2013:353; Kovats 2001:6-8). Van Baar argues that these gaps must be put into the context of European governmentality following the fall of Communism; there is a need to assess the new forms of governance, the 'neo-

[28] The idea that project-based endeavours alone can change social exclusion is now questioned by the European Council, in 2011 calling for more a more 'integrated and flexible manner' (Vermeersch 2013:356).

liberal restructuring of states, economies, and civil societies' and to see how they relate to 'the resurgence and reshaping of forms of nationalism and Romaphobia' (2011a:6).

Referring back again to the UN's 2017 mid-review of the national strategies, although their focus on human rights implementation is a welcome new paradigm, it must also be recognized that this framework is an outgrowth of Western neoliberalism and therefore cannot be taken as a monolithic ideology applied with equal results in all nation-states. In this work, I refer to neoliberalism in reference to governmentality—namely, expressions of political-economic governance based on market relationships (Larner 2000:5) extending into the social domain (van Baar 2011a:153). These forms of governmentality interact with local cultures and politics in specific ways (van Baar 2011a:166; Larner 2000:21). Neoliberal ideas of governance emphasize active subjects, free choice and individual responsibility, consumerism, and market inclusion (van Baar 2011a:17). Van Baar (2011a:317) argues that one negative consequence to this paradigm in post-socialist states is the trend 'to make the Roma responsible for solving their own issues without substantially improving the conditions under which they could do so'. Although locating the issues in a human rights and development framework provides important insights into the problems existing between the majority cultures and the Roma, perspectives from other epistemological frameworks can also provide insights. Chapter Two will suggest that Pentecostal Christianity is not just an object of study, but also its epistemology can be a 'theoretical and methodological contributor' to the analyses (Eriksen 2015:46).[29]

Finally, the framing of Roma identity influences both policies and everyday interactions between Roma and non-Roma. As Vermeersch (2013:345) notes: 'There are currently no strong and effective responses to the practice of some local policy makers of

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[29] The epistemological lens of Pentecostalism refers to an epistemology or tacit worldview congruent with its spirituality, practices, and belief (Frestadius 2016). For Pentecostals, knowledge is gained not just through cognitive rationality, but it is an affective process, an embodied spirituality (Smith 2010) and is connected to how individuals experience reality (Yong 2002).

portraying Romani citizens systematically as a burden on the local economy, rather than as a group that deserves economic support as equal citizens.' This raises the question of how identity should be understood and studied.

1.4 Identity and Social Context

In this study, I interact with two approaches to identity. First, identity as a 'self', a reflexive modality through which one understands oneself and for which one asks for recognition (Leve 2011:513); a self that we construct and live out in relationship to the various decisions, demands, challenges, and in specific local contexts and relationships (Gubrium & Holstein 2000:10); a self within a horizon of possibilities within which one orients oneself through decisions regarding what is good and ought to be done (Taylor 1989:27–8). This includes our self-image that we form from our 'family, gender, cultural, ethnic, and individual socialization process' (Ting-Toomey 2005:212). It is the importance of this 'self', for example, that has relevance for what it means to be a 'born again person' that Roman (2017:37) highlights in her work on Kaale Pentecostals. I propose that one useful way of understanding this 'self' is through narrative theory, explored further in Chapter Four.

Second, the concept of identity as a socio-political construction emerges from the society, discourses and institutions, which 'produces not only the classes and categories of social personhood that structure public recognition of social collectivities but, indeed, the very ontology of "identity" itself' (Leve 2011:514). In the case of Roma identity, there is an ongoing 'symbiotic relationship' between various Roma communities and dominant cultures, which is shaping, and continues to shape Roma identity (Guy 2001b:5). For example, although Michael Stewart (2012:8) criticizes certain political rhetoric emerging from some countries, he refuses to link this solely with the manifestation of fears, violence, and anxieties from ordinary people, rather he claims it acts a trigger to augment

what is already there. Further, changes in the socio-political order can shift the meanings of identity categories. In a ten-year span of anthropological fieldwork in a village in Hungary, for example, ethnographers explored the connection between the changing social order and naming the ‘Gypsy’ (Horváth 2012). An unspoken understanding that ‘Gypsy’, which meant ‘handicapped [disabled] Hungarian’ shifted into being defined in an oppositional way as the Roma began moving into Hungarian neighbourhoods, schools, and jobs—occupying ‘Hungarian’ spaces. ‘Gypsy’ thus came (in common understanding) to represent the new social problems and ills post-transition from Communism (Horváth 2012:120). If, as Belton (2004:142) notes, Roma ethnic identity is formed in and against the ongoing process of marginalization and stigmatization, then the creation of identity, or at least the perception of identity in society, is really determined by the non-Roma.

Drawing on the identity negotiation (IN) theory, the interaction of these two aspects of identity are negotiated through ‘symbolic communication’ (both verbal and non-verbal) with others in an intercultural encounter. This is in an effort to achieve identity security, connection, and inclusion (Ting-Toomey 2009:493) and attempt to ‘assert define, modify, challenge, and/or support their own and others’ desired self-images’ (Ting-Toomey 2005:217). According to Ting-Toomey (2015:419), whether it is unconscious or conscious, ‘identity self-conception and other typecasting influence our everyday behaviours in a generalized and particularized manner’. Thus, in the sphere of everyday life, Roma negotiate their identity in relationship to their social contexts and local relationships.[30] However, this is intertwined with the second approach to identity; the category of conceptualised ‘Roma’ which has every day implications (Ludvig 2006:248), particularly since the characteristics of their ‘imagined community’ have been

[30] See Beranek’s (2011) PhD thesis: ‘“With Us Roma”: The narrative engagement and social knowledge of two Czech Romani women’. She analyses narratives to explore how ethnicity becomes significant through interactions between Roma and Czechs.

created from the majority cultures around them (Marushiakova & Popov 2013; Anderson 2006). From a policy standpoint, 'Roma' is often associated with a 'lack of' (lack of resources, lack of education, lack of proper housing, lack of employment), thus grouping related, semi, or non-related groups of people as problems to be solved. From a local standpoint, the image of the 'Roma' or 'Gypsy' is linked to images of poverty, criminality, dirtiness, and unruliness (Stewart 2012:4).

Identity then, lived out within transnational, state, and local contexts, can be redefined and renegotiated as a result of socio-political changes, but changes in identity can also affect the socio-political order. This thesis will explore the ways in which changes to conceptions of the 'self' in regard to the adoption of a new religious identity interacts with these negotiations. In seeking to answer this question, the rise of Pentecostalism in Roma communities offers a dynamic field of study that addresses these various dynamics.

1.5 Roma and Religion

1.5.1 Historical Relationship

In addition to societies having a complex relationship with the Roma, so did religious traditions. Longstanding folk and oral traditions from at least the fifteenth century illustrate connections between Roma and Christianity. Stories are repeated about Roma stealing the nails from Jesus' cross, or crafting the nails, or failing to offer shelter to Joseph, Mary, and Jesus when they fled to Egypt to escape Herod's murderous intentions (Atanasov 2008:101). Even today some Roma link this failure of hospitality to a 'curse' placed by God upon the Roma, resulting in their current suffering (Hancock 2002; Fraser 1995). Some Christian Roma attribute their suffering to curses that must be broken in the spiritual realm (Field notes, January 2020).

In fact, from the sixteenth century onward, it seems that the Orthodox, Catholic, and Islamic authorities were often suspicious of the 'Gypsies', as they were perceived to be

‘irreligious’ (Margalit 1999). In 1611 in Madrid, for example, Gypsies were accused of faking their Christian faith (indicating that they were not ‘good Catholics’) leading King Phillip III to issue a mandate of expulsion in 1619 (Matras 2015:176).[31] Between 1497 and 1774, 146 decrees were issued against the Gypsies by the Holy Roman Empire (Margalit 1999).[32] In Italy, until the nineteenth century, the Church often refused Gypsies access to the sacraments, and yet in 1635 in Portugal, Gypsies were excommunicated if they did not attend mass (Fraser 1995:184). The Catholic Church generally also referred to the Gypsies’ ‘heathenish practices and sorcery’ (Fraser 1995:129). In 1538, the Spanish Inquisition began investigating Gypsies, accusing them of sorcery and superstition, although some local priests did protect members of the community and offered them sanctuary (Matras 2015:171–76).

After the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century, Catholicism began to highlight religious obedience with conformity to morality within a given society. Since it was widely believed that Gypsies did not marry in church or baptize their infants, this was perceived of as a direct challenge to the Church’s moral authority and hence how a civil society should operate (Taylor 2014:58). In fact, since the Catholic, Orthodox, and later Protestant churches[33] all took a strong mediating role in enforcing and perpetuating standards for Christian morality and civility, they have thus often been complicit in furthering the stereotypes of the Gypsy as ‘Other’, collaborating with governments to assimilate or supress Roma (Thurfjell 2013:34).[34]

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[31] The Spanish context was extremely multicultural, including Jewish and Muslim communities. In the latter part of the fifteenth century and the sixteenth century, Spanish rulers became obsessed with expunging religious and linguistic differences. As Spanish state power began declining, there was a rise in expulsions of Muslims, Jews, and Moriscos who refused to convert (Taylor 2014:57).

[32] One document from 1749 writes: ‘It is certain that gypsies [sic] have at all times been godless, wicked people who are harried with complete justification’ (Fraser 1995:188).

[33] Thurfjell (2013:35) notes that the Lutheran church in Swedish-Finland would baptize the Kaale children in the nineteenth century, but the community was still considered to be ‘heathen’ by the Church.

[34] For example, Thurfjell (2013:34) relates that in the late Eighteenth Century, Emperor Joseph II of the Austro-Hungarian Empire passed a decree within which five edicts pertained to how the Church could best assimilate the Roma.

Sources from the Ottoman time period make it clear that some Gypsies merged Muslim and Christian beliefs with their own traditions, or were willing to switch their religion, which could have been a pragmatic calculation regarding the financial benefit Roma would receive within the Ottoman tax system (Taylor 2014:31–2). Several accounts reveal that some Turks and Christians were suspicious of Gypsies, and Muslims relegated the burial of Muslim Gypsies to obscure places in the graveyard (Marushiakova & Popov 2001b:74ff). European travellers reported the bad image Christians and Muslims had of the Gypsies in the Ottoman Empire, viewing them as pagans, sexually loose with a tendency toward criminality, and a general laxity in keeping religious ordinances—and accordingly, both Christian and Muslim leaders barred them from mosques and churches (Ginio 2004:127). However, it is possible that European travellers were merely interpreting matters through the prism of their own existing prejudices against the communities (Ginio 2004:127-28).

In the Christian Orthodox world, similar attitudes were evident. For example, in 1860 in Bulgaria, a bishop said it was a 'sin' to give alms to Gypsies and infidels, whilst Orthodox priests were forbidden to bless Gypsy marriages (Atanasov 2008:99; Marushiakova & Popov 2001b). The monasteries in Wallachia, Moldova and Transylvania benefited from the labour of Gypsy slaves between the fourteenth and nineteenth centuries (Achim 2004). This suspicion towards the population did not always manifest as exclusion, however; in the late nineteenth century, a Serbian bishop Melentije confidentially issued a notice requiring Serbs to convert Gypsies to Orthodoxy—in three years, Melentije personally baptized 2222 Gypsies in his diocese (Crowe 2007:209).

Evidence also exists that there were active Gypsy Orthodox Christians in the nineteenth century. A letter written by an anonymous 'Egyptian' from Prilep, Macedonia, in the context of Bulgarian opposition toward Greek Patriarchy in the Church, reveals an exposition of theology and civic rights, in which the writer challenges the Church's

superior attitude toward the Gypsies, citing that Christians are 'clothed with Christ' and are therefore a 'new creation' (Galatians 3:27:2 Corinthians 5:17 New American Revised Version (NRSV); therefore members of the author's community should have the same religious rights as everyone else. This 'Egyptian' attributes Gypsy religious changeability to the fact that '…although they are Christian, they are not allowed to participate in the Mysteries, and they are suspected by the rest of the Christians' (Marushiakova & Popov 2001b:77).

It was not until the eighteenth century in England that concern for 'Gypsy souls', appeared in different Protestant documents. However, characteristic of the perspective of that time, Christians had the desire to 'civilize', as well as missionize (Fraser 1995:198). Meier (2018:105), for example, demonstrates how Protestant missionaries 'Othered' Roma and Sinti, referred to as *Zigeuner* in nineteenth century Germany, using terminology similar to colonial subjects. Protestant missionaries aimed to 'transform' *Zigeuner* perceived to be living on the rewards of theft and trickery, through teaching Christian morality using work and education, prayer, and God's help.

The widespread ministry of Gypsy Smith, a Romani evangelist from England, reveals these attitudes merging 'civilizing' and 'mission' in his own self-narration. For example, in his first sermon he tells the people he is 'only a gipsy [sic] boy,' and excuses himself to people in relation to his first experience of eating publicly in a 'civilized manner' by saying:

> Please forgive me. I do not know any better. I am only a gipsy boy. I have never been taught what these things [cutlery] are. I know I shall make lots of blunders, but if you correct me whenever I make a mistake, I will be very grateful. I will never be angry, and never cross.

The next morning, Smith prayed to God, stating that he is in foreign territory among people who 'could not understand my wildness and my romantic nature' (2017). In these musings, one can note the inextricable connection between conversion and 'civilizing',

as well as the extraordinary way in which the narrator accepted perceptions of his lower level of 'development'.

Given the history of being excluded, persecuted, and even enslaved by religious authorities and institutions in many countries, the continued growth of Pentecostalism among the Roma in places like Europe, South America, and Russia is remarkable. When the difficult history of Roma communities and Christian traditions is juxtaposed against the explosion of Roma Pentecostalism in Europe beginning in the 1950s, Pentecostalism among the Roma emerges as an important field of anthropological inquiry in itself, but also in relationship to the broader studies of Pentecostalism in general.[35]

1.5.2 Pentecostalism among the Roma

The rise of Pentecostalism among the Roma began in the 1950s and 1960s in various locations: France, England, Bulgaria, and Romania (Atanasov 2008; Fosztó 2019; Acton 2014), although most prominently in France. In CEE, its spread accelerated after the fall of Communism in 1989 (Altanov & Benovska-Sabkova 2010; Atanasov 2008; Slavkova 2014:60; Gog 2009) with newer churches in Southeastern Europe beginning in the twenty-first century. A limited number of studies in specific geographical contexts illustrate that Pentecostalism's impact on Roma communities is twofold: it is linked to social change including a rise in levels of education and literacy, and a decrease in crime; and better relationships with the majority culture (Atanasov 2008; Podolinská & Hrustič 2010; 2014).

Studies have suggested various reasons for its success: Pentecostalism's non-hierarchical structures and theology allow easier cultural adaption (Williams 1991, 1993; Strand 2014); continuity of certain cultural factors such as dance and song (Todorović

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[35] Thurfjell & Marsh (2014:13) note the 'dearth' of studies on Romani Pentecostalism within the broader field of global Pentecostalism; however, since then, there has been increased publication involving Roma Pentecostalism in various contexts including in Finland (Roman 2017), Brazil (Toyansk 2017), Spain (Cantón-Delgado 2017), and the Czech Republic (Ripka 2014, 2015).

2012); facilitation through kinship networks and a strong leader (Hrustič 2014; Slavkova 2003); innovative means of cultural/political affirmation (Cantón-Delgado 2017; Acton 2014), response to everyday needs caused by ethnic and social marginalization (Fosztó 2019; Thurfjell & Marsh 2014); a response to spiritual or emotional needs (Podolinská 2014; Thurfjell 2013), decreasing of social distance to the majority and new networks of belonging (Todorović 2012; Roman 2017; Podolinská 2014); a means of identity empowerment, and revitalization (Thurfjell & Marsh 2014; Carrizo-Reimann 2011; Acton 2014:23; Marushiakova & Popov 1999; Strand 2014; Ries 2014).

In some studies, theorists point to a 'new kind of diaspora' (Cantón-Delgado 2017:9), an 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006), formed on the basis of Pentecostal beliefs resulting in belonging in God's family, rather than only ethnic markers (Ries 2014; Strand 2014). This perspective sees this process as a kind of ethno-genesis (Thurfjell 2013), or a 'vehicle of Romani identity' (Acton 2014: 23) similar to, or on a parallel track, with the growth of Roma political movements, although with different motivations. Strand (2014:123) articulates that whilst both want social change, Romani activists work through political and social organizations, while Pentecostals focus on morality, although frequently those two streams intersect since, for example, some activists are also pastors (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019). On the other hand, some researchers claim that regardless of a new Christian identity, ethnic distinction is still preserved between different Roma groups and between the *gadje* (non-Roma) and Roma (Slavkova 2014:72; Ries 2014; Acton 2014), or new boundaries are made between believers and non-believers (Roman 2017). Theorists argue that Roma identities are being constructed in context, in relationship to Pentecostal theology, 'with the production of discourses and practices that

combine the self-attributed traditional heritage and its re-signification, driven by new codes and new objectives' (Cantón-Delgado 2014:80).[36]

Despite the increase of studies on Roma Pentecostalism, there is considerably less analysis of, and data on, Roma Christians who leave the church after initial conversion and the setbacks and difficulties that many Pentecostal leaders articulate and encounter (although see Thurfjell 2013; Hrustič 2014; Lange 2003). One mission coordinator in Eastern Europe, for example, wrote in a 2002 report: 'The difficulties arising from variations in dialects, extreme poverty, widespread illiteracy, and racial prejudice against Romany[sic] make facilitating a church movement a slow process (Dawson 2002). In various interviews, church leaders in CEE concede that the spiritual openness of the Roma allow for their quick conversion, but change is slow, and sometimes they easily leave the church. One pastor in Serbia described in an interview: 'At the moment when they hear the gospel, they are usually without hope, and when they hear it, they feel hope. They accept it, and they have a fire in their heart, but they don't how to put wood on the fire…we try to help them, but it is not easy' (Subotin, interview 2012).

Roma leaders' explanations for the difficult process involved with discipling Roma to live in accordance with the teachings of Jesus include widespread adult illiteracy (making Bible study difficult), ongoing dabbling in magic, cultural barriers for those non-Roma who are discipling Roma, the daily stress of surviving poverty, fractured relationships in the community, domestic violence, and alcoholism (Wachsmuth 2013b). In the literature, scholars note that converts attribute their struggle to the influence of 'evil', the demands of family and social networks (Fosztó 2009: 116-18), wrestling between sin in the 'world' and new identity in Christ (Ries 2007), and the difficulty of the 'moral life' that one has to live out (Gog 2009:105). Hrustič (2014:205) notes that the failure of a charismatic

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[36] For example, Gay y Blasco (1999) explores how Pentecostalism among Spanish Gitanos has influenced their approach to conflict.

church's mission in one Roma community in Slovakia is interpreted by Roma converts as their own 'moral failure', while local non-believers attributed it to the movement's inability to make money because of the people's poverty.

Scholars have explanations of their own: Thurfjell (2013:153) attributes the difficulties to marginalization and economic insecurity, leading to low self-esteem;[37] Podolinská (2017) adds the struggle of belonging and poverty; Lipan (2017:71) highlights the interplay between ethnic and religious identity through the tension of migration; while Roman (2017:175) compares it to the wider literature of evangelicalism that illustrates religious backsliding is not merely a 'Roma' phenomenon (Luhrmann 2012). Hrustič (2014:210) argues from the 'stage model' of conversion (Rambo 1993) that disengagement is caused by a failure to complete the 'last stage' of conversion, which relates to changes in values, behaviours, and lifestyles. Often the majority cultures, however, and sometimes even Roma pastors, ascribe this issue as being something intrinsic within the 'Roma culture'; a certain 'lack of discipline' or laziness, reflective of historical and religious perceptions. This is illustrated by the non-Roma pastor's explanation of his church's failure described by Hrustič (2014:206) above as choosing inadequate Roma leaders, migration, and because Roma are 'missing certain habits that are commonplace for the majority … mind, will, emotional and working habits'.

Although these anthropological and sociological studies provide essential insight, two areas are lacking. First, a narrative inquiry methodology, described in Chapter Four, revealed life narratives that hold a substantial amount of unresolved trauma, suggesting another contributing factor to the difficulties of Christian discipleship: the impact of complex trauma, defined in this paper as 'exposure to sustained, repeated, or multiple

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[37] A recent example in Eastern Croatia illustrates this. A young Roma woman attempted to get a job at a bakery so that she could stop begging. The owner would not hire her because her presence behind the counter would most certainly lead to less business. Therefore, the woman is forced to continue begging in order to survive, despite frequently enduring the curses and scorn (that she is begging instead of working) of the Croatians from whom she is begging (Field notes, November 2018).

traumas, particularly in the childhood years' (Cloitre et al. 2009:399). Second, there has been a distinct lack of studies that incorporate Christian theological categories into the analysis. Applying a different epistemological lens by which to interpret the Roma experience may broaden the understanding between contextual expressions of Roma Pentecostal identity and a Pentecostal theology, set within a complex socio-political space. Therefore, Chapter Two will describe Pentecostalism in historical and modern expressions, first locating the discussion within the discipline of the anthropology of Christianity.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One laid out the foundation of this thesis by highlighting the complexity of Roma identity negotiation within their socio-economic and political realities and argued that the epistemological lens of Pentecostalism offers the possibility to expand the perimeters of research. In this chapter, I will locate the study within the anthropology of Christianity because of this discipline's epistemological view of Christianity and its openness to interacting with theology, which I define in this thesis as meaning-making of the Christian faith (Lauterbach & Vähäkangas 2019:5). Next, I will introduce the global phenomena of Pentecostalism, discussing definitions, historical overview, and dominant themes related to my particular contexts of study. This large diverse landscape of Pentecostalism will allow greater nuance and comparison when I discuss the localized contexts in the study of Serbia and Croatia.

Historically, anthropology has been about studying experience, difference and 'otherness' (Luhrmann 2018:79), although the attitudes toward the 'Other' and the positionality of the researcher have shifted over the decades as the discipline has matured. In the late nineteenth century, social scientists began using the methodology of the physical sciences to study human experience; it was assumed that by using scientific methods, an objective researcher could discover the reality of social existence, thus using the 'facts' to create social theory and predictions (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007:9). Two of the most significant assumptions behind this methodological framework were the perceived non-intersecting spheres of the researched and researcher, and the sense of static time in which the research findings were thought to reside. With this kind of

decontextualization, it was presumed that findings could be applied to different contexts as if the ‘essence’ of a culture could be captured like a photograph (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007:10).

These assumptions of objectivity influenced how anthropologists viewed Christian missionaries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. On the one hand, anthropologists were critical of how Christian missionaries engaged with ‘cultural change’ through religion—using anthropological tools in order to more effectively convert populations who opposed their values of ‘objectivity’ governing the discipline (Lauterbach & Vähäkangas 2019:4). On the other hand, early anthropologists received a substantial part of their ethnographic data from missionaries, as anthropological fieldwork did not routinely occur until the 1920s and 1930s (Pels 1990:82).[1]

The social-evolutionary perspective, popularised by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), was one of the dominant social epistemologies flourishing in the late nineteenth century, which impacted how both anthropologists and Christian missionaries approached the ‘Other’. This view held that societies move through stages from savage, barbaric, and magical to civilized, religious, and scientific. In E.B Tylor’s theorizing (1832–1917), religion moved from animism to polytheism to monotheism through rational thought (Whiteman 2003:398). ‘Civilization’ placed a higher value on literacy, democracy, and complex social structures and this became intertwined with how Christianity should manifest in a society (Smith 1999:48).

In fact, the historical relationship between Christianity and anthropology illustrates how both anthropologists and Christian missionaries approached the cultural and

[1] Sometimes, the benefits of ethnographic data were a mutual enterprise. For example, Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881) sent a kinship survey to many missionaries, asking them to send back the data. Through this, Lorimer Fison (1832–1907), an Australian missionary in Fiji, developed an appreciation for anthropology, using it to understand the Fijian worldview and the impact of Western contact (Whiteman 2003:399). Several missionary ethnographies came out of Melanesia during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, Charles E. Fox (1878–1977) wrote *The Threshold of the Pacific: An Account of the Social Organisation, Magic, and Religion of the People of San Cristoval in the Solomon Islands* (1924).

religious 'Other' limited by their own epistemological horizons. Larsen (2016), for example, explores the relationship between British social anthropology and Christianity through a historical, in-depth study of the attitudes, theory, and writings of significant British anthropologists. Among his conclusions is that the link between personal attitudes toward Christianity—set in the dominant social epistemologies of a given time—play heavily into formulated anthropological theory.[2] This is evidenced in the work of scholars who became derisive toward Christianity (such as E.B Tylor (1832–1917), as well as those who were Christians (such as Mary Douglas (1921–2007) or became adherents of the Christian faith such as Sir Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard (1902–1973), who converted from nominal Anglicanism. As Edith Turner (1921–2016) outlined in her autobiography, Victor Turner (1920–1983) and she were spiritually inclined Marxists materialists until they were drawn into Catholicism by the rituals. This movement into faith allowed Edith and Victor to deeply experience other traditions' spirituality in their research (Turner 2008).[3]

Through the gradual process of decolonization in the twentieth century, both anthropologists and mission scholars questioned the assumptions behind approaches to culture and the 'Other'.[4] In the 1960s, the civil rights movement in America and the 1970s emergence of feminism drew attention to repressed narratives of people, such as slave narratives (Chase 2005:654) and black women's conversion stories (McKay 1989:139).[5]

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[2] For example, Larsen highlights E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) whose Quaker roots and subsequent disenchantment can be traced in the evolution of his anthropological theories on religion (2016:13–36).

[3] Larsen (2016:114) argues that Evans-Pritchard's work opened up dialogue between anthropologists and theologians and biblical scholars.

[4] For example, Malinowski's (1884–1942) article 'Practical Anthropology' (1929:38) called for anthropologists to study cultures out in the field and to study 'the changing Native' as a result of Westernization; Edwin W. Smith (1876–1957), missionary and 'amateur' anthropologist who served as the president of Britain's Royal Anthropological Institute from 1933–1935 noted in his presidential address that Christian missionaries too often conflated Western ways of living and behaving, seeing themselves as agents of European civilization (Smith 1934: xxvi–xxvii); A Christian anthropologist, Robert B. Taylor, launched the publication of *Practical Anthropology* in 1953, which discussed issues of culture and mission (Whiteman 2004).

[5]These Black Christian women, who 'claimed equal access to the love and forgiveness of a black-appropriated Christian God could not be non-persons in eyes of a white world' (McKay 1989:140).

Increasingly reflexive approaches problematized the positioned act of studying the 'cultural other'—often critiquing the dominant body of perspectives from Anglo-North America, France, and Germany (Okely 2012; Erickson & Murphy 2013:168; Stromberg 2014:216). Qualitative researchers thus began to blur genres by employing a wide variety of paradigms such as ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism, critical theory, and neo-Marxist theory (Alastalo 2014:35). The influence of post-modernism, poststructuralism, and social constructionism further began to assume 'multiple, disunified subjectivities' (Andrews et al. 2013b:3). Since it was recognized that representations of a culture were at least partially the result of unequal power relations, practice, politics and epistemology were understood to be intertwined (James et al. 1997:2). If the lives of others are situated, contextual, and 'becoming' (James et al. 1997:4), how a researcher approaches the study of human experience is likewise related to their epistemological stance on understanding and interpreting reality (Gubrium & Holstein 2009).

2.2 Anthropology of Christianity and Theology

Since the 1990s, the growing field of anthropology of Christianity has challenged some of anthropology's grounding assumptions regarding the study of Christianity. For example, scholars (Robbins 2007; Cannell 2005; Jørgensen, 2011) have used Jean and John Comaroff's work on Christianity in Africa (1991,1992) as a jumping off point to critique the ways in which anthropology has 'decentred' Christianity and assumed the 'inevitable secularizing tendency of Modernity' (Jenkins 2012:466). Harding's (1991:375) essay 'Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other' argued that the tools of anthropology to critically study 'the Others' were not applied to all equally, but only those who fit into anthropologists' categories. Further, she challenged the categories of thought that produced the binaries of 'us' and 'them,' all

set within the modernist discourse. The trajectory of liberal progress cast the 'Fundamentalist' Christian[6] as backwards and aberrant, whilst the Fundamentalist Christian, trapped in the same epistemological discourse, saw themselves as the bastions of truth.

Other themes in the study of Christianity became central: for example, whether Christianity is primarily transcendent in nature; how Christianity contributes to expressions of individualism; and how Christianity contributes to major cultural change (Robbins 2019:18). Joel Robbins argued in 'Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture' (2007) and 'Anthropology, Pentecostalism, and the New Paul' (2010b), that anthropologists historically have emphasized continuity in culture—assuming cultures are inherently hard to change because of deeply embedded values, symbols and meanings—whereas Christianity is based on a culture of discontinuity.[7] Consequently, he points out that anthropologists have not been inclined to study cultural shifts *resulting* from Christianity. Anthropologists listening to converts have often tried to substantiate their own continuity arguments by attempting to show how their traditions are still being 'redressed' by new religious ideas (2010b:635–36); or that Christian beliefs are adopted only for economic, social, or political gain; that 'change' is only located in speech and conversion narratives, or that the entire concept of Christian conversion is problematic (2007: 6f).

In essence, Robbins (2007:10) unpacks an 'ethnography of change', arguing that Christianity, from its very beginnings, has a sense of time where radical change can

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[6] I am speaking of Christian Fundamentalism here as a specific movement that emerged in the early twentieth century as a reaction against perceived liberal theology and modernist culture. It emphasized literal interpretation of the Bible and maintained such Church doctrines such as the virgin birth, the resurrection, and miracles. This identity was first shaped through the 'Fundamentalist-modernist' controversy, which climaxed in the evolution debate of the Scopes trial in 1925 in which scientific modernity was pitted against Biblical literalist interpretations of science. Fundamentalism continued to redefine its identity in response to American culture through the twentieth century (Marsden 2006).

[7] One can see this commitment to 'continuity' in E. B. Tylor's concept of 'survivals'. That is, if something does not make sense in the current context of a culture, it might be left over from an 'earlier stage', such as a superstition, thus illustrating the continuity of culture (Larsen 2016:22).

happen in the past influencing the present, which can determine a new future. In Harding's *The Book of Jerry Falwell* (2000), she argues that this change comes about through knowledge manifested through language: '…belief that indisputably transfigures you and your reality, belief that becomes you, comes only through speech' (2000:60). Luhrmann (2004:522–24), on the other hand, in 'Metakinesis: How God becomes intimate in contemporary U.S. Christianity', uses an ethnography of an American Pentecostal church to argue that knowledge about God is not enough, and that there must be an emotional knowing of God cultivated by learning how to recognize God's presence in bodies, a process she refers to as metakinesis. These are 'bodily phenomena' that are 'new and distinctive', and this discontinuity of experience is often interpreted as a sign of God's presence in their lives. In Luhrmann's study, she notes 'sensory hallucinations' and changes in conscious awareness as part of this embodied experience.

To offer a critical interpretation of the subjects' own religious experience is to understand their 'sense-making' process; therefore, one must begin where Christians begin—their framework for interpreting the world (Garriot & O'Neal 2008:386–87). This includes studying the questions and problems Christianity itself poses, which means fostering a dialogue between theology and anthropology (Cannell 2005, 2006; Howell 2007; Larsen 2016; Jørgensen 2011). As noted above, anthropology and Christianity have influenced each other in various ways (Lemons 2018:22), and a more explicit connection between theology and anthropology has long precedent. For example, Evans-Pritchard's use of theological categories in *Theories of Primitive Religion* (1965) or more recently Luhrmann's (2012) *When God Talks Back* employment of theological sources to bring understanding to an anthropological study of experience with God.[8]

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[8] See also: Mary Douglas's *Natural Symbols*: *Explorations in cosmology* (1970); Douglas Davies *Anthropology and Theology* (2002); Keane's (2007:32) *Christian Moderns*: *Freedom and fetish in the mission encounter* ethnography of the encounter between Dutch Calvinism and Sumban Indonesians.

In 'Anthropology and Theology: An awkward relationship?', Robbins (2006:286f) posits three ways that anthropology might engage with theology: to understand the theological ideas that have been part of the formation of anthropology, to use theology as data about a particular Christian culture, and to explore the possibility that theologians may have certain concepts that are more expansive, such as questions pertaining to ultimate meaning, transformation, morality, and values (Howell 2018:32). For example, Robbins (2010b:645–46) uses the Pauline theology of radical conversion, which causes a 'reorganization' of lives around a new truth to discuss the charismatic religious revival among the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea in 1977, depicting a faith that eventually organizes around questions and concerns of the context.[9]

Kollman critiques part of Robbins' argument in 'What can Theology Contribute to Anthropology' (2018:92f), arguing that Robbins' use of theology is too narrow, assuming that theology is written by elites and must always be systematic in form. This raises the question of how to define theology. Theology, literally the 'the study of God', has a long tradition of being defined as 'faith seeking understanding' (Migliore 2014:2). As a result of a greater reflexivity brought on by different understandings of the cultural 'Other' as discussed above, Protestant and Catholic mission scholars began to recognize by the 1970s that there is no 'super cultural theology' or 'universal Christian culture' but that 'theology reflects upon culturally embedded forms of religious life' (Sedmak 2002:79).[10]

This interplay of theological categories and a local context (Cannell 2006:13) highlights the complexity of the 'oscillation' between doctrine, churches, individuals, and

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[9] Robbins (2010b) points both to critics who suggest that Pentecostalism leads to authoritarianism, and also those who see Pentecostalism leading to greater openness of social structures—such as the releasing of certain Urapim gender taboos and reconceptualization of Christian Urapim identity. This shifts the conception of Christianity from being a 'white' religion—with associations of 'white' being rich, intelligent, and well behaved—to a faith quite comfortably situated in Urapim context, confronting their own particular questions and issues.

[10] This realization emerged from factors such as decolonization, insights from anthropology, and critical reflection on how the Enlightenment created the idea of religion that was based on rational belief set against a secular assumption of reality (Dryness 2016).

multiple cultures (Jørgensen 2011:196; Cannell 2006). Mission theologians (both Catholic and Protestant) began to use terms from the 1970s onward like ‘indigenization’, ‘inculturation’, and ‘contextualization’ (Schreiter 2015:2) to indicate a ‘weaving together’, so that theological symbols and language encompass people’s subjective reality (Sedmak 2002:95). Dryness (2016) traces the development of contextualization, pointing to a change in the 1980s and 1990s that moved the emphasis from the messenger (missionary) to the world of the ‘hearers’ of the message.[11] Dryness (2016) indicates another shift occurred in the early 2000s as evangelical theologians began to grapple more deeply with the ‘interreligious’ world, moving the focus from ‘contextualization’ to ‘intercultural theology’, in which the Christian process is a mutually interpretative one. The goal is to render the whole of the Christian faith understandable both as a message and a way of living in the local culture (Moreau 2012:36).[12] Therefore, in this study, theology is more helpfully defined as ‘meaning-making of Christian faith’, which thus allows ‘theologizing’ to transpire both in an academic setting and in a grass-roots context (Lauterbach & Vähäkangas 2019:5). Further, in this study, the phrase ‘Christian theology’ is used when denoting meaning-making and faith commitments generally shared across Christian denominations and expressions, whilst ‘Pentecostal theology’ is used to indicate specific ways in which Pentecostals practise and think about their faith. The particular emphasis of Pentecostal theology will be further expounded on in the rest of the chapter.

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[11] Influential mission theologians during this period and onwards for this subject include such people as David Bosch’s *Transforming Mission* (1991a); Robert Schreiter’s *Constructing Local Theologies* (2015); Andrew Walls’ ‘*The Gospel as Prisoner and Liberator of Culture: Is there a “Historic Christian Faith”?*’ (1982); Paul Hiebert’s ‘*Critical Contextualization*’ (1987); Steve Bevans’ *Models of Contextual Theology* (1992); Charles Kraft’s *Appropriate Christianity* (2005).

[12] Dryness (2016) points out several critiques of the term contextualization: First, it can be seen as being laden with colonial meaning since it implies that someone outside the culture knows how to contextualize the Christian gospel. Second, considering the process of interpreting Scripture for a local context raises the question of what kind of hermeneutics would be utilized, given that cultures have different methods of interpretation. Third, is the question of power dynamics within which the hermeneutic process is taking place.

This approach to theology can contribute to an activist or engaged anthropology (Beck & Maida 2013), if it critiques and benefits the communities being studied; such as, for example, its influence in evaluating capitalism as a culture (Robbins 2006:286) or specific theologies such as Black, liberation, feminist, and womanist, which have criticised structures of power in society, gender and ethnic relations (Bielo 2018). Theology can help anthropologists, long versed in withholding judgement, render a 'judgement' in humility 'on the basis of explicit standards that have been hammered out over long periods of scholarly effort', whilst anthropologists can help theologians assess the 'depth and complexity of the kinds of cultural expressions they are often called to judge' (Robbins 2019: 32–3). Margaret Greenfields (2013:103), for example, finds links between the theology of Jewish and Christian activists and their work with Gypsy, Traveller, and Roma populations in Europe, although the theological underpinnings and motivations of adherents to the two faiths are somewhat different.

This kind of interaction between anthropology and theology can perhaps, as Robbins (2019:16) articulates, 'expand each discipline's sense of its ends', resulting in a surprisingly wider horizon. If, as noted above, in other time periods Christians and anthropologists were limited by the time's social epistemologies, one can assume research today is also limited, albeit by different social epistemologies.

In terms of this study, Pentecostal theology can help interpret how church practice and teaching is intended to shape community and individual narratives (McGrath 2018), whilst anthropological insights reveal the interaction between individual, cultural and social narratives as people make meaning in their daily lives. In this regard, Pentecostalism is a dynamic field of study that brings into focus the relationship between global and local theology, reflexive anthropological analysis, and local interpretations of cultural change. It inherently challenges previous borders in anthropology: 'self and

other, local and "global," home and abroad, anthropology and theology' (Coleman & Hackett 2015a:13).[13]

2.3 Pentecostalism

2.3.1 Describing Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism has become a remarkable global expression and the fastest growing branch of contemporary Christianity over the last century. By 2010, estimates put the global number at over 600 million, which is a quarter of all Christians in the world (Anderson 2013a:2). Pentecostalism, however, is not a uniform movement, but rather 'polycentric and transnational' (Anderson 2013a:1), and a 'variegated phenomenon, best seen as historically related, revivalist movements where the emphasis is on the experience of the Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts' (Anderson 2013a:48).

The multicultural phenomenon of Pentecostalism has made it difficult for scholars, both theologians and anthropologists, to classify and describe all the expressions of Pentecostalism, particularly as it has morphed over its history. Pentecostal historian Allen Anderson (2004:10) refers to a 'range of Pentecostalisms' as a variety of movements with 'family resemblance' (2010:15). Anderson (2010:17–19) suggests a historical typology, dividing into: 1. Classical Pentecostals (with roots in the early twentieth century movement beginning in 1906, 2. Older Independent and Spirit Churches (in Sub-Saharan Africa, China, and India with diachronous connections to classical Pentecostalism) emerging in the first two to three decades of the twentieth century (Anderson 2013a; 2013b), 3. Charismatics within traditional churches including Catholics, Anglicans and Protestants (1960s), 4. Neo-Pentecostal and neo-Charismatic (influenced by Pentecostals

[13] For example, a community might interpret the presence of an anthropologist as a God-sent opportunity for evangelism (Coleman & Hackett 2015a:4).

and the Charismatic movements) (1970s).[14] Anderson's typology can be considered a basic historical starting point with two caveats. First, early twentieth century mission work was still dominated by colonial views of the 'Other' as discussed above; therefore, early Pentecostal global history lacks local voices and perspectives (Anderson 2013b). Second, as Maltese et al. (2019:9) argues, such typologies do not indicate which similarities or differences matter in order to be considered as part of one of these families. Specific contexts, emphasizing local leaders' perspectives, may not neatly fit into any category.

For example, Chapter Five will present Josip's narrative, the pastor of the church community in field site C; while he speaks in tongues, prays for healing, and believes in the gifts of the Spirit, spiritual practices associated with Pentecostalism or charismatic spirituality, he also claims that he is Pentecostal simply because that is the form in which the gospel came to him: 'If I was converted in the Baptist church, I would be Baptist. I am not connected to Pentecostals or anyone else but connected to Christ' (Wachsmuth 2017b).[15] In contrast, Marko, the pastor in the Pentecostal church in field site B, asserts his Pentecostal identity because he 'believes in the gifts of the Spirit' and says, 'it would be hard for a Roma to be Baptist' (Wachsmuth 2017b:107).

From a theological point of view, definitions of Pentecostalism root dynamic experience of the Holy Spirit[16] in the person of Jesus Christ with an orientation of evangelistic mission toward the world. Pentecostal theologian Wonsuk Ma describes Pentecostalism as: 'Segments of Christianity that believe and experience the dynamic

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[14] Each of these broad categories Anderson further divides. For example, he divides classical Pentecostals into four categories: Holiness Pentecostals, Baptist Pentecostals, Oneness Pentecostals, and Apostolic Pentecostals (2010:17f).

[15] In 2019, however, in reference to Anglicanism, Josip stated emphatically that the Roma would not be inclined to that Christian tradition with its rigorous ritualistic culture and lack of spontaneity.

[16] Ma (2009:41) argues that the pneumatology, or doctrine of the Spirit, between these different groups are not necessarily the same; for example, while Classical Pentecostals might accept the Baptism of the Spirit, neo-Pentecostals/charismatics may just be aware and open to the Holy Spirit.

work of the Holy Spirit, including supernatural demonstrations of God's power and spiritual gifts, with consequent dynamic and participatory worship and zeal for evangelism' (2009:41). Kärkkäinen (2009: xvii) adds that Pentecostal theology and identity is rooted in Christology, as a 'Christ-centred charismatic spirituality' in which Jesus Christ is acknowledged as a Saviour, healer, baptizer with the Holy Spirit, and the King who will return, otherwise known as the 'full gospel' (Anderson 2013a).

Studying Pentecostalism through an anthropological lens raises certain themes that also emphasize the experience of the Holy Spirit (Robbins 2004), such as healing and charismatic expression, speaking in tongues (Meyer 2004, gifts of the Spirit, and focus on praise, worship and prayer (Coleman & Hackett 2015a:8). Other themes allude to the discussion regarding discontinuity such as 'breaking with the past', born-again identities (Engelke 2010) and 'ritual spontaneity over a fixed liturgy or organizational hierarchy' (Coleman & Hackett 2015a:8). Anthropologists also emphasize the interrelatedness of global and local expressions. Because it is 'de-territorialized' (Eriksen et al. 2019:5), Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon; but it is also local, since local informants interpret their own practice of Pentecostalism in a specific context. For example, Eriksen et al. (2019:6) use studies conducted in Angola and DR Congo to highlight how Holy Spirit healing was developed in connection to local independent expressions of church that were not associated with foreign missionary efforts. Indeed, it is the interplay of specific aspects of global Pentecostal theology and ritual that are emphasized locally that foreground the relevant cultural issues. Thus, entering a specific Pentecostal context, I enter the spiritual life of my interlocutors on their terms, trying to see the cultural and religious landscapes as they do, bridging the gap between 'real' and 'spiritual' (Eriksen et al. 2019:14).

2.3.2 Pentecostal History

The roots of Pentecostalism have a diverse multi-context history.[17] They can be seen in various sporadic charisms usually at the fringes of mainstream Protestant churches. In the seventeenth century, the Quakers manifested signs of the Spirit in trembling, visions, weeping, speaking in tongues, and prophecies. In 1830–31 in the Scottish Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Edward Irving (1792–1834), charismatic gifts appeared in various congregations. In North America in the late eighteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century, the Shakers spoke in tongues, danced, and experienced healing. The Holiness Movement was a significant influence,[18] and many early Pentecostals came from that background. Also influential was the Keswick movement (beginning at an 1875 convention and emphasizing 'new birth' and 'fullness of the Spirit'), revivalism in the United States, and the Christian healing movement of the Nineteenth Century (Anderson 2004:19–33).[19]

The healing movement contested the Protestant ideal that suffering begat holiness and therefore resignation was the most spiritual approach; rather, it renewed the idea of Jesus as healer of both body and spirit. Further, healing, as part of the 'full gospel' was

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[17] Robeck (2014:13–14) outlines the various issues with Pentecostal historiography in which scholars have argued for different narratives of origin and interpretative lenses, summarizing four approaches that have been used in Pentecostal historiography: 'providential approach' (God's role in history), 'genetic approach' (traces the influence of other Christian movements in the nineteenth century), the 'multicultural approach' (showcases Hispanic and African-American concerns in America) and the 'functional approach' (addresses questions raised by social and political sciences). These are not mutually exclusive and indeed can reflect on the interplay between insider and outsider approaches to historiography and metaphysical versus material emphasis.

[18] The nineteenth century Holiness movement emphasized Biblical literalism, personal conversion, and moral perfection. It emerged from John Wesley's (1703–1791) teaching and John Fletcher (1729–1785), both influenced by German Pietism. The Pietist movement emphasized a 'new birth' by the Holy Spirit and personal experience with God, encouraging emotion and personal relationship. It also emphasized a high moral life separate from the world and the priesthood function of all Christian believers. Wesley developed the idea of a 'second blessing' after conversion which was Christian perfection—this was reinterpreted by the American Holiness movement after a revival in 1857–8 to eventually have more emphasis on holiness as a 'baptism of the Holy Spirit' (Anderson 2004:25–7). By the beginning of the twentieth century, there were three Holiness groups: 1. The Wesleyan, which equated the second blessing with baptism in the Spirit or perfection; 2. The Keswick position, which associated baptism of the Spirit with equipping for Christian service; 3. The 'third blessing' position, which held both the second blessing and a third blessing, which was a blessing of power (Anderson 2004:29).

[19] In 1885 in London, an International Conference on Divine Healing and True Holiness gathered 2000 people who shared the theology that full salvation included body and soul. William E. Boardman's (1810–1896) opening comments stated that the conference was the beginning of 'a new revival of Pentecost ...' (Curtis 2011:30)

connected to the unity of believers and linked to being empowered for evangelization and mission (Curtis 2011:34–6). Nevertheless, the fluidity of the movement allowed differences of theological nuances and modalities of healing in diverse geographic contexts. As Pentecostal revivals began emerging in the twentieth century, many in this movement thought the 'fullness of Pentecost' had finally arrived (Curtis 2011:43).

Early in the twentieth century, outbreaks of widespread revivals distinguished the beginnings of Classical Pentecostalism from earlier charismatic manifestations. The concept of 'revival' is linked to an outpouring of the Holy Spirit affecting numerous people both within and outside the Church, as was experienced by Jesus' apostles (Acts 2) and within the early New Testament Church. A revival could involve repentance and conversion, speaking in tongues, healings and deliverance, and other miracles (Anderson 2010), as well as motivating strong impulses toward evangelism, teaching, and social action (Anderson 2013a:15).[20]

One of the most popular 'canonized narratives' (Laurent 2014; Robeck 2014)[21] of Pentecostalism's advent is Charles Parham's Bible school in Topeka, Kansas (1900) where a student had an experience with the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues (Robeck 2014:19). Even more significant, however, was the Azusa Street Revival (1906) (Anderson 2004; Thurfjell 2014; Acton 2014). When William Joseph Seymour (1870–1922) listened to Charles Parham's (1873–1929) lectures on the baptism of the Spirit in Texas, he became convinced of its importance.[22] He moved to Los Angeles to pastor a

[20] Pentecostalism is considered a 'revivalist' movement in that there is a focus on 'an emotional encounter with God through the Spirit', characteristic of Evangelicalism with its focus on being 'born-again'. In the nineteenth century, numerous evangelical revivals led to a great missionary movement, new denominations, and the holiness and healing movements. Evangelical revivals consisted of outpourings of emotion in large daily services, which led to mass conversion and change in local communities (Anderson 2013a:12–14).

[21] For example, Robeck (2014:19–22) describes how the narrative of William Seymour's leadership of the Azusa Street revival in 1906 came to dominate the origin stories, over and above Charles Parham's leadership of the Topeka revival in 1900. Further, a third narrative argues for the Holy Spirit as the initiator and leader.

[22] Seymour was forced to listen to Parham's lectures from the hallway because Parham was a Ku Klux Klan sympathizer (Hollenweger 1986).

small African American Holiness church, but they were not receptive to his teaching on 'tongues' as a sign of baptism in the Holy Spirit. At his host's home, however, people began having experiences with speaking in tongues and with the Holy Spirit. After a week, they rented a space on Azusa street where daily meetings occurred, including singing, experiences of tongues, falling to the ground, and this continued for the next three years (Anderson 2004:39f). In the years following, visitors came from Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa to see what was happening and then returned to their own countries with the baptism of the Spirit (Anderson 2013a:46).

Other 'outpourings' or revivals around the same time, however, contest the idea that there was only one primary catalyst for the global movement. The Welsh revival (1904–1905), although not typically considered a 'Pentecostal revival' since there was no emphasis on baptism of the Spirit and speaking in tongues, contributed to widespread social change in Wales and international influence.[23] There were also revivals in Khasia or Khasi Hills of northern India (1905); among Scandinavians in North Dakota and Minnesota (1906), Toronto (1906), Pyongyang, Korea (1907), and among Methodists in Valparaiso, Chile (1909) (Robeck 2014:22). In the Ivory Coast and Gold Coast (Ghana), William Wade Harris from Liberia, began a revival in 1914–15 resulting in 120,000 conversions a year (Anderson 2013b:36).[24]

The revival (1905–1906) in Pandita Ramabai's mission in Mukti, India was also internationally significant. Ramabai (1858–1922) had her own experience with the Holy

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[23] Los Angeles pastor Joseph Smale, inspired after his visit to Wales, began praying for revival and immediately changed his preaching style to allow more space for the Holy Spirit to lead the service (Miskov 2016). This 'spark' and inspiration from the Welsh revival stirred expectation and hope for revival by the time William Seymour arrived (Robeck 2006). Historian and participant of the Azusa street revival, Frank Bartleman (1925:21), drew connections between the revivals: 'The present world-wide revival was rocked in the cradle of little Wales, it was "brought up" in India, following; becoming full grown in Los Angeles later.'

[24] These revivals were all significant in different ways—for example, the Korean revival in 1907 led to an expansive growth of the Korean church (McClymond 2014:39). In 1911, there were still reports of 1,100 people attending the weekly prayer service and that one sixth of Korean Christians were training for the ministry (Anderson 2013a:36).

Spirit in 1894, and was thereafter influenced by the Keswick, Holiness and revivalist movements (see above historical explanation), to ask God for an 'outpouring' of the Holy Spirit on Indian Christians at an 1898 Keswick convention. In 1905, early morning prayer meetings turned into a revival with the Holy Spirit, and her Bible school began to host all night meetings of girls praying and speaking in tongues. This revival spread throughout the region around the city Pune (Southwest India) through 'praying bands' of traveling girls. The revival continued for a year and a half; 1000 people were baptized at the school, and this revival received much international and missionary attention, with visitors and writings of the revival spawning other revivals in places like Latin America (Anderson 2013a:28–32).[25] The Mukti revival was not only significant for India and the worldwide spread of Pentecostalism, but also for the fact that Ramabai pioneered an 'independent Indian Christianity', a form of 'resistance' against foreign manifestations of Christianity (Anderson 2013a:33).[26]

Perhaps because of the missionary impulse that followed the revivals, news of the Pentecostal outpouring spread quickly. For example, in 1906, Thomas Ball Barratt (1862–1940), a pastor in Oslo, Norway, visited America, heard about the revivals in Azusa Street, and experienced his own encounter with the Holy Spirit, which he then propagated in Norway and other places in Europe (Schmidgall 2003:19).[27] In fact, Anderson

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[25] Minnie Abrams, Methodist missionary (1859–1912) who witnessed the revival, connects the Mukti 1905 revival with the revivals in Wales, northwest India, Korean, and Manchurian (1910), whereas she sees the Los Angeles and European revivals as separate movements, although connected by virtue of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Anderson 2013a:30).

[26] This 'resistance' can be seen in other Pentecostal contexts. Francisco Olazábal (1886–1937), dubbed the 'Mighty Aztec', became a Pentecostal after Azusa Street, and his healing and evangelistic ministry often crossed racial, denominational, and linguistic lines. He resigned from the prominent Assemblies of God (AoG) Pentecostal denomination in 1922 after Euro American AoG leaders tried to take control of a Latino convention in Texas and instead became president of the first autonomous Latino Protestant denomination in the United States in 1923. By the time of his sudden death, he was responsible for 150 churches and 50,000 followers in North America and Latin Caribbean (Espinosa 2011).

[27] Plüss (2014:93–95) specifies three catalysts for the Pentecostal revival in Europe. First, a renewed ardour for spiritual piety, particularly in the Lutheran Churches in places like Scandinavia and Germany. Second, the influence of the Methodist Holiness movement which focused on sanctification, receiving 'power from on high', and the imminent return of Christ which led to a greater impulse for mission. Third, the Welsh revival in 1904.

(2013a:2) estimates that Pentecostalism travelled to fifty different countries within the first ten years of its existence. The centrality of mission to Pentecostalism results from its very spirituality: the eschatological focus of being in the 'last days' and the central role of the Holy Spirit displaying the power of God (Kärkkäinen 2014a:295). In addition, there were other revivals outside of 'classical Pentecostalism' beginning from the mid-twentieth century, such as the Latter Rain Revival in Canada in 1948, and the Healing Revival from 1947–1958, which spread across the United States. By early 1960, a 'charismatic renewal', involving baptism in the Spirit and speaking in tongues, also began to occur among mainline Protestant denominations such as Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Lutherans and Methodists, and had spread to Roman Catholics by 1967 (McClymond 2014:35).[28] Outpourings of the Spirit also touched Eastern Europe early in the twentieth century, due in part to missionaries from Western Europe and America. Since my fieldwork focuses on contexts in Croatia and Serbia, these will be the focus of the following discussion.

2.3.2.1 Pentecostalism in Croatia and Serbia

Both Croatia and Serbia are part of a complicated geo-political context in Southeastern Europe, comprising a diversity of religions, ethnicities, and languages. Croatia is predominately a Catholic country—according to the 2011 census, 86.3 percent of the population identified as Catholic adherents, 4.4 percent Orthodox, 0.3 percent Protestant. 3.8 percent atheists, and 1.5 percent Muslim (Buršić 2013). According to the World Christian Encyclopaedia (2020), the 2015 numbers are 0.8 percent Protestant (of which 2.9 percent is Pentecostal/Charismatic) (Johnson & Zurlo 2020). In contrast, Serbia is predominately an Orthodox country, with the 2011 census showing 84 percent of the

[28] McClymond (2014:36) notes that there are theological differences between these classical Pentecostals and charismatic renewals in terms of how to understand the Holy Spirit's manifestation in people and communities.

population identified as Orthodox, 5 percent Catholic, 0.99 percent as Protestant (Pentecostals making up 0.3 percent of that total who identify as Protestant), and 3 percent Muslim (Vukmirović 2013; Mandryk 2010).

Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Islam have had the most historical influence, although the Protestant Reformation had an impact from the seventeenth century. The Catholic Church in Croatia has been instrumental in keeping Croatian identity alive during various phases of its history, and even more so during and in the aftermath of Communism and the war in Croatia (1991–1995).[29] Likewise, the Serbian Orthodox Church promoted Serb nationalism and identity.[30] Such intertwined ethno-religious identities (Perica 2002) created contradictory and problematic issues for those of different faiths or ethnicities in Serbia and Croatia, conflicting the relationship between identity and 'otherness' (Volf 1996:16f). These problematic issues are not merely referring to personal identity, but also, for example, gaining the rights and protections of the state, although the situation improved after a new Yugoslav constitution in 1960 (Steele 1995:36) and again in Croatia after the war (1995). At that time, a Protestant-Evangelical Alliance of Croatia formed, which then afforded it the same rights as enjoyed by the Catholic Church. 'Free churches', such as Baptist or Pentecostal—dubbed free because they are not connected to a particular ethnicity and have less hierarchical structures—have been, and in some contexts still are, viewed as 'sects' (Bjelajac 2003; 2014).[31]

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[29] This entwined relationships between religion and national identity can be illustrated by some common Croatian maxims: *Bog, obitelj i domovina* (God, family, and homeland) and *Bog i Hrvati* (God and Croats) (Budiselić 2016:45).

[30] For example, in 1987, the Patriarch Germanus said of Serbia in an interview that Serbia and the Serbian Orthodox church were waiting for a national leader to defend Serbia's interests (Perica 2002:143). During the war in the 1990s, priests of both the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Croatian Catholic Church prayed for their respective troops and offered blessings over weapons before their adherents went into war (Budiselić 2016:39).

[31] Baptists in Northern Serbia could own church property before WWII, but Pentecostals could not; thus, Pentecostals would call themselves 'Baptists' in order to purchase church property. In Macedonia through the first half of the twentieth century, the Protestant Church's conflict with Orthodoxy resulted in pastors being imprisoned, tortured and killed (Steele 1995:35).

Despite this strong identification with Catholicism, Croatia received three strands of Protestantism from the Reformation[32]: Lutherans, who are historically termed 'Evangelicals', Reformed (Calvinist), and Radical Protestants (Steele 1995). A second wave of Protestantism took place in the eighteenth century in northern Yugoslavia (Blažević et al. 2015; Steele 1995), and a third wave in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought the 'free churches', dubbed 'neo-evangelical' (Steele 1995).[33] This was largely the effort of Western missionaries of neo-evangelical churches such as Congregational, Methodist, Nazarene, Baptist, Pentecostal, Seventh Day Adventist, and Brethren (Steele 1995:32).

The first Pentecostal—or baptism of the Holy Spirit—experiences in former Yugoslavia were chiefly among German communities, happening spontaneously within the Lutheran and Reformed churches, but later encouraged and fostered by German missionaries (Krasniqi 2011). The first took place in 1905 in Vojvodina[34] (northern Serbia) in a Lutheran church (Krasniqi 2011:207); and in 1907 in Beška, Vojvodina, two German women from the Lutheran and Reformed churches experienced the 'baptism in the Holy Spirit'. This experience spread among the German, Hungarian, and Slovak peoples in Vojvodina and eastern Croatia, but as the Lutheran and Reformed churches considered such religious experiences to be fanaticism, new religious communities were formed, led by men from within these communities and visited by preachers from Germany (Jambrek 2007:209). The church in Beška served as a centre in the 1920s and 1930s (Bjelajac 2003:130), evangelizing and planting churches, also among the Croat and

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[32] These early Protestants had significant impact: translating the Slovenes' first books in the vernacular (including the Bible) and established church schools which encouraged education even for the peasants (Steele 1995:31).

[33] Therefore, today in Croatia, the term evangelical has multiple meanings. First, it refers to the historic Protestant churches, second, it is also claimed by Christians amongst a variety of denominations that advocate for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and being born again, and third, it denotes the Evangelical Pentecostal Church, formerly known as the Pentecostal Church.

[34] Historically and currently, this is a very multi-cultural area of Serbia, with Germans, Hungarians, Romanians, Czechs, and Slovaks.

Serbian communities (Vinkovci: 1932; Laslovo: 1937, Osijek: 1939, Novi Sad: 1938). American missionaries of evangelical and Pentecostal denominations began conducting services in Croatian and training Croats for ministry in the late 1930s (Jambrek 2007:211–12). This proved an important factor in the continuance of Pentecostalism; after WWII, most Germans emigrated from the area, because of the sentiment toward them, and the German Pentecostal Churches stopped their activities.[35] After the World Wars, the 'Christ Spiritual Church in SFR Yugoslavia' formed in 1950.[36] Although the agreement only lasted for two years due to ongoing doctrinal disagreements, it reformed in 1967 as 'The Pentecostal Church of Christ in SFR Yugoslavia' (Krasniqi 2011:210) and lasted until Yugoslavia dissolved.

By the end of the twentieth century, the early Pentecostal movements in Croatia had become five different denominations. Today, as stated above, Pentecostals make up a tiny percentage of the already small Protestant population in Croatia and Serbia. The Pentecostal Church of Christ in Serbia is estimated as comprising around 60 churches in Serbia as of 2011 (Krasniqi 2011:210). Pentecostals and Baptists, active in Croatia since the 1920s, each claim about 50 churches—making them the dominant force in neo-

[35] The early Pentecostal activity in the regions of present-day Croatia and Serbia in the early twentieth century up until WWII can thus be categorized into 3 streams: 1. Those who stayed within the Lutheran and Reformed churches as they experienced the Holy Spirit 2. Those emphasizing adult-baptism 3. Those who adopted the practice of foot washing after Communion and became known as the 'Spiritual church of the foot washers' (Jambrek 2007).

[36] Also, after WWII, Pentecostals in Eastern Croatia began a monthly publication first called *Okružnica* (Circular), then *Put Spasenje* (Way of Salvation), then *Pentekostna Vijest* (Pentecostal News), and from the early 1980s to date it is called *Izvori* (Spring) (Kuzmič 2016). Articles included personal testimonies, Biblical and theological discussions, as well as articles addressing current issues. *Izvori* was most influential in the 1980s and 1990s as a monthly publication with robust theological articles (P. Kuzmić, interview 2020), but it eventually went quarterly and by 2014 it was published only once a year. As the number of Roma Pentecostals in Southeastern Europe began growing, occasional articles would appear by or about them: a testimony by Šerif Bakić, Roma pastor from Leskovac (2011); a testimony I wrote regarding the healing of the first convert in Community C (2012); a testimony by a Croatian woman of how she began ministering, and eventually church planting, among Roma in Western Croatia, and her testimony of adopting a Roma child (Prokopić 2013); Marija of Community C wrote a short testimony of how a Roma woman in Serbia learned to read using the Bible (date/title redacted and not in bibliography to protect anonymity). This inclusion of Roma stories and authors was likely partially influenced by the fact that one of the editors of the magazine was the Croatian woman who was instrumental in Marija's conversion and discipleship of both Marija and Josip in their Croatian Pentecostal church (See Section 5.2.3).

evangelical churches in Croatia. One of the neo-evangelical denominations was known as 'Christ's Pentecostal Churches', and its name was changed to the Evangelical Pentecostal Church (EPC) in 1989. The church in Community C is under this denominational umbrella. It became a prominent denomination, known for teaching, preaching, prayer, and evangelism.

2.3.2.2 Roma Pentecostalism

Most scholars highlight the Roma revival in France as being a primary catalyst of Pentecostalism among the Roma in Europe. In 1950s France, countries in Europe were still rebuilding from the ravages of the previous decades, both materially and spiritually; the memories of concentration camps for many Roma were very fresh. Elin Strand (2014:109) argues that the growth of Roma Pentecostalism 'met a need for spiritual rehabilitation following the suffering and losses of 1939–1945'. In 1950 in Lisieux, France, a Manouche mother, Mme Duvil-Reinhardt, asked a pastor to pray for her dying son, Zino. After he was healed, the family converted (Acton 1979).[37] The family began attending church where pastor Clément Le Cossec, who was not Roma, initially met them, although shortly afterward the family moved on. Two years later, Le Cossec encountered the same family in Brest and Zino's brother, Mandz,[38] told him that other evangelical pastors would not administer communion or baptism because he was not legally married, but he and his wife wished to be baptized so fervently that they intended to go to the river to baptize each other. Le Cossec arranged for both the legal marriage and the baptisms (Acton 1979).[39] Le Cossec began to focus on the Gypsies and growth was rapid—3000

[37] The Manouches were one Gypsy group or tribe in France, descendants of Romani immigrants to France in the fifteenth century (Action 1979:293).
[38] Mandz became the first pastor in the Gypsy Evangelical Mission.
[39] Laurent (2014) argues that Pentecostalism, concerned initially with non-Roma people, was not very important in the religious fabric in France. However, Le Cossec, from Britany, France was influenced by classical Pentecostalism from the United States and eventually became a minister (Laurent 2014). He became known as the 'Apostle to the Gypsies'.

baptised by 1958. Le Cossec trained elders to start their own congregations, teaching them to read and write, and a Bible School was started in 1977 (Acton 1979).

The movement spread to different Roma groups or tribes and eventually Le Cossec began the Gypsy Evangelical Mission (also known as Vie et Lumière or Life and Light). Because of Le Cossec's emphasis on training the Roma to be leaders and evangelists, key advocates were identified in different countries so that these 'movements' spread to 50 countries in 50 years—primarily in Europe (For example, French Roma went to Spain for evangelization in the 1960s (Gay y Blasco 1999) and England in the 1970s (Strand 2014).[40] Laurent (2014) identifies two factors in this spread: existing churches in Europe with which Le Cossec could partner and the strength of the Roma kinship networks throughout Europe. This movement has a large international reach—a branch of the International Life and Light Mission is the Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship (GATIEF), which works in 24 countries in America, Asia, Australia, and Europe (Laurent 2014:33–9).[41]

In addition to Life and Light, however, there are numerous independent movements of Roma Pentecostalism, such as began in Yambol, Bulgaria in the 1950s (Atanasov 2008) and Leskovac, Serbia in the mid-1990s (Wachsmuth 2013a). In the case of the Rugul Aprins [Burning Bush] movement from Toflea, Romania, a revival began in the early 1990s resulting from the evangelism of three women and one man (Romanian and Roma). In 2003, 500 people were baptized and in 2015, the pastor estimated in an interview that 80 to 90 percent of the town was converted, with 4000 members spread over ten churches

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[40] Fundraising and tithing were part and parcel of ministers raising money for missions or international projects (Laurent 2014:35). Le Cossec also established *Life and Light* magazine which eventually became entirely devoted to the Gypsy movement. He was also connected to other Pentecostal missions already existing in Europe.

[41] Laurent (2014:37) argues that the dominance of what he calls this 'founding myth' was not necessarily accepted by all the Roma groups involved in the story. However, Acton (1979) wrote that he heard this story from both Le Cossec himself and from Mandz's testimony, at a Gypsy Council York Hall Rally in 1968 and at an Ennordres rally in 1973, detailed in his Doctoral Thesis (1973:171; private email, January 6, 2020). As of 2019, René Zanellato is the international coordinator of GATIEF and founder of mission work in Russia and central Asia.

in four countries (as people began migrating for economic reasons, new churches were started to accommodate the congregants in various contexts) (Capitanu, interview 2015; Wachsmuth 2017a; Cace et al. 2012). Nevertheless, French Roma Pentecostals from Life and Light would often visit and assist a context where a Pentecostal movement was already taking place. Fosztó (2019) notes the lack of adequate research that explores the connections and exchanges between Roma Pentecostals in Eastern and Western Europe.

2.3.3 Pentecostal Characteristics

Since Pentecostal history is so diverse and multifaceted, the next section of this chapter will introduce some relevant characteristics of Pentecostalism reflective of the specific contextual factors of this study. First, many outpourings of the Holy Spirit began among poor and disenfranchised peoples, whether it was at Pandita Ramabai's Mukti Mission for young widows and orphans (Anderson 2004:37) or the 'Korean Pentecost' in 1907 Pyongyang among the Korean people who had been oppressed and diminished by Japanese colonization (Yun 2009:91–2).

This was also the case in 1906 Azusa Street; Ma (2009:42) notes that many who initially participated were socially dislocated but confronted racial segregation by creating a 'social and spiritual culture where the hopeless found a space to experience God's grace and power'. The outpouring of the Spirit alike upon black and white, Mexican workers and white professors, women and men created an equality (Hollenweger 1986:5). The meetings were racially integrated, and the leadership team was also integrated with black and white, male and female leaders. Other established churches looked down upon the Pentecostals because of their 'lowly black origins' (6). For example, although black spirituals were considered too inferior for church music,

Seymour included them within his liturgy. Hollenweger (1986:6) quotes the press from that time as asking, 'What good can come from a self-appointed Negro prophet?'[42]

Despite this, other contexts of Pentecostal flourishing challenge the notion that it is only a movement for the poor and marginalized. For example, the charismatic movement (1960s) among Catholics, Episcopalians, and Anglicans, which included people from various socio-economic and educational backgrounds (Hollenweger 1973:234) or Swedish Charismatics (Coleman 2011). Some scholars of Roma Pentecostalism also contest the inadequacy of the deprivation theory to explain Pentecostalism (Podolinská 2014).

Second, because of the focus on Spirit baptism and encounter, Pentecostalism has demonstrated a vision for life that is experientially intimate with God, facilitated by the activity of the Holy Spirit (Macchia 2009:17). In Pentecostalism, there is an expectancy for the supernatural to collide with the natural (Albrecht & Howard 2014:241)—a religion with 'flesh and bones' that attends to the daily cares and concerns of the adherents (Ma 2009:43). Albrecht & Howard (2014:240-41) characterize Pentecostal sensibilities as being sensitive to the influence Holy Spirit, an 'orientation to experience', and an expectation that God will act upon immediate needs such as accomplishing healings. Often these sensibilities are encouraged through music, prayer, and worship during a service.

Third, Pentecostal theology espouses a holistic manifestation of healed and abundant life with all one's senses, rather than with only intellectual assent (Macchia & Moltmann 1996:4). Brown (2011:3) attributes Divine healing, more than any other factor, as the distinguishing mark of a Pentecostal or Charismatic Christian, based on various surveys

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[42] In Seymour's lifetime, there were 3436 accounts of lynching; some of the brutality was instigated by white Christians (Hollenweger 1986:5).

and studies of Pentecostalism.[43] She notes that before Pentecostalism, theologians in North America and Europe tended to separate body and spirit, devaluing the body at the expense of the spirit, a view which has disproportionally negative effects for women and people of colour (2011:9). Reports of physical healings were often at least part of the catalyst of Pentecostal growth among the Roma; for example, in Bulgaria and France in the 1950s (Atanasov 2008; Acton 1979), and in the mid 1990s in Leskovac, Serbia (Wachsmuth 2013a).

In view of the Pentecostal understanding of the 'full gospel', that is, Christ as Saviour, Healer, Baptizer in the Holy Spirit, and coming King, (Anderson 2013a), the first priority of healing is forgiveness and salvation (McGuire 1988:43). With God as the healer, this extends to include emotional healing, deliverance from demons, broken relationships, and physical healing.[44] A healing experience can even be a felt experience of coming nearer to God (Anderson 2013a).

Responses to how healing is understood and practised is a dynamic process of theological interpretation interacting with cultural and social processes. For example, the African American Faith movement, emerging in the early twentieth century, was shaped from metaphysical elements, African religions, and Pentecostalism in order to answer Black concerns of materiality and access to 'the good life' (Bowler 2011). Today in the movement, faith is 'instrumentalized' so that faith is 'a force that reaches through the boundaries of materiality and into the spiritual realm, as if plucking objects from there and drawing them back into space and time' (Bowler 2011:87). Tarango (2011:108–13)

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[43] Brown (2011:3) cites a Pew Forum survey (2006) which found that in eight out of ten countries surveyed, more than 70 percent of Pentecostals have personally seen or experienced a healing. She also argues that the book's essays, coming from diverse contexts (including Brazil, South India, China, Ghana, Korea, and charismatics in the Catholic Church) argue this same point.

[44] Hefner (2006:120) uses the phrase 'double entendre' to refer to the dual meaning of the Greek works in the Bible for *hiamoa* (heal or cure), *therapeuo* (to serve or care for), and *sothesomai* (to make whole). He argues: 'These terms … refer to curing, caring, and wholeness as purely physical but also at the same time spiritually transcendent.'

notes how Pentecostal healing promoted by white Pentecostals to Native Americans and First Nations peoples resonated with their cosmology as 'sacred healing' was a part of their religious traditions. Although white Pentecostals focused on the healing of physical bodies, Native Americans and First Nations peoples placed healing 'within a native worldview, using native terms and native forms of understanding' (108–109). In addition, reflective of the brutal history between Native Americans and white Americans and the socio-political realities, Native Americans broadened concepts of healing to include bitterness, hatred, and injustice—with a focus toward reconciliation and redirection of judgement to the Divine prerogative (114). John McPherson, a Cherokee, recounts his conversion experience in 1943:

> All my life I had laboured [sic] under the stigma of being born an Indian. I had always been made to feel I wasn't quite as good as people with White skin. I was amazed after labouring under that stigma all my life to find the One who so loved me that He died upon the cross for me. He wasn't ashamed of me or my copper skin. He wasn't ashamed of my humble beginnings or ancestry. (Tarango 2011:117)

Pentecostalism also allowed Native Americans and First Nations peoples the religious autonomy to begin fighting prejudice and misconceptions through their Christian activity and distribution of materials pertaining to their history and culture (Tarango 2011:114).

The revival in 1907 Pyongyang also demonstrates the nature of emotional healing in a particular cultural expression. The revival's main impact was public confession of sin and receiving of forgiveness from God and each other. However, Koreans had suppressed negative emotions suffered under Japan's oppressive policies. The revival opened up space to release this shame and anger, manifesting as crying, beating the floor with fists and heads and screaming in agony, and even confessing publicly their deep hatred of the Japanese. In this way, they were able to let go of their 'han' or deep grudge and bitterness, allowing space for love and friendship (Yun 2009:103–104).

Margaret Poloma and Lynette Hoelter's research on the Toronto Blessing (1998:263), a modern revival that began in the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship in 1994, detail different types of emotional, spiritual, and physical healing in a charismatic revival.

Healing is often sought through rituals such as music, prayer, and anointing with oil during a church service. They describe the differing healings as: concerning the relationship with the Divine, inner healing of self-image and relationship to others, and mental and physical healing.[45] However, Poloma emphasizes that seeking healing is not just a matter of beliefs or rituals, rather it is '… woven into the very warp and woof of the Pentecostal worldview. It occurs in a context … in which believers accept the reality of a parallel but transcendent spiritual world. They are aware of the sensate or "what is", but they are also in tune with the spiritual or "what can be" (Poloma 2009:39).

Fourth, as is evident from the enculturated expressions of healing described above, Pentecostalism can 'incarnate' Christianity into different forms—thus Pentecostal identity is always rooted in the local even though it is a global phenomenon (Anderson 2004:14; Wilkinson 2006; Klaus 1999). In regard to the earlier discussion, Pentecostalism 'contextualizes' more readily than other forms of Christianity as it does not have the strong hierarchical structures and facilitates the 'democratization of language by dismantling the privileges of abstract, rational, and propositional systems' (Hollenweger 1973:234). In other words, whether one learns through orality or literacy, has education or no education, Pentecostalism can offer equal opportunity to all.

In conclusion, Hollenweger (1986:6) claims that the eventual international vast spread of Pentecostalism is not because of a particular doctrine, but because it emerged from the grassroots that highlight liturgical orality, narrative theology, democratization of participation (which inevitably is reconciliatory in nature), serious consideration for dreams and visions, and a body/mind relationship that takes seriously healing prayer.[46]

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[45] Poloma & Hoelter (1998:261) argue that emotions are interconnected to somatic manifestations (such as shaking, laughing, crying), which also appear in other earlier American revivals such as the Great Awakening. These manifestations are interpreted as God's work, that is, a holistic healing including 'being drawn closer to God, being able to forgive past injuries, improved personal relations, healing of emotional hurts, and sometimes healing of physical and mental health problems.

[46] Hollenweger (1986:6) also argues Pentecostalism in Europe and North America began becoming a middle-class religion, which is a turning away of these roots: 'replaced by efficient fund-raising structures,

2.3.4 Pentecostalism and Social Processes

The earlier discussion regarding anthropology and theology nuances Cannell's important question: 'What difference does Christianity make to the kinds of questions we are able to ask about social processes?' (2006:1). In studies of anthropology of Christianity, the question of 'rupture'—or radical change from the ways in which someone has previously lived (Robbins 2010a:159)—has been a key theme for anthropologists to explore. This 'rupture' refers to breaking with customs, traditions, or even family that link to a past life, and instead emphasizes a greater allegiance to the Divine (Bialecki et al. 2008:1147). Various studies on 'rupture' have proposed different ways that Pentecostalism has 'facilitated the shift of populations toward radically new forms of self-conception and practice involving engagement with "modernity" and rejection of past customs' (Coleman & Hackett 2015a:14). In studies of African Pentecostalism, conversion involves a repudiation of certain customs or traditions considered to be linked to the Devil (Engelke 2010:177; Meyer 1999). However, other studies have questioned this relationship between 'rupture' and 'modernity', in that it causes a 'myopia' in research given that 'modernity' may be seen as the ideal or goal (Engelke 2010:179). In the African context, Krause (2015:79) argues that there are two flaws associated with this connection between 'rupture' and modernity: the assumption that spirit possession is necessarily 'traditional' and conversely, that Christianity is modern. In fact, a Pentecostal epistemology challenges modernity's 'reductionistic cognitivism' with its inclusion of embodied knowledge (Eriksen 2015:51).

The above critique demonstrates how studying 'rupture' challenges one to consider epistemological assumptions. This also extends to the wider socio-cultural milieu.

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a streamlined ecclesiastical bureaucracy and a Pentecostal conceptual theology'. Therefore, the factors critical to its rapid spread are disappearing in certain contexts.

Anderson (2013a:38–9), for example, partially attributes the rise of independent Pentecostal churches in places like China and Africa as a response to wider currents reacting to colonialism and racism. Thus, Pentecostalism was a vehicle of 'rupture' against the epistemologies and social structures controlled by a colonial mindset of the 'Other'.

Robbins (2003:222–23) argues there is not just 'discontinuity', but also a continuity, and he refers to this juxtaposition as a 'double paradox'. In the first paradox, Robbins claims that Pentecostalism is local, in that it inherently accepts local ontologies through addressing questions/issues without necessarily accepting or practicing the local, and in some cases, actively fighting against it. For example, a Roma pastor in Serbia would forbid a congregant from taking his or her troubles to the local magic person, even while assuming the issues related to spirits and curses are a real threat (Subotin, interview 2012). Engelke (2010:179) takes this further by arguing that the idea of 'rupture' from the past is also a 'realignment' of self to the Christian story. This 'realignment' is necessarily continuous, as the new reconfigured identity is a desire 'grounded as it is in relation to an event in the Christian imaginary that serves as a model for contemporary religious experience' (196).

In the second paradox, there is a global Pentecostal identity construction; conferences, missionary endeavours, and shared music and sermons become the 'third space' by which this global identity formation happens, and thus many see themselves as 'imagined migrants' across the globe (Coleman 2013:370).[47] Certain movements result in both physical and 'imagined' connections. In Eastern Europe, for example, there have been three Roma Christian conferences (2014, 2016, 2019) involving numerous countries

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[47] Coleman uses Sebastian Schüller's (2008) discussion of Homi Bhabha's 'third space' and Henri Lefebvre's 'rooms of action' to represent how alleged transnationalism is located in local practices, since conferences and networking are part and parcel of the Pentecostal imagination (2013:370). He concludes his study by noting that perhaps this transnationalism is based more on imagined networking through shared sermons and conferences, rather than a real knowledge of the 'other' in local context (Coleman 2013:387).

aimed to help encourage, share knowledge and tools, and make connections that sometimes result in future partnerships in each other's contexts. Although these are non-denominational conferences, most Roma participants are from Pentecostal churches.[48]

In many contexts, anthropologists have associated Pentecostal charismas such as healing, spirit possession, tongues, with local indigenous practices, in order to argue for continuity in a given locality. However, these are also the trademarks of the Pentecostal global culture. As Robbins (2003:224) notes: 'When you put the two paradoxes of global Pentecostalism together, you have a religion that localizes easily yet claims to brook no compromise with traditional life and that at the same time seems to have at its heart a set of globalized practices that often look very local in their makeup'.

The key to understanding the interplay between continuities and discontinuities lies in determining what meaning people confer to their actions (Robbins 2003:229). Part of this can be observed and demonstrated through the different rituals both in and out of the Church, rituals that share global continuities with Pentecostalism but also take on local expressions. In the context of Zimbabwe, for example, Engelke (2010:188) refers to how the breaking with one's ancestral spirits is demonstrated by congregants refusing to use surnames in church life, as the surname acts as the primary connection to ancestral relations.

In Pentecostal theology, conversion demands nothing less than a 'complete break' with the past and the world; a turning from sins, or those deeds in opposition to Christian teachings (Anderson 2013a:147). To take Pentecostals on their own terms considering 'rupture', one can start with the premise that they are actually trying to change in

[48] The first conference in 2014 in Budapest, Hungary, was organized by a Chinese mission organization, The Great Commission Center International. Around 160 participants (100 Roma) from 16 countries attended. After interest was expressed from participants to have another conference, the Chinese handed the leadership of the initiative to a Board of three Roma and three non-Roma leaders, and they began a grassroots movement called Roma Networks. The 2016 Conference in Békés, Hungary had 190 participants from 29 countries, and the 2019 conference in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina had 226 participants from 31 countries.

accordance with their theology, as they are 'involved in personal and collective projects of discontinuity framed very much in Christian terms' (Robbins 2003:224, 230). This 'rupture' certainly corresponds with the literature on Roma Pentecostalism. In various studies across divergent contexts, it has been shown to be linked to social change ranging from a rise of education levels and literacy, to a decrease in crime and domestic violence, and an increase in the well-being of women, as well as better relationships with the majority culture (Marushiakova & Popov 1999; Wachsmuth 2017a, b; Podolinská & Hrustič 2010; 2014). Atanasov's 2008 PhD thesis concludes that amidst Bulgaria's unravelling socio-economic situation, Gypsy Pentecostalism has resulted in the revitalization of individuals, families, and communities in various degrees: 'This has been evidenced by the raising of moral standards, deliverance from addictions, lower crime rates, better education, more honesty in business, more opportunities for employment—a significant social lift' (273).

Often, conversion rituals can articulate the 'discourses of discontinuity' and meaning-making, which are part and parcel of the Christian narrative (Engelke 2010:182). However, although this 'realignment' of identity can be performed through conversion narratives and other rituals in the church such as Communion, it also must be reflected on what people do in day-to-day life and in the context of social relationships (Engelke 2010:179, 196). Engelke (2010:196) thus argues: '…it is in what people do and with whom they relate that rupture gains much of its force and meaning'.

2.4 Conclusion

Thurfjell & Marsh (2014:11) point out the importance of studying Roma Pentecostalism in non-essentialized perspectives—a 'complex set of communities that challenge the hegemony of categorizing people into ethnicities' experiencing a 'number of different revivals' rather than a single story. Placing Roma Pentecostalism in conversation with

global Pentecostalism helps diffuse the idea that in another anthropological sense, Pentecostalism among the Roma is a separate or 'exotic' phenomenon (Marushiakova & Popov 2011:102). Roman (2017) counters this tendency in her study of Pentecostal Kaale, as she links to the wider literature of anthropology of Christianity and the explorations with the 'born-again' self to the multiple belongings and ambiguities of Pentecostal Kaale working out their faith. Still, Cantón-Delgado et al. (2019) argue that often research on Roma Pentecostalism has merely adopted the language of the state to satisfy the state interests and goals in relation to integration and social inclusion (See also Voiculescu 2017). This tendency therefore 'produces a vision of the Romani world that oscillates between '*victimism* and *welfare dependency*, *integrationism* and *exotization*', placing socio-political language in the structure of neoliberalism ahead of religious and cultural expression (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019:10).

Cantón-Delgado et al.'s (2019) caution resonates with the studies that question the conflation of 'rupture' with modernity (Engelke 2010; Krause 2015). In terms of Roma history, such a conflation is particularly problematic in terms of various measures to assimilate the Roma into majority cultures in the last centuries. As Howell (2018:48) notes: 'In taking the world of these Christians seriously, it becomes unhelpful to remain in an analytical frame of universal categories such as equality, citizenship, or even religiosity.' In this sense, understanding how Pentecostal theology interacts with a community foregrounds the differences between the goals and language of the state and the vision and goals of Roma Christians.

One of the most critical areas in Pentecostalism concerning 'rupture' is emotional or physical healing that reshapes a person's world. Although this concept is not emphasized in the literature on Roma Pentecostalism (and even Coleman & Hackett's (2015a:23) volume of collected anthropological essays on Pentecostalism note that miracles are a 'academically neglected area'), my research illustrates how Roma experiences with

miraculous healings, visions and dreams play a significant role in the growth of Pentecostalism. This can be seen both on an individual basis as well as on the community level, which in turn becomes a catalyst for widespread revival. This will be explored further in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

Part and parcel of charismatic healing is 'imagination, memory, language and emotion', which orient individuals toward themes of 'spontaneity, control and intimacy', characteristic in Pentecostalism (Csordas 1994: ix). Pentecostal Roma pastors argue that the emotive nature of Pentecostalism is important, connecting with the people through both embodied practice and spoken ritual, a theme highlighted by Thurfjell's (2013) study on Kaale Pentecostalism in Sweden and Finland.[49] Thurfjell contributes an important understanding regarding the powerful effect emotional rituals can have in shifting life direction and validating the reality of emotional experience in the Pentecostal space. However, his analysis also somewhat reduces the complexity of Pentecostal change, perhaps removing it too far from its own discourse by suggesting ritualized emotions 'as a means of self-suggestion by which individuals manipulate themselves in order to feel in a specific way and thereby strengthen themselves to follow a chosen way of conduct' (105). This dislocation of Christian discourse is illustrated by Luhrmann's (2018:79) claim that most anthropologists believed that in order to study gods within a culture, one's 'objectivity' comes from the assumption that such beliefs cannot be true.

The following chapters explore both theological and anthropological categories in order to analyse how local practices of Pentecostalism are interpreted within two communities, B and C. This study will explore how identity and social processes are affected by interpreting what kinds of 'rupture' are taking place or not taking place, both through informants' words, rituals, and behaviours manifested in everyday living, and the

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[49] Thurfjell (2013:93) however, notes that in interviews, Romani pastors criticize too much focus on emotion which can hamper personal transformation and social change.

meaning they are making in their lives. Because the study highlights the interaction between local practice and global claims, in Chapter Three I will situate the narratives firmly within the socio-historical context of twentieth century Yugoslavia and the constructed identities of 'Roma' and 'Gypsy' within the country.

CHAPTER THREE: ROMA IDENTITY IN TWENTIETH CENTURY YUGOSLAVA

3.1 Introduction

As discussed in Chapter One, the history of the Romani[1] people, including reasons for migrations out of Northwest India and their early presence in Europe, is difficult to interpret (Kenrick 2007: xxxvii; Taylor 2014:20). It is not just the scarcity of documents that makes this a complex process, but also other factors: the historian's epistemological framework, the particular questions and assumptions with which the historian approaches the documents, the divergent experiences of the Roma spread across different contexts and historical eras, and the fact that very few accounts are written by Romani themselves (Matras 2015:157; Lee 2001:4).

Since Romani voices have been arbitrated through *gadje* histories, they 'exist primarily as representations, as essentialised exotics that have been actively constituted through discursive formations' and Lee (2001:4) thus argues that this makes examining historical accounts difficult. If the Roma were mentioned at all in historical narratives, they have often been positioned only in opposition to the dominant narrative as the 'Other', and therefore the Gypsy image developed as a 'leitmotif of imagination' (Matras 2015:205). The arts and literature over several centuries are partially responsible for this, as a certain 'Gypsy image', is portrayed, depicting the Roma as exotic, sensuous, practicing magic, breaking rules of civilized people, frightening and mysterious (Matras 2015:190-95) or idealized by the romantics as the last refuge against the march of modernity (Taylor 2014:113-14).[2] At other times and in diverse locations, they were viewed as social

[1] This chapter will use Romani, Gypsy, and Roma because each has been used in different historical eras and different contexts.

[2] One well known example is Grimm's fairy tales, which often portrayed Gypsies as 'Other', depicting them as sorceress, devils, and ugly or dirty (Taylor 2014:134).

problems that merely needed to be developed and educated or seen as a criminal class that were irreligious. These images are still very much present—part and parcel of societal attitudes throughout Europe—and a latent thread running through media portrayals and the common neoliberal development response to these communities today.

Smith (1999:34-8) believes that indigenous peoples have often been 'oppressed by theory', in the ways in which Western methodologies have deconstructed and reconstructed histories, religious practice, cultures, and art. The deconstruction of the inevitability of the nation-state, Western modernity, and the 'Other', however, has influenced the questions with which historians now approach the historical text (Anderson 2006; Taylor 2004; Said 1978). Van Baar (2011a), for example, looks at the relationship between changes of governmentality in Europe and how the problemization of the Romani is conceived and portrayed. Taylor (2014) emphasizes that Romani history is not 'separate' but as much tied to the broader swathe of history as that of any other community.[3] Lucassen, Willems, & Cottaar (1998) focus on how the image of the Gypsy has been constructed through social processes. Matras (2015:157) points out the one-sidedness of Roma history since it was written by non-Romani, and that actually their history is about 'different groups of people, at different times, and in different places'.

Some scholars have written focused history according to specific contexts. For example, Achim (2004) specifically focused on the Roma in Romanian history. Okely (1984:4) challenged traditional definitions of nomadism in her anthropological study of Gypsies and Travellers in England and suggested the possibility that many ancestors of the present Gypsy population may have 'emerged from the indigenous vagrant population as an ethnic group using the principle of descent and other self-defining features'; she

[3] For example, Greenfields & Smith (2019) explore the past 150 years of intertwined relationships of Gypsies and Travellers, working class and migrants with settled populations. This 'hidden history' reveals the interaction of social attitudes, urban planning, and policy decision whilst revealing the Gypsy's resistance and creative space-making in response.

argues for the inevitable intermingling between mobile groups occupying marginal but very useful niches on the edge of the economy.

3.2 Yugoslavia

In view of these challenges, I will now highlight the situation of the Roma in former Yugoslavia during the twentieth century, which provides an illuminating perspective on how nation, ethnicity, and identity evolve in a specific socio-political context. Balkan nationalisms emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a reflection of the wider dynamics in Europe initially triggered by the French Revolution, but more specifically to the consequences of the weakening of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires, even whilst these Empires were still vying for power (Glenny 1999).[4]

The concept of 'Yugoslavia', although originating in the nineteenth century from religious and intellectual elites, came into fruition in various forms in the twentieth century, even as greater-power politics continued to influence state formation (Glenny 1999). This concept was equally motivated by fear of assimilation by more powerful forces such as Germany, Turks, and Magyars as well as a belief that Serbs and Croats were originally one people. This conceptual formation was therefore dominated by the large minority ethnic groups of Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, and after World War II the Macedonians, Muslims, and Albanians (Cipek 2003; Nečak 1995).[5] Whereas the first

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[4] This can be seen in the First Serbian Uprising (1804–1813), cooperating first with Ottoman landlords loyal to the Sultan against brutal janissary control and then against the Sultan's forces until the Ottoman Empire defeated them in 1813; the Second Serbian Uprising (1815), and the Greek War of Independence (1821-30) (Glenny 1999).

[5] Glenny (1999:261) traces various concepts of Serb and Croat nationalism which shifted depending on international political movements. The beginning of Croat national consciousness formed around the idea of 'Illyrianism' in the 1820s and 1830s, which is a name alluding to the Western Balkans in antiquity. This has connotations of a pan-Slav or pan-Yugoslav (Southern Slav) identity (42). In 1848, Serbs and Croats united against Hungarian control in the present-day areas of Croatia and Slovenia and in 1905, the Croatian National Peasant Party emphasized Serbs and Croats together against Hungarian control. On the other hand, another stream focused on identification with Austria, central Europe, and was anti-Serb (43). In 1878, for example, activists Ante Starčević and Eugen Kvarternik advocated for Croatia's own state whilst the Serb principality argued that it should be the central Slav unification point (256).

Yugoslavia (1918–1941) was based more on the concept of a nation-state, the Communist reformation of Yugoslavia (1945) after WWII was based on Marxist ideology, to ultimately transform the society into a place without state, class, or parties (Jović 2003:159).[6]

After WWI, the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were established, which eventually became the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929. It was in this time that the idea of national unity (*narodno jedinstvo*) was proposed. Although a 1928 act established citizenship for the entire Kingdom, in reality certain non-majority groups were treated with fewer rights (Krasniqi & Stjepanovič 2015:116). In Croatia in the interwar period (1918–1941), only some minorities were recognized as 'national minorities', which excluded groups like Jews, Roma, Vlach, Macedonians, and Bulgarians.[7] This meant that these groups were not regulated with uniform measures like the national minorities; rather, there were 'ad-hoc' measures. As they were lacking the support of a 'parent country', they were usually more marginalized (Vojak 2014:312). Most worked in manual or basic level jobs, such as metal-workers, horse traders, entertainers, or even beggars.

At the same time, Romani political and cultural mobilization continued to grow in the early twentieth century, particularly in Serbia and Macedonia, fostered by literary contributions, activism, and by the granting of citizen's rights to Roma. For example, several Roma cultural organizations were established in the Balkans—such as *Društva Roma* in Belgrade in 1930 (Crowe 2007:217). In 1935, a Romani publication called *Romano Lil* was published in Serbia and quickly became popular for a growing intellectual class; however, it survived for only three months because of financial

[6] The Yugoslav Communists wanted a state very different than that of the inter-war Yugoslav kingdom, which they believed was too centralized and dominated by Serbian bourgeoisie (Jović 2003:159).
[7] Officially recognized minority groups would be considered to be part of another nationality and their protection was guaranteed through international treaties (Vojak 2014:310).

difficulties. Significantly, it stated that it would only publish positive news about the Roma, tired 'of having all the crimes of the land laid at their innocent doors…the WHOLE [sic] race of Gypsies must not be branded as liars, cheats, robbers, and assassins (Crowe 2007:217).[8] In Croatia, however, Vojak (2014:312) notes that during this interwar period, Roma were marginalized socially, economically, and politically, with no record of an institution beginning to elevate their situation.

In the context of how the state could best deal with the 'Gypsy question' during this interwar period, a proposal was sent to the League of Nations by representatives from Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Austria about 'resettling' the Roma minorities on some islands in the Atlantic or Pacific (Vojak 2014:313). On the eve of the collapse of Croatia's government in 1941, the Croatian Peasants Party suggested a forced colonization of the Roma on the Croatian island of Mljet during a discussion of the 'Gypsy question' at a meeting of the District Governing Committee of the Croatian Peasant Party (Vojak 2014:313).

During WWII, the Roma were the only other ethnic group, alongside the Jews, singled out for extermination, but until the 1960s this 'forgotten Holocaust' was barely acknowledged (Rosenhaft 2018).[9] The Nazis had willing collaborators in Croatia, Austria, Hungary and Romania in terms of their deportation and extermination policies, indicative of the disdain in which the Roma communities were held (van Baar 2011a:3). From 1941-1944, the areas of Baranja and Medjimurje in Croatia were under Hungarian control, and these were the years when the fascist Independent State of Croatia (*Nezavisna*

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[8] Crowe (2007:218) notes how Rebecca West, travel writer, in her 1937 text of *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon,* observed a positive atmosphere in Serbia and Macedonia in which 'the gipsies [sic] are proud of being gipsies, and other people … honour them for their qualities …'.

[9] Since the 1990s, an increasing amount of research has been done on the Roma during WWII. See for example, *The Gypsies During the Second World War* (Fings et al. 1997); *Pharrajimos: The fate of the Roma during the Holocaust* (Bársony & Daróczi 2008); *Beyond the Roma Holocaust: From resistance to mobilization* (Buchsbaum & Kapralski 2017); *Stradanje Roma U Nezavisnoj Državi hrvatskoj 1941–1945* [The Suffering of the Roma in the Independent State of Croatia] (Vojak et al. 2015).

Država Hrvatska-NDH) sent most of Croatia's Roma, as well as Roma from other parts of Yugoslavia, to the concentration camp Jasenovac in Croatia (Sorescu-Marinković 2008:186). At least 16,173 were tortured and killed (Vojak et al. 2015:13, 379), although this is probably too low an estimate of Roma deaths that took place in the camp.[10] There are no accurate numbers of how many Gypsies died in total in Europe during WWII, estimates range from 219,000–500,000 (Matras 2015:223,224), although some scholars put the number much higher (Hancock 2002. In Yugoslavia, some Roma fled and others resisted, fighting with the Partisans, a group which later became the basis of the Communist Party in Croatia (Crowe 2007:221).

3.2.1 The Socialist Federation of Yugoslavia (1944–1992)

The brutality of WWII resulted in the deaths of 11 percent of the pre-war population in Yugoslavia, about 1.75 million people (Crowe 2007:221). After the collapse of the NDH in 1944, The Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (FPRY) under the leadership of Josip Broz Tito was established—this time as a federation of six republics: Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

In general in Eastern Europe, Roma populations underwent significant changes as state socialism brought in new ideologies and policies (Guy 2001b:8; Barany 2002).[11]

Many scholars argue that in Yugoslavia, the Roma had more cultural, economic, and political opportunity than in other socialist states (Kenrick 2001; Barany 2002; Latham 1999). For example, 2000 Roma belonged to the League of Communists (Kenrick

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[10] Crowe argues that the NDH sent between 26,000-28,000 to their deaths (2007:220).

[11] Policies of inclusion and assimilation were introduced in order to facilitate communist ideals and the development of the proletariat, and it was recognized that the Roma labour force was useful in the implementation of socialist policies. State socialism still however viewed the Roma as a social problem that could be 'solved', and this idea of a 'social problem' was fostered by their continuing subordinate roles within the economy and residence in large ghettos, which contributed to social separation (Guy 2001b; Mirga & Gheorghe 1997; van Baar 2011a). Generally, policies were aimed at including Roma through measures to support accessing education, employment, and housing (whilst downplaying their language and cultural distinctiveness)—both in an effort towards the ideals of socialist socio-economic equality but also because this was believed to help solve their 'social problems' as they became integrated into mainstream society (Marushiakova & Popov 2001a:47; Vermeersch 2001:376).

2001:406), and in the 1940s, Roma writers and poets formed a literary organization in Macedonia (Crowe 2007:222). Roma benefited from the League of Communists' land distribution (as their Party membership provided them with certain privileges regardless of their ethnic background) enabling them to became farmers, especially in Serbia (Barany 2002:122-23). In fact, Crowe (2007:222) notes that Tito briefly considered giving the Roma their own territory in Macedonia after WWII, since they had been so committed to the Partisans. Barany (2002:122) terms Yugoslavia's relationship with Romani groups as 'constructive interference', arguing that it tended toward integration rather than assimilation. Certainly, my primary research in both Croatia and Serbia shows that many Roma reflect a longing for, and idealization of, former Yugoslavia, when 'everyone who wanted a job had a job' and life was not so difficult (Vladomir, interview 2018; Zoran, interview 2018).

Sardelić (2011, 2105) and others (Latham 1999; Várady 1997), on the other hand, argue instead that the reality was more heterogeneous, depending on the decade, regarding how the federal government was defining and understanding its minorities, and the interaction between federal and republic constitutions.[12] In fact, understanding the situation of the Roma during the time of Yugoslavia requires certain interpretative inferences, gained through a variety of means: interpreting the language of citizens' rights in the federal and republic constitutions of Yugoslavia, reading the historical summaries of historians, such as Crowe (2007) and Vojak (2014) who specifically analyse Romani history in Southeastern Europe, and summarizing historical accounts of Yugoslavia in general (Djokić 2003; Jović 2009; Lampe 1996). Although there were significant numbers of Roma in Yugoslavia during the Communist period—for example, identified

[12] Latham quotes Rudko Kawczynski, a Roma civil rights activist who has been involved in several Roma organizations such as ETRF and the Roma National Congress as saying in a 1997 interview, 'It was just a place where Roma could survive' (1999:207).

through the 1948 Yugoslav census, where the category of 'Romanies-Gypsies' showed up for the first time, enumerating 72,651 Gypsies;[13] in 1953, 84,713 Gypsies were numbered,[14] and in 1971, 78,485 (although some contest these figures as being significantly too low—see Sardelić 2011; Crowe 2007:222)—historians hardly mention Roma communities.[15]

In terms of the relationship of ethnic groups in Yugoslavia, Tito was primarily concerned with emphasizing class in the mantra *brotherhood and unity* in order that the 'national question would wither away' (Nečak 1995:25f). The 1947 constitution specified the equality of all citizens under the law regardless of nationality, race, or creed (Article 21) and also noted that 'National minorities in the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia enjoy the right to and protection of their own cultural development and the free use of their language' (Article 13). Nevertheless, the constitution did not define or name the various minorities, nor what constitutes a minority.

Various events, however, illustrated the difference between the constitution's stated claims and the more complicated reality. For example, the question about Albanian rights (1959) and the 'Croatian crisis' (1967–1972) in which Croatians made complaints about alleged Serbian dominance in terms of language, representation, and economics, were some of the factors that led to reforms, allowing more autonomy to individual republics (Lampe 1996:301-304; Dimitrijević 1995). This led to a new 1974 constitution (Crowe 2007:225–26).

The 1974 constitution declared all nationalities and nations within Yugoslavia to be equal, with the nations having the right to self-determination and secession. It

[13] Breznik & Sentić (1974:20) list the number as 72,736.
[14] Crowe attributes these significant population gains, particularly in light of the devastation of WWII as a result of the more receptive atmosphere to the Roma so that people felt more comfortable self-identifying (2007:222–23).
[15] The census was broken into categories of 'Peoples of the SFRY', 'Nationalities of the SFRY', and 'Other nationalities and ethnic groups'. The numbers of Roma were higher in 1948 than four of the 'Nationalities' listed and 1971 higher than five of the 'Nationalities' listed (Breznik & Sentić 1974:20).

differentiated between ‘nations’ (*narodi)*, which were the Slavic majorities who made up the republic (Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Slovenians, Montenegrins) and Muslims; and ‘nationalities’ *(narodnosti*), which were all other ethnic groups who could identify with a nation outside of Yugoslavia, such as Hungarians, Albanians, Slovaks, and Bulgarians (Várady 1997; Ilić 2004). Groups such as the Roma and Jews, without ties to a nation state, were not mentioned in the 1974 constitution. Therefore, although they were accorded rights as individuals, they did not have collective rights as the other nations or nationalities (Ramet 1992:60).[16] Despite the declaration of equality, in reality the 1974 constitution set up a complex hierarchy of rights based on nations, nationalities, and unmentioned groups such as the Roma (Sardelić 2011:15, 37; 2015:165). In addition, the constitutions of individual republics did not always align with the federal constitution, and so within the republics, the Roma had differentiated political, economic, and cultural access to power and rights (Sardelić 2011:37).[17]

Crowe (2007:226) claims that the Roma benefited from some of the changes in the early 1970s, citing as proof that over twice the number of individuals claiming Romani as their mother tongue in the 1971 census compared to the previous (decade earlier) census.[18] Further, a growing agency is revealed in Roma political and cultural activity. The Cultural Society Rom was founded in 1969, and in 1974, the Federation of Rom Societies of Serbia was established, which linked together 40 local Roma organizations. Yugoslav Romani also played a part in the International Romani Union (Kenrick 2001:406), whilst a Romani grammar book was published in Macedonia in 1980, and

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[16] Ramet (1992:60) offered the Bulgarian example, in which Bulgarians listened to radio in the Bulgarian language, had Bulgarian publications, and could take up the option to be educated in school in their own language.

[17] In fact, only Macedonia recognized the Roma as an ethnic group in its 1971 constitution, meaning therefore that they could use the Romani national flag and were granted certain cultural rights (Sardelić 2011).

[18] For example, Crowe (2007:226) writes about a Romani representative in the Macedonian parliament that officially changed the status of the Roma to an ethnic group.

Romani radio programmes began broadcasting from Belgrade in 1981 (Crowe 2007:226–27).

In the late 1970s, debates arose as to whether the Roma should be seen as a nationality, and finally in 1981, they were recognized as a nationality on a federal level (Barany 2002:116). However, only Bosnia and Herzegovina recognized them as a nationality at the republic level, and Slovenia and Croatia made no mention of them at all in their constitutions (Sardelić 2011:40). The end of the 1980s saw no major legal status change, but Tito's death in 1980 spawned further political, economic, and social challenges. In 1989, Rajko Djurić petitioned the Yugoslav parliament to unify the Roma nationality across all the republics. The threats and intimidation by Yugoslav state authorities and rising prejudice as the Roma became more demanding of their rights may have contributed to Djurić leaving Yugoslavia to seek asylum in Germany (Latham 1999:209). In Croatia, Roma formed the Romani party of Croatia (Crowe 2007:231)—the primary objective of which was to ensure that the Roma were recognized as a national minority in the Croatian republic (Sardelić 2011).

Despite the equalizing opportunities available under socialism and the newfound recognition as a nationality in 1981, Roma socio-economic status continued to fall behind other nationalities, which Crowe (2007) attributes to weak education, unemployment, and prejudice. Most Roma did not finish primary school, and for example, in Serbia, less than one in sixty would continue to secondary education (Crowe 2007:229). Since a lower number of Roma enrolled in Yugoslav universities (between 50–100 in the late 1970s), the Roma chronically lagged behind other groups in terms of higher education. This low education rate affected employment in roles that demanded at least an eighth-grade

education; therefore, the jobs they were able to obtain were low-skilled and predominantly involved manual labour (Crowe 2007:230).[19]

The Roma also found themselves in the middle of various ethnic and national divisions, particularly as Slobodan Milosević gained power.[20] There was a shift toward 'ethnic boundary signification' in the late 1980s and beginning of the 1990s (Russell-Omaljev 2016:91) and ethnicities 'rediscovered' links between religious history and present nationalistic ideals, as was mentioned in Chapter Two.[21] The interconnection between religion and ethnicity also became a way to differentiate nation and identity against those seen as the 'Other' (Milkov 2014; Perica 2002; Iveković 2002).[22]

3.2.2 The wars in former Yugoslavia: 1991–2001

Yugoslavia began to break apart with Croatia and Slovenia seceding in 1991, resulting in the devastating wars in Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo in the 1990s (Jović 2009). Shortly after Croatia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the Yugoslavian National Army (JNA) tried to take control of Croatia, thus pre-empting what Croatia calls the *Domovinski rat* (Homeland War).[23] In 1991, a group of Croatian Serbs from Knin declared their independence from the Republic of Croatia and set up the Serbian Autonomous Province of Krajina (SAO Krajina) which grew in territory and became the *Republika Srbska Krajina* (RSK). Until 1995, it controlled one-third of Croatia (Despalatović 2000:97). When the RSK had control, Serbian paramilitary forces expelled

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[19] This reality had already been highlighted by the Yugoslav Federal Council in a 1978 report that cited disturbing social statistics and suggested that the Roma be identified as an 'undeveloped nationality' so that they could benefit from 'positive discrimination' (Crowe 2007:227–28).
[20] For example, pressure was put on them to declare themselves Albanian in the midst of rising Albanian nationalism in the 1980s (Crowe 2007:228).
[21] Perica (2002) coined the phrase 'ethnoclericalism', which is an inextricable connection between the state, religion, and ethnicity, and the cleric acting as a protector of the nation.
[22] Mojzes (1995:27) argued that the use of religion was actually used by 'irreligious people who wear religion as a distinguishing badge but do not know what the badge stands for'.
[23] Although called *Domovinski Rat* (Homeland War) or sometimes *Velikosrpska agresija* (Greater-Serbia aggression) in Croatia, it is referred to as the *Rat u Hrvatskoj* (War in Croatia) or *Rat u Krajini* (War in Krajina) in Serbia.

or killed Croatian inhabitants from the RSK. Many Croatians (UNHCR reports 77,000 Croats fled or were expelled from Eastern Slavonia) chose to flee from their homeland rather than face Serbian confrontation (Despalatović 2000:97; ERRC 1999a). Numerous Roma communities dotted this area of eastern Croatia, and although some also left, many stayed on to weather the war. Two major offenses to take back control of the RSK—Operation Storm and Operation Flash—were successfully carried out by Croat forces in 1995 effectively ending the war; and the rest of Croatian territory taken by the RSK was peacefully seceded back to Croatia in 1998 (Rupić 2007; Silber & Little 1996; Despalatović 2000:98).

Although all populations suffered in the war, little research has focused on the Roma experience.[24] Crowe claims that Roma felt particularly vulnerable during and directly after the war, often being the poorest communities and faced with rival nationalistic claims. Therefore, Roma began to leave Yugoslavia 'by the thousands' (2007:232; Latham 1999:207).[25] Kenrick (2001: 407) argues that the Roma were 'wooed' by Serbian or Macedonian governments for nationalistic purposes and 'conscripted' in various armies of the new states around them. In Bosnia, Roma were 'forcibly mobilized' and sent to the front lines as well as being used to clear land mines; there were four Romani brigades mobilized by the Muslims (Latham 1999:213; ERRC 2004).[26] Like the other populations suffering in the war, Roma also experienced systematic rape and massacre and were sent to prisoner of war camps (Latham 1999:214).

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[24] A 1999 report by the documentation of the Bosnian Section of the Society for Threatened Peoples collected various testimonies that described Roma massacres and deportations. A 2007 Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) 2007 article describes the lacuna existing in Bosnia regarding the Roma experience during the war, although sources have documented massacre, rape, and deportation (Mustajbegović 2007).

[25] An exception to this was Macedonia, whose president recognized them as full and equal citizens in 1991 (Crowe 2007:232), although Romani citizens say the daily reality was far removed from this legality (Latham 1999:206).

[26] Rajko Djurić, activist, academic, and former president of International Romani Union, made this claim in an interview with Latham in 1997, as she notes in her 1999 work. In addition, Thomas Acton (1996) wrote about Roma women and children being taken and not united with their husbands until the men had tested the ground to check for mines.

In Croatia, Kenrick (2001) relates how Roma either escaped from Eastern Croatia or were killed by Serbian paramilitaries.[27] My primary research highlights stories from the many Roma who stayed in eastern Croatia, trapped by opposing narratives, and simply tried to survive.[28] The scarcity of research into the Roma experience created a general sentiment, supported and enhanced by previously held opinions or anecdotal stories, which holds that either all Roma 'left before the first shot' and became asylum seekers in Western Europe, or joined the Serbian 'side' due to their Orthodox leanings, looting abandoned Croatian houses and committing atrocities (Vučković 2015; Latham 1999:206–207). These beliefs about Roma culpability during the war became deeply rooted, remaining common through to the present day and contributing to ingrained stereotypes.

A 1998 European Roma Rights Centre report stated that after the reintegration of Eastern Slavonia into Croatia in 1998, many cases of anti-Roma violence were reported; Croatians returned to their homes and assumed the Roma were complicit in atrocities and/or looting of homes and were therefore 'traitors'. As a result, many Roma fled.[29] An ERRC report noted that 'less than 2500 Roma are left' in Baranja (North-eastern Croatia) of the reported 10,000 before the war (1999b).[30] Many interviewed Roma described the fear they felt when the Croatians returned; as soon as it would grow dark, groups of Croatians would drive into the Roma villages around this study's field site of Community

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[27] Kenrick cites an example in the town Torjanici in 1991 were Serbian paramilitary forces burned down the Roma part of town and killed the 11 remaining people, accusing them of being Catholics like the Croats (2001:409).

[28] One man related his experience after the Serbian forces took over: 'Men taken to one side, women to the other, children… They made us go to the trenches. We dug trenches, where the front line was… If you didn't want to, you knew what was coming to you. You were beaten during the night, you disappeared in the dark' (Zoran, interview 2018).

[29] According to an earlier report (ERRC, April 1999a), the few Roma that were successful at selling their homes prior to leaving Baranja had to sell for very low prices to a state-run real estate agency. The displaced Roma told the ERRC that the 'silent exodus' of non-Croats from Slavonia only referred publicly to the Serbians, ignoring their situation (April 1999).

[30]This ERRC report is quoting from an August 30, 1999 Feral Tribune Article, a now defunct independent anti-establishment weekly.

C; if anyone was outside or they could see lights from a house, they would attack, with no fear of police reprisal. Consequently, Roma families would hang blankets on their windows when it grew dark. The parents of one teenage girl from the church in Community C were victims of such an attack. They were out late working in the cornfield, and the Roma man was attacked with a pitchfork. He sustained a blood clot to the brain which had lifelong health consequences; doctors believed it was linked to the brain tumour that killed him ten years later. In another interview, a woman stated 'now our Croatians heard that our Gypsies were with the Serbians, and in fact, we were neither for one nor the other side, we just lived there. And so, a lot of our people left. All around the world' (Iva, interview 2016).

In fact, the Roma were caught in an identity ambiguity, which is why some interviewed individuals fondly recalled the days of simply being considered 'Yugoslavs' (Zoran, interview 2018). As Roma in Croatia and Serbia, they frequently either identify as Orthodox or Catholic, and yet they were still frequently 'Othered' as an ethnic group. As one of my interviewees explained: 'In 1995, 1996 when I was going and [temporarily] living in Sombor [Serbia] and Bezdan, we are "Ustaša". When I returned to [Croatia], they said 'you are Četniks" (Vladomir, interview 2018). Both Ustaša and Četniks are highly charged terms referring to ultranationalist and fascist groups during WWII.[31] Further, being identified as a 'Gypsy' could worsen the situation, as stereotypes of looting, stealing, and untrustworthiness would also be applied to them. One of my interlocuters described: 'Like, no one hated us because of the war, but they hated us because we were Gypsies. Yes, because we were Gypsies. That was the biggest problem' (Josip, interview 2018).[32]

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[31] The Ustaša was responsible for thousands of murders of Serbs, Jews, and Roma from 1929-1945.

[32] For example, a group of Roma men were taken from a bomb shelter and badly beaten to serve as a warning to the Roma that when the war starts, not to go stealing. 'And when they were beaten, the men came back, then all of them left that basement. None of us Roma wanted to stay there anymore, in the basement, everyone returned to their homes, and we were, well, we said, what happens to us, happens.

Within most of the conducted interviews, stories of the war emerged as part and parcel of the respondent's life narrative, the boundary line of 'before' and 'after'; when their lives were better and easier, compared to how their lives are now. Before the war, like other Yugoslavians, most Roma had steady jobs or ways of making income, as one of my interviewees noted: 'We lived a normal life like [the] majority of Roma in Eastern Croatia. 99 percent of people who were able to work, worked. From their work, they were able to take care of their children and themselves' (Vladomir, interview 2018). Although many Croatians also lost jobs in the factories as a result of Communism's end, as mentioned earlier, the Roma, starting with less education and higher rates of poverty, found it difficult to compete for jobs and political capital afterward (Latham 1999:207).

Another challenge after the war was the difficulty many Roma had in obtaining citizenship and therefore equal access to their rights as a state citizen after the conflict, resulting in 'uneven citizenships' (Krasniqi & Stjepanović 2015). During the period of Yugoslavia (1945–1992), there had been many internal migrations as Roma worked within a niche economy, for example crafting things like trough-making, or entertaining. This had often resulted in the creating of informal settlements in a different republic than their 'home' republic. The war complicated matters as people fled the fighting and then had a difficult time securing citizenship of the new country when they returned to their place of origin.

This issue can be seen in Marija and Josip's life, leaders of the church in Community C, whose narratives will be explored in Chapter Five. Josip was born in Croatia in the former Yugoslavia, and although he had a birth certificate, he had no Yugoslavian passport or documentation. Under the *Srbski Krajna,* when Serbia was occupying his part of Croatia, he had an identity card. He had the right to obtain automatic Croatian

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Here, if something kills us, it will be a grenade…and there they will massacre us.' After that, he and his wife fled to Serbia (Josip, interview 2018).

citizenship before he turned 18, but as he was standing in line with his parents to do so around 1997/8, he realised he had forgotten his identity card. When he ran back to get his, Marija and her mother, both born in Serbia, were panicking because her mother was a 'Četnik' and consequently they were afraid of getting deported back to Serbia, while Marija was pregnant with their second child.

Josip's status as a 'perpetual foreigner' often had stressful consequences. When he and Marija went to Serbia to visit a doctor in 1998, the borders closed as the peaceful reintegration process had begun to relinquish the RSK back to Croatia. They stayed out of Croatia for two years, and when they returned, only Marija and her oldest son could pass through with their Croatian documents. Josip smuggled himself over the Danube river and Marija used the same papers issued to her son to smuggle her infant daughter across the border. When Josip tried to apply for Croatian documents again, he was put in jail for ten days since he was without documentation. He was then told to apply for Serbian citizenship, but the Serbian authorities would not issue him documents since he had not been born there.

Marija, on the other hand, did have Yugoslav and Serbian papers. She obtained her Croatian citizenship in 2003/4 by pretending to marry Josip's brother, who was a Croatian citizen. They believed this was the only way their family could stay together, since Josip was not able to get citizenship. Eventually, when her papers came through, she 'divorced' the brother. Josip finally obtained Serbian citizenship in 2009, which enabled him to finally win Croatian citizenship in 2014. During this whole period, he was considered a foreigner in his own birth country of Croatia, and therefore without the rights of citizenship.

Such stories illustrate the complexity of the Roma situation in chaotic and young nation-states. Sardelić (2015) argues that this difficulty cannot merely be attributed to the fact that as Roma, they have been positioned as the 'Other'. After the collapse of

Yugoslavia and the ending of the wars, the difficulties many Roma faced were based on this internal migration and other intermingled factors including inter-generational poverty (Sardelić 2015:167). Sardelić (2015:161–64) argues that because of various policies and identity hierarchies, Roma minorities often found themselves in a 'space of specific in-betweenness'. Drawing on Spivak's (1999) concept of epistemological violence—how post-Yugoslav states defined citizenship, which emerged from the larger socio-cultural dynamics—and Homi Bhabha's (2012)concept of forced 'in-betweenness', Sardelić illustrates that Romani minorities challenged the meta-narrative of the homogenous state, and they thus often ended up as 'collateral damage' because of this in-betweenness.[33]

In Croatia, for example, a provisionary constitution was written in late 1990, recognizing equality of rights between nations and minorities within the state. In 1997, the constitution renamed 'minorities' as 'autochthonous national minorities', but the Roma were not mentioned.[34] In 2000, the constitution guaranteed national minorities the right to be represented in parliament but did not explicitly mention Roma or Slovenian minorities. In 2001, the constitution was further amended to name ten autochthonous national minorities as being eligible for minority rights. Finally, in 2005, Croatia adopted the 'Roma national program' as a prerequisite to participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005–2010) (Sardelić 2011:59); but it was not until 2010 that the Constitutional Act for the Rights of National Minorities became applicable to Roma. At

[33] In Croatia and Serbia, this in-betweenness manifested between Croats and Serbs, while in Kosovo, between the Albanian Kosovars and Serbians, and in Macedonia, between the Macedonian majority and the Albanian minority (Sardelić 2015:163).

[34] Article Five of the Constitutional Act on the Rights of National Minorities defines national minorities as 'a group of Croatian citizens whose members are traditionally settled on the territory of Croatia; its members have ethnic, linguistic, cultural and/or religious characteristics which are different from those of other citizens; and they are guided by the desire to preserve them' (Sardelić 2011:56). This act provides official language status to minority languages, and seats in parliament for minority representatives mentioned in Article 19. If the minority is below 1.5% of Croatian population, they are entitled to 4 representatives in total, to represent all the minorities. In 2007, Naif Memedi, a Roma, was elected as the national minority representative (Sardelić 2011:57).

that point, for the first time the Roma were mentioned in the preamble of Croatia's constitution, along with 22 other ethnic minorities (2011:55).[35]

3.3 Conclusion

Through this brief discussion of the Roma in Southeastern Europe, it is possible to see how larger religious, social, and political forces and shifting ideas interacted with how Roma were and still are imagined. [36] The former Yugoslavia and the Balkans are areas, which since WWI, the West has often associated with backwardness, primitiveness, barbarians, and violence in contrast to 'civilized' Europe (Todorova 2009; Bakić-Hayden 1995). Bakić-Hayden (1995:918) uses the concepts underlying Orientalism[37] to argue for the 'nesting Orientalisms' found within the Balkans. This is predicated upon the gradated distance of 'Eastness' to the West—thus the Orient is East from the Balkans, the Balkans is East in Eastern Europe, and within the Balkans are also hierarchies based on geographical distance between the East and West, religion, and former empires.[38] Those regions who were under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, such as Croatia and Slovenia, for

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[35] The promise of EU succession was at least partially responsible for new attention being placed on the Roma communities, as potential member states had to meet a minimum requirement for their minorities, particularly concerning anti-discrimination laws and minority rights (Sardelić 2015; Vermeersch & Ram 2009:61; Vermeersch 2013:344; Kovats 2001:4). In fact, until 2000, the larger conversation regarding Roma in the EU had to do with their migration from East to West, which led to a policy focus on Roma status in their home countries with the implicit intent that improving their status would ensure that they did not migrate (Acton 2017). However, in 2000, the EU began to focus on the Roma status as a minority in their home countries as a conditional requirement to move toward full EU membership (Önsoy & Tuncel 2017:52).

[36] See, for example, Hammack's (2011:312) analysis of how Israeli and Palestinian interpretative frameworks of history, which may be competing, affect how they make meaning of their lives. He argues this is always political as personal narratives 'represent texts of social and psychological integration, and thus they fulfil both an individual psychological and sociocultural purpose'.

[37] *Orientalism* by Edward Said (1978) was a ground-breaking book that challenged the 'West's' exotic conceptions and representations of the 'East' (Asia, Middle East, North Africa).

[38] For example, during the 1920s, Milan Šufflay, a professor of anthropology and a nationalist wrote that Croat means civilization, and consequently 'loyal service to the white West' and to align itself with the Serbs would mean a certain 'Balkanization of the Croat nation' (Yeomans 2006:107).

example, readily claimed more 'Europeaness' over and above the Muslims that were under the Ottomans.[39]

With this framework, the Roma in the Balkans are 'Orientalized' to the furthest degree. Scholars such as Lucassen, Willems & Cottaar (1998) have argued that nineteenth century scholarship on the Roma, or 'Gypsylorism' led to the general 'Orientalizing' of Gypsy identity until the mid-twentieth century. Lee (2000:132) defines 'Gypsylorist' in conversation with Orientalism thus: 'Whilst Orientalism is the construction of the exotic Other outside Europe, Gypsylorism is the construction of the exotic Other within Europe—Romanies are the "Orientals within"'.

Furthering Said's work in *Orientalism,* post-colonial critique and subaltern studies seek to recognize how the 'Other' has been excluded from historical accounts (Smith 1999:30). Lee argues that although Romanies were not dispossessed of land in the typical way one thinks of when considering colonialism, they can be considered colonial subjects in the ways in which they were dispossessed of other aspects of humanity such as language, dignity, and culture (2004:32). Evidenced in such examples as the slow development of Roma constitutional rights in Yugoslavia, and the lack of interest regarding the Roma experience in the recent wars in the Balkans, it seems clear that Roma are still 'Othered' in the larger societies of Croatia and Serbia.

Despite this 'Othering', post-colonial critiques demonstrate how social changes are not just a result of the agency of the powerful, but rather the impetus of change has a plurality of actors and can be located in moments of 'confrontation and resistance', in which 'subalterns' are primary agents of change (Mahmud 2006:54). This requires someone to listen to the 'small voice of history' (Guha 2009); in other words, seeking

[39] There are exceptions to dispute this point. For example, the father of Croatian nationalism, Ante Starčević, claimed Bosnian Muslims were actually 'pure-blooded Croats' who had merely accepted Islam under the Ottoman empire (Yeomans 2006:103). This was also declared by other politicians and academics through the 1930s in order to argue that Bosnia should belong to a future Croatian state (Yeomans 2006:38).

accounts of those who hold little social or political power. This requires a methodology that allows space for the Roma to narrate their own lives and thus I employ narrative inquiry as a methodology, an approach that will be introduced in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction: What is Narrative?

This chapter proposes that narrative inquiry is an appropriate anthropological approach of studying the relationship between identity, Pentecostalism, and social processes—that is, how one operates within family, community and society.[1] Narrative has past, present, and future implications (Polkinghorne 1988:11); this means that people are constantly reinterpreting their pasts in light of their ongoing stories (Clandinin & Connelly 2006:375) to continue creating meaning and are therefore the 'narrator' of their own stories (Ricoeur 1991:32). Narrative focuses on the particularistic nature of the human experience, described in their own terms and language (Taylor 1989; Spector-Mersel 2010; Chase 2011).[2]

Put in the context of a methodology, narrative inquiry is the 'study of experience as a story' (Clandinin & Connelly 2006:375); a 'collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus' (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:20). Simply, the narrative analysis of life stories aids in the multi-layered interpretation of how individuals understand themselves, ascribe meaning to their life events, and plot their future decisions.

Like grounded theory, narrative inquiry analyses 'bottom-up' data—collected narratives and interviews with people (Floersch et al. 2010:3). In fact, narrative inquiry has some points of commensurability with other qualitative methods such as grounded

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[1] See, for example, Shaw's thesis (2006): *Narrating Gypsies, Telling Travellers: A study of the relational self in four life stories.*

[2] As noted in Section 1.1, narrative is defined in this thesis as a 'distinct form of discourse: as meaning making through the shaping or ordering of experience, a way of understanding one's own or others' actions, of organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events over time' (Chase 2011:421).

theory, and narrative theorists can use discourse analysis, thematic analysis or other mixed methods approaches in order to offset each method's potential weaknesses (Josselson 2011:226). Because grounded theory has roots in symbolic interactionism, narrative theory can link narrative inquiry and grounded theory in terms of how individuals interpret and perform meaning in their lives (Lal et al. 2012:6ff). However, grounded theory attempts to produce theory from themes and categories of this bottom-up data (Floersch et al. 2010) in order to explain social processes (Lal et al. 2012:5), whereas narrative inquiry tries to explain human experience via the form and content of the narratives themselves (Lal et al. 2012). In this way, narrative inquiry can offset the critique that grounded theory dissipates participants' stories for the sake of thematic categories (Lal et al. 2012:14). Narrative inquiry's attested weaknesses regarding validity will be addressed in section 4.4.2.

Narrative inquiry, therefore, is essentially hermeneutical, as it is concerned with interpreted meanings from the 'contextualized stories that people tell to mark and understand their actions, to construct an identity, and to distinguish themselves from others' (Josselson 2011:240). This interpretative work takes place within a relationship, with the potential for both the researcher and interlocuter to be changed in the process (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007:7–9). First, this chapter will explore how narrative is a paradigm in itself, given its ontological, epistemological and methodological basis (Spector-Mersel 2010).[3] Second, the chapter will explore how this theoretical base works out in the methodology. Third, the specifics of data collection and analysis will be explained. Finally, the chapter will explore methodological considerations impacting the research such as ethics and use of translation.

[3] Spector-Mersel argues that narrative corresponds with other interpretative paradigms in its major dimensions; it has its own ontology, epistemology, methodology, aim, researcher posture, and participant posture (2010:204).

4.2 The Narrative Paradigm

4.2.1 The Narrative Turn in the Social Sciences

It was in the 1960s when, for the first time, narrative emerged in literary theory as its own object of study (Kreiswirth 2010:378),[4] utilized in disciplines such as history and social sciences in what has been called the 'narrative turn' (Riessman 2008; Wells 2011).[5] The narrative turn altered the perceptions of narratives—from stories seen as merely a window into the past or a way to view personality, to a more discursive and constructivist approach (Spector-Mersel 2010:207), shifting the emphasis to a focus on 'storied forms of knowledge' (Kreiswirth 2010:380).[6] Jerome Bruner (1986:13), for example, differentiated between a paradigmatic way of knowing—classification and categorization through hypothesis and testing in order to arrive at empirical truth—versus narrative ways of knowing which are: 'interpreted descriptions of the rich and multi-layered meanings of historical and personal events' (Wertz et al. 2011:65). Bruner (2004:692) later argued that autobiography is a way of 'life-making', in that telling one's story is about interpretation, a way of constructing ourselves.

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[4] In the twentieth century post-war period, there was a shift towards humanist, people-centred methods in Western psychology and sociology. Sociologists and anthropologists began collecting life histories, biographies, and case studies as a way to understand subjective experience (Andrews et al. 2013b:3). During this period, anthropologists approached life histories as a representative sample to understand a whole culture, or culture change, such as in the case of Native American narratives (Chase 2005:654). In the anthropological view during this period, narration had a direct relation to reality (Spector-Mersel 2010).

[5] Hyvärinen (2010b:72–7) nuances the 'narrative turn' by claiming *four* turns: literary studies, historiography, social sciences, and culture studies. He traces four attitudes emerging from the four turns: Literary studies, looking at narrative study on its own outside of genres; Historiography, the very nature of history as narrative-making; Social Sciences, narrative now seen as theory and material for research; and Cultural-narrative turn as a general thought-mode on a grander scale.

[6] Kreiswirth (2010:380) highlights narrative's movement into different disciplines as a recognition of narrative as a valid form of knowledge in, for example, medicine, political science, and law. For example, Hurwitz et al. (2004) show how the increasing use of narratives as a valid form of 'knowing' in the field of medicine in the twentieth century was a reaction to ethical issues in medical research. Kreiswirth (2010:381) argues that how narratives are perceived—whether fact or fiction—is dependent on the expectations and cues from the audience. For example, he contrasts an illness narrative with a novel—both are stories but have different functions and are received differently.

One of the contributing factors and outcomes of this ‘narrative turn’ in the 1960s was a new understanding regarding the role of language. Polkinghorne (1988:158) argues that linguistic forms have an epistemological function, ‘for they filter and organize information from the physical and cultural realms and transform it into the meanings that make up human knowledge and experiences’. Languages linguistically articulate the world in different ways, and language mediates our past and present experience, becoming the ‘code’ creating the structures by which we interpret meaning into our experience (McLean 2012:162–64).[7] Although this concept of linguistic relativity has since been critiqued as being overly deterministic and impersonal in determining how meanings are understood and formulated, McLean postulates that even as our thoughts are constructed by the language we use in order to create the thought, we can be ‘active agents’ in terms of how we employ language (2012:165ff).

In addition, there was also a recognition that, based on Labov and Waletzky’s ground-breaking 1967 work on applying linguistic analysis to first person event narratives, ordinary people’s day-to-day accounts were valuable, and a ‘“cognitive representation of reality” can be formed in the narrative structure’ (Chase 2005:656). In the 1980s, certain studies (Sarbin 1986; Bruner 1986; McAdams 1988; Polkinghorne 1988) furthered this approach, looking at narrative as a meaning-making enterprise that shapes identity, taking seriously the particularistic nature of human experience (Spector-Mersel 2010; Taylor 1989). Researchers began to find value in examining selfhood and social agency in the language and ideas of the individuals themselves (Maynes et al. 2008).

4.2.2. Hermeneutic Contributions

Narrative’s ontological foundations rest on the premise that social reality is a narrative reality on both an individual and communal level (Spector-Mersel 2010:211; Gubrium &

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[7] This is referred to as the concept of linguistic relativity or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (McLean 2012:162).

Holstein 2009). Narratives shape our personal identity[8] (Gubrium & Holstein 2000) through 'constellations of relationships' (Somers 1994) interacting in familial, social, and cultural contexts (Eakin 1999) and help us to imagine our cultural/national identity (Taylor 2004; Anderson 2006). Narratives, then, are an 'essential source of psycho-socio-cultural learning and shape who we are and might become … a portal through which a person enters the world …' (Smith & Sparks 2009:3).

Hermeneutics moves from text to meaning through the act of interpretation.[9] Josselson (2004) reflects on the contributions of Ricoeur's (1970:28–32) hermeneutics of faith, which aims to restore the meaning of a message through listening and respecting the symbol through which the message comes, and hermeneutics of suspicion, which mistrusts the symbol, interpreting 'disguised' meanings. Josselson (2004:6) argues that hermeneutics aimed at restoration of meaning relies on both a phenomenology of experience and the use of language to construct social realities (See also Gadamer 1989). Usually relying on 'thick description' (Geertz 1973), the restoration process dialectically moves between local and global structures and details (Josselson 2004:10). Conversely, the hermeneutics of suspicion attempts to deconstruct symbols and remove masks to understand the social processes at work, looking at what is not said and the contradictions within the narrative (Josselson 2004:13–15). Grounded in the premise that cultural constraints enable and inhibit discourses available to the narrator (Gubrium & Holstein 2009:2), the hermeneutic of suspicion 'recognizes the relativity of all accounts; it takes

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[8] Many theorists explore the connection between narrative and identity. See, for example, Brockmeier & Carbaugh (2001) *Narrative and Identity: Studies in autobiography, self, and culture*; Bamberg et al. (2007) *Selves and Identity in Narrative Discourse*; McAdams et al. (2006) *Identity and Story: Creating Self in Narrative.*

[9] The hermeneutic tradition, evolved from philosophers such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), and Ricoeur (1913–2005) contributes to modern narrative research.

as axiomatic that context and time frame a mutable sense of causality and contingency that underpin a currently-told biography' (Josselson 2004:15).

This was poignantly illustrated in the home of one lady interviewed for this study, who at first was adamant that she did not want her life story recorded. As we spoke about other things, she spoke honestly about her current despair in life: she admitted that she had searched for God but never found him, and consequently had given up. Later, she suddenly agreed to be taped, but as soon as I turned on the tape recorder, her whole presentation became a religious litany of 'God did this' and 'Praise Jesus'. Presumably, the tape recorder indicated a different audience and thus a different way of performing her story (Anka, interview 2017).

Gadamer's concept of the 'fusion of horizons' enriches the hermeneutical process. Gadamer emphasizes the subjective nature being in a 'situation' in which our understanding can never be complete because our own self-knowledge is never complete (1989:301). A 'finite present' has its horizon, which is everything that can be seen from that point, and yet is always moving as we are aware and test our prejudices when we encounter the horizon of either another person or the historical past (Gadamer 1989:301–305). Gadamer (1989:305) argues that understanding comes in the 'fusion' of these horizons, as the interpreter is able to see both their phenomenological horizon and the other's horizon at the same time (McLean 2012:192). This fusion holds the possibility of superseding both (Gadamer 1989:306) as it 'creates a modified temporal space from which one can see beyond the former limits of one's own historically effected consciousness' (McLean 2012:192). The hermeneutic process should bring out these horizons and the tensions arising in their fusion when the interpreter 'reawakens' the narrative text as they bring their horizon in play (390). To understand how the narrator constructs reality and the self through the story (Polkinghorne 1988; Gubrium & Holstein

2009) is to move forward into this 'fusion' as the narrator is constructing reality from a different vantage point than the researcher.

Gadamer's contribution to narrative research illuminates the transformative possibilities through the expanded and shifting horizons in the dialogical encounter. His concept of the 'fusion of horizons' indicates understanding-in-movement, since it offers the potential of new vantage points being created through the encounter. Both Gadamer and Ricoeur see this 'movement' as a continual opportunity for mutual change as the narrative remains open for re-interpretation. However, the hermeneutic process of interpretation and re-interpretation is not just significant for the dialogic process of text and reader or narrator and listener, but since a phenomenological 'horizon' can belong to a culture or community (McLean 2012:176),[10] interpretation of narratives can have a catalytic social effect as well.

4.2.3 Self as the Author: Movement of Narrative as Social Change

If the hermeneutic process is not a static activity, neither is the self-interpretation of narrative where one must explain one's present action by having a sense of where one has come from or where one might be going (Taylor 1989:48). As new events happen, an individual must step into the interstitial space of *time* wherewith they must re-reflect on the past in light of the new event. It is in this hybrid space that new creative interpretations of life events are born, which impacts actions and attitudes for the future. This act of storytelling, then, allows the narrator 'constitutive agency' and this very act of storytelling is a social accomplishment (Gubrium et al. 2012:7).

In our freedom as our own protagonist, we can narrate ourselves as victims or heroes, and this has implications with how we conduct ourselves in the real world (Polkinghorne

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[10] Mclean offers the example of a 'Western' horizon of meaning as being the linearity of time, progress, freedom, and rights of individuals (2012:179-80).

1988; Spector-Mersel 2010:208). Charles Taylor explores this relationship between 'being' and 'doing'.[11] For Taylor (1989:28), identity cannot be separated from social agency because the values to which we orient ourselves become the rubric for making evaluative decisions. In his words, to know ourselves is to be 'oriented in a moral space' and it is from this orientation that we make decisions and respond to questions. Thus, our actions flow from our sense of self, which is constantly orienting to our concept of the 'good', which we decided is superior to other ways (92). Bruner (2004:694) says it this way:

> Eventually the culturally shaped cognitive and linguistic processes that guide the self-telling of life narratives achieve the power to structure perceptual experience, to organize memory, to segment and purpose-build the very 'events' of a life. In the end, we *become* the autobiographical narratives by which we 'tell about' our lives.

Therefore, it is essential to mark how autobiographies shift over time, how 'our way of telling about ourselves changes' (Bruner 2004:695). Bruner's (2004:708) hypothesis, then, is that the ways of telling become 'recipes' for conceptualizing and organizing experience, in ways that make sense of the past and provide direction for the future. If this is true, something that 'breaks' into the narrative recipe, such as trauma or a conversion, could be significant for analysis of how human experience changes over time—not only the *what* of the story, but also the very form, language and style.

One example of this can be seen in the Holocaust survivors' narratives. When Holocaust survivor stories began to appear more frequently as oral history accounts in the 1970s, the limitations of language to express experience was also revealed. Psychiatrist Dori Laub (1998:802), who was part of one of the first Holocaust testimony projects, noted that victims had no language structures from their past to be able to formulate thoughts to express their experience because of the trauma which effectively caused a

[11] For Taylor, identity 'is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done…' (1989:27).

'break' between their past and present.[12] If a victim was able to break through and narratively recount their experience, they were able to begin mediating trauma (Schiffrin 2003:539). They needed to access new forms and language to create the narrative of the past, and the ability to tell the stories had the potential to lead to 'healing, liberation, and mental health' as well as freeing the listeners to expose their own darker narratives (Delgado 1989:2437).[13] The inaccessibility of language could be at least part of the reason why sometimes, when I would ask a woman to tell her story, she would say something like 'Oh, it's just suffering and hardship. There is nothing to say' (Field notes, September 2017).

In addition, as noted earlier, narrative research intrinsically confronts cultural, institutional, and societal structures of injustice by bringing to light interactions of power. Delgado argues for a 'creative dialectic' between the cultural narrative and the counter-narratives: 'The dominant group justifies its privileged position by means of stories, stock explanations that construct reality in ways favourable to it' (1989:2438). Counter-stories, on the other hand, can open new perspectives in reality, engage imagination, and move conscience (1989:2415).[14] In addition, the narrative researcher can 'look for the collusive or resistant strategies that narrators develop in relation to the constraints of their narrative environments' (Chase 2011:430).

To bring this into the context of this study, narrative can reveal power relations through a dialectical study between society's narratives (the Roma are poor because they are lazy and it is just their culture) and the counter-narratives of the Roma (we work hard to

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[12] Other scholars also note the inadequacy of language to describe trauma. Skultans (1998:14), collecting narratives of Latvians under Soviet occupation, noted that when asked what deportation was like, many commonly answered that it was it 'was beyond words or beyond description'.

[13] This is seen in other contexts as well. Out of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, a literary scholar and psychologist talk about the role of 'narrating trauma' to facilitate the reconstruction of self (Gobodo-Madikizela & van der Merwe 2007:29).

[14] Delgado illustrates his point by comparing the white narrative of race relations in America versus the African-American narrative, the former highlighting a foregone dark period of history with a steady progress toward good relations compared to the latter of a history of torture, rape, and brutality that still tangibly impacts African-Americans today (1989:2416–17)

survive but there are no jobs for us), paying special attention to the ways in which the counter-stories subvert their socio-cultural constraints. This is key to moving toward an activist or engaged anthropology, where my research could bring a needed critique in the larger society, as noted in Chapter Two (Beck & Maida 2013; Hale 2008).

4.3 Narrative Analysis in Context

As stated in the Foreword to this thesis, I initially entered the Roma community in Croatia in June 2011, and only this first visit involved a Croatian translator. In the fall of 2011, I started regularly accompanying the Romani couple, Marija and Josip, who are at present leaders in Community C. Since the couple could not speak English, my exposure to these communities was a slow process interwoven with language learning and silent observing. Marija became instrumental in my language learning; somehow, she could always understand what I was trying to say, even acting as a translator between Josip and myself. Around the same time, another couple, a Dutch man, Gustav, and Croatian woman, Tijana, began visiting the villages to study the Bible with people, and the five of us began an informal 'joint' enterprise of visiting and praying for people. I was doing other research and writing at the time, so these weekly visits were not my primary focus.

When the Romani couple had a desire to begin a church in the fall of 2012 (the story of which will be explored more in Chapter Five), I was swept up in the plan, simply because by that point, we had formed a friendship and I wanted to support them in this endeavour. It was in this organic way that I entered into church leadership, along with Gustav and Tijana. The Croatian Pentecostal Church formerly appointed Marija and Josip as pastors to the church in 2013, and Marija and Josip designated me and Tijana as

‘Elders’.[15] Functionally, however, the church operated from a team of four leaders—Josip as the pastor preferring decision-making through group consensus.

Initially, I was conscious of my primary role as a researcher and learner, but this became an increasingly embattled internal boundary. At one point in early 2013, I was verbally challenged by the other church leaders to take more ownership in my leadership role and less refuge in my researcher role. I realised in some ways I was keeping this barrier because I did not want to become so deeply intertwined with the chaotic beginnings of the church plant. However, I took on the challenge and began to take my role more seriously as a church leader.

4.3.1. Data Collection

Narrative researchers often base their studies on a small number of in-depth interviews, contextually situated, as they are not attempting to generalize themes to a population (Chase 2005:666–67). The number of interviews selected should be related to the level of complexity in detailed analysis (the more detailed and complex, the fewer required), and a sample may refer not just to people, but to units of text within multiple interviews of one person (Wells 2011:20). Given the importance of both form and content to narrative analysis, the interview format was loosely structured. At the beginning, I would tell the interlocuter that they could start their life story wherever they wished. I would let them tell their story to the extent they wanted, with no or little prompting from myself. When they finished, I would follow up with questions to clarify and to establish more of a chronology (See Appendix 3).

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[15] By this point, the Dutch man had moved back to the Netherlands and was no longer a part of the church.

I studied two different communities, who share familial, lingual, and cultural connections, because I wondered how my different relationship with the two communities would impact the kind of narratives that emerged. Candea (2016:2) compares the frontal comparison in which ‘an unfamiliar ethnographic entity is contrasted to a putatively familiar background’ to lateral ‘cases [that] are laid side by side’. He argues that the differences the lateral comparisons bring to light create more questions, routes of enquiry, and possibilities (7), but still cannot be separated from the frontal comparison. As a hermeneutical circle, the frontal ‘makes the familiar and the familiar strange, while the lateral continues to ‘drive the investigation deeper’ (18). The lateral comparison can thus bring the frontal comparison into more acute focus as it forces the relational role of the researcher into a wider lens of analysis. In this case, I discovered that my suspicions were accurate, that my differing relationship with the two communities had a profound effect on the elicited narratives.

In the fieldwork site of Community C, in Croatia, population of 1000 people, I conducted ten initial in-depth interviews as well as follow-up interviews with six of the same respondents, including interviews with the church leaders. I selected people in the church who were willing and who would be able to tell a coherent story.

Figure 4.1 Interlocuters in Community C

Name	Age	Gender	Type
Marija*	36	Female	Extended interviews
Josip*	36	Male	Extended interviews
Hana	56	Female	Two interviews
Iva	55	Female	One interview
Ana	66	Female	One interview
Mia	48	Female	Two interviews
Helena	63	Female	Two interviews
Zoran	49	Male	Conversational interview
Ivan	63	Male	Two interviews
Katarina	61	Female	Two interviews

*Church leader

Outside of the church, I also conducted informal interviews (not included in the chart above) with the Roma president of the community and the Roma president of the region, as well as a Roma activist from the region in order to gain more general context. My longevity in the community is important for narrative research since 'extensive relationships' are key to developing trust and intimacy, and this determines the kinds of stories one can collect (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl 2007:147).

In narrative inquiry, data collection can comprise a wide range of methods, including written narratives from participants, photographs, and other artefacts (Lal et al. 2012:11). I collected 'field texts' (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:95), which are comprised of field notes and personal reflections based on non-formal conversations in people's homes (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl 2007), sharing in the context of church events, observations from the community and the church community. I organized these field texts in Evernote software, as this allowed me to keep photos, notes, and recordings all in one place for easy access. I accompanied the people to social and cultural events, oftentimes dancing with them, and drove them on errands such as to social services or the hospital/doctor and visited them in the hospital. Sometimes people would share their family pictures with me

to provide context to their stories and past relationships; and some gave me permission to photograph their family pictures.[16] Being such an active and familiar part of this community allowed me to form long-standing trusting relationships.

In the fieldwork site of Community B in Serbia, population of 5000 people, I conducted 20 in-depth interviews, including with the church leaders. The people were suggested and asked if they would be willing to participate by the pastor.

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[16] Other narrative researchers have noted how the narrators voluntary show photographs, not just to add more context, but to signal something important the researcher should be listening to (Riessman 2012:374). Chase (2005:662) shares an episode from her own research when she was interviewing a woman regarding her move from a prestigious job to a one involving lower stress. The woman seemingly digressed from her narrative by pulling out pictures and telling her about a family member with a serious disability. It was only later that Chase realised this was actually central to the narrative: showing photos and sharing family stories was part and parcel of her grappling with life meaning, moving toward family and away from work.

Figure 4.2 Interlocutors in Community B

Names	Age	Gender(s)	Type
Milan & Sandra	44, 43	Married couple	Conversation, interview
Nikola & Dejan	42, 42	Married couple	Conversation
Filip	71	Male	Interview
Dragan & Mina	44, 46	Married couple	Interviews, conversation
Luka & Vanja	38, 37	Married couple	Two interviews
Boris and family	55	Family	Interview
Elena	36	Female	Conversation, Interview
Vera	64	Female	Conversational
Mladen & Family	63, 43 (parents)	Family	Interview
Nina & Lazar	45, 48	Married couple	Interview
Dragana & Miroslav	23, 24	Married couple	Conversations, two interviews
Sofija & Nemanja	45, 48	Married couple	Interview
Ruzica & Miodrag	62, 64	Married couple	Two interviews
Ljuba	46	Female	Interview, conversations
Tijana & Vuk	46, 44	Married couple	Interview
Anka	62	Female	Interview
Nikolina	55	Female	Interview
Vesna	38	Female	Conversational, interview
Marko*	43	Male church leader	Multiple interviews
Zora*	41	Female church leader	Multiple interviews

*Church leader

I have been visiting this Roma community since 2012; however, since I have never lived in close proximity to them, this community does not know me as well; consequently, I noticed a difference, in particular with the women, about the type and depth of the stories shared. In fact, the men were much more open with their stories whilst the women were more guarded, except in the cases where I interviewed female relatives of people from the community in Croatia. Since relationship is highly valued, they 'knew' me through their relatives and narrated their stories in as much depth as did those in Croatia. I stayed with various families from the church when I visited and spent time in their church community as well as in the homes of the people. I also collected field texts from this

community, including family pictures that people insisted on showing me as part and parcel of their stories. The differences between my elicited research in the two communities, based on the difference of relationship will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

4.3.2 Data Analysis

Within narrative inquiry, the method of analysing narratives holds a non-dogmatic creative openness (Josselson 2011:228).[17] I used Spector-Mersel's (2011:173) holistic examination of 'mechanisms of selection'—inclusion, silencing, flattening, omitting, sharpening, meaning attribution—for interpreting narratives. This method of analysis seeks to identify the biographical elements in the story and the form in which they are constructed as a 'means of recognizing the identity being claimed' (Spector-Mersel 2014b:11). I chose this analysis style because I felt it best reflected the epistemological commitments and hermeneutic process of narrative whilst focusing on claimed identity in the narratives. The holistic analysis is based on the active interpretation of these four components: the plot events, the form or 'emplotment'—the selection and fusion of heterogenous elements (Ricoeur 1991)—of the told events, the immediate context, and the macro context. Appendix 4 offers an example of this process.

4.3.2.1 Plot Events

As the storyteller is the interpretative protagonist, she or he determines what events to include in their narrative (Riessman 1993). Each act of storytelling is not haphazard as it involves a decision of what events to tell and what not to tell (Spector-Mersel 2014a:25; Rosenthal 1993). This decision-making process is guided by the narrator's 'end point';

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[17] One can see this exemplified, for example, in a special edition of *Narrative Works* in which five readings of the same life story text elicit five distinct modes of narrative interpretation: mechanisms of selection(Spector-Mersel 2014b), a metaphor-oriented positioning (Kupferberg 2014), interdisciplinary discourse analysis (Perez & Tobin 2014), a reflexive reading combining 'holistic content and form' (Lieblich 2014), and the three context model involving immediate relationships, collective social field, and cultural metanarratives (Tuval-Mashiach 2014).

that is, the identity the narrator wishes to claim in the story. Thus, identity claims through stories are 'based upon conscious and unconscious acts of sorting, filtering, and selecting from the "raw material" contained in our life history' (Spector-Mersel 2014a:25). As such, the story, comprised of emploted events, must be considered a unit for analysis (Clandinin & Connelly 2000:31).[18]

4.3.2.2 Form

In terms of analysis, it is not just the story itself or recitation of events that is important, but also the form in which the story is told: emplotment requires certain decisions on the part of the narrator and this emplotment 'constitutes the creative centre of narrative' because this form conveys meaning (Ricoeur 1991:21–4).[19] Furthermore, the actual narrative structure acts not just as a literary form, but also as a 'mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience…' (Eakin 1999:100).

Narrative form is influenced by factors such as individual and social influences, trauma, cultural forms, and whether a culture is largely oral or text-based.[20] Structural theorists argue that the narrative form reflects moralistic impulses and the desire to shape events with 'coherence, integrity, fullness, and closure of an image of life that is and can only be imaginary' (White 1980:27). Skultans (1998:21) explored the density of narrative form, particularly in cases of life trauma or terror, stating that language 'holds in suspension the residues of personal and social histories'. This becomes a 'metaphorical' order rather than a temporal one, since trauma borne of exile, war, and imprisonment 'fragmented accepted notions of time and space' (27). Metaphor can point to what is

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[18] See also Riessman 1993; Spector-Mersel 2010; Chase 2005; Gubrium & Holstein 2009.
[19] Ricoeur also explains the importance of 'time' in narrative, pointing to two kinds in every narrative: a series of events, and time related to 'integration, culmination, and closure' in the light of which the story becomes unique (1991:22).
[20] Orality refers to people who prefer to communicate in oral-based means, whether or not they are literate. They prefer sound over sight, memory over writing, personal contact over second hand information (Ong 2002; Camery-Hoggatt 2005). Emerging studies in orality argue that oral based cultures process and remember events and stories differently than those more reliant on text.

experienced or felt by an individual, but which is out of immediate language grasp (Skultans 1998:28). In any cultural paradigm, there are often 'unspoken' forms in which someone plots her story (Riessman 1993).[21] In certain Western phenomenological horizons (McLean 2012:179–80), for example, there is much more focus on the 'self' rather than the undergirding social fabric, and there is usually more emphasis on a chronological autobiography (Andrews 2007:493), whilst oral learners, such as the people in Community C and B, highlight event importance (Arnett 2017:54).

Regardless of cultural forms of story, there is a reflexive relationship between events and form, which depicts the 'narrative reality' out of which the individual makes sense of their world (Gubrium & Holstein 2009). In other words, *how* a storyteller tells their story is part and parcel of their identity construction, and we can see 'what life "means" to them at the moment of telling—through experiencing the tension in the structure of the narrative, the juxtaposition of the real and the wished for, the story and the dream' (Riessman 1993:52).

4.3.2.3 Immediate Context

The immediate context in which a story is told involves several factors: The place and time of the actual interview, the initial statement or question by the interviewer, the immediate emotional, physical and psychological circumstances of the storyteller, and the relationship between storyteller and listener. All of these factors impact how identity is narrated (Gubrium & Holstein 2009; Spector-Mersel 2011:173). Narration is a relational act, an 'unfolding of relational identity in many registers, in discourses with others and within ourselves' (Eakin 1999:85). For a narrative to take shape and have

[21]In Ginsburg's (1989:64) study of women's pro-choice narratives, she uses as a story baseline the anticipated chronological structure and social conventions of Caucasian American women: birth, childhood, marriage, motherhood. I have listened to many stories over a four-year span and have discovered that the method of Roma storytelling differs from how I, as a Caucasian American, understood the format of how to tell a story.

meaning, it must be told; but it is at the moment(s) of interaction between the listener and the teller that the significance comes to fruition, as the listener hears and (re) interprets through her own narratives and socio-cultural context.

4.3.2.4 Macro Context—Utilizing an Interdisciplinary Lens

As noted earlier, the 'story of the self' is constructed within social, cultural, religious and institutional life (Taylor 1989:105–106; Gubrium & Holstein 2000, 2009). Skultans (1998:25) attempts, in her analysis of Latvian narratives, to merge both the events themselves and the social and cultural realities which give rise to the narrative forms, noting that just as form and content are intertwined, so are the relationship between power and powerlessness (1998:25).[22] Undertaking narrative analysis of the data collected, therefore, enables one to see the complicated intersections between gender, ethnicity, religion, imposed identities, and deeply embedded societal stereotypes. It also allows the researcher to see how other dimensions—ethnicity, class, and gender, for example—influence intragroup differences (Crenshaw 1990:1242). For example, Oprea highlights this point when analysing the media's response to the controversial marriage of 12-year-old Ana Maria Cioaba in Sibiu, Romania. Her aunt, an accomplished writer and activist, Luminita Cioaba, was initially against the marriage, but after a public backlash, began defending it as the right of their community. Oprea concludes: 'When her feminist values and race were pitted against one another, she chose to defend her family and race in a country where Roma are treated as second-class citizens' (2005:139).

This illustrates the concept of intersectionality, which has emerged from feminist studies as a way of looking at the complex relationship of inequalities and power.[23] The

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[22] Skultans (1998:22-4) suggests that individuals sharing extreme situations use past resources to be able to reflect on their experiences and yet still the relationship between personal narrative and cultural resources is an ambivalent one, highlighting the narrator's primary agency.

[23] I use Leslie McCall's definition of intersectionality as '…the relationships among multiple dimensions and modalities of social relations and subject formations…' (2005:1771). McCall notes that she uses it as a way of rejecting the ability to separate identity and analytic categories. McCall specifies three different

points of axes emerging in the narrative analysis: gender, religion, ethnicity, and class interact with one another without being 'reduced' to one another (Yuval-Davis 2006:200). Undertaking narrative analysis while being conscious of these dimensions brings nuance to the complex interplay of individual, social, and cultural narratives and therefore how identities are assumed and performed in response to these interacting narratives (Yuval-Davis 2006:205).

4.4 Methodological Reflexivity and Validity

4.4.1 Reflexive Researcher

To be an insider or outsider is not a rigid dichotomy; rather, it has been postulated that it is a continuum, with researcher positionality shifting in response to relational context (Greene 2014:2). For example, Knott (2010) quotes Heilman, who while doing a study on a Jewish community as a social scientist and a Jew, suggested that the very act of becoming an observer keeps some distance between yourself and the community of which you are a part, producing 'a feeling of separation' (253). In fact, blurred boundaries between insider-outsider research suggest that there are costs and benefits all along the continuum of researcher positionality (Greene 2014:3).

My experience of moving between points of interpersonal and religious connection and non-identification illustrates this fluidity of researcher-informant relationship. A reflexive stance and approach are central to interpreting and reflecting on this insider/outsider experience (Knott 2010:245). Reflexivity is the perspective where I question my own authority, but do not negate interpretation (Josephides 1997:17). It requires a certain self-awareness in which I can seek to name my biases, the 'politics'

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types of intersectional analysis: categorical studies relationships between categories in quantitative research, anti-categorical (which is the post-modern critique of this), recognizing the discourses that have constructed these categories, and finally intra-categorical, which uses narratives to study the intersections of some of the social dimensions and categories.

implicit in my social and ethnic position. I must also recognize the influence of current theoretical approaches to studying religion and Christianity, which is why context, power, politics, and identities come into play (Jørgensen 2011:205). It requires that I understand my own process of epistemology, recognizing that the processes I use to construct knowledge may widely differ from the people whom I am studying (Liamputtong 2007:17).

In one sense, for example, I do not need to get 'inside' the religious experience of my Roma Christian informants, because I am approaching this study self-identifying as a Christian (although not of Pentecostal persuasion) as well as being a leader of one of the Christian communities I am studying. This particular positionality means a shared orientation of '…historical, locational, and theological commitments, which are not reducible to cognitive categories, "worldview", discourse or practices alone' (Howell 2007:384). Further, I came into the community with Masters' degree in both theology and intercultural studies, which influenced how I interpret events both theologically and culturally.

As Howell argues, approaching research from a Christian standpoint position focuses the study on dialogical, relational and therefore embodied aspects of Christianity as being at the centre of religious identity (2007:381).[24] In fact, this highly personal interaction and relationship blurs the lines between researcher and subject, allowing multiple vantage points for analysis (Dickson-Swift 2007:336). This is evident in my research as my identification as a Christian allowed me instant access into communities, with pastors and others facilitating interviews and often opening their own homes in a show of hospitality. Although I am a sincere Christian, my claim to be such was never questioned or

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[24] Howell reflects on his experiences in the Philippines, noting that his self-identification as a Christian gave him immediate access and openness. Although he was a cultural outsider, he was a religious insider, and thus the 'blurring of identity lines'. He found that what was shared were the participation of common commitments (2007:376-87).

approached with suspicion, particularly if another Roma pastor or even Christian referred me. In turn, I also felt a sense of connection of shared faith and a responsibility to uphold the trust that was given to me.

This allows for a dialogical interaction between my own Christian identity, practice and orientation—and how Christianity manifests in its localness and contextuality—in the lives of the research subjects (Howell 2007:376). For example, in many Roma Christian communities, prayer for miraculous healing is often practised with expectant anticipation, particularly since there are often many issues with accessing quality medical care. 'God is my doctor', is a frequent phrase uttered both in prayer and reflection. This is in contrast to my own Christian upbringing, growing up Conservative Baptist where supernatural healing was believed to have ended in the New Testament. However, the frequent personal stories of healing I encountered caused my own blurring of boundaries in my Christian praxis and caused me to question my categories of study such as the role and reality of miracles in conversion.

However, to identify 'spiritual relationships' with fieldwork participants can bring a certain criticism in anthropological circles, and Bowie notes that 'to admit to a spiritual affinity with fieldwork subjects, rather than friendship, common interest, or perhaps advocacy, may be to test recent subjectivist, relativist, stances to their limits, inviting the charge of illegitimate bias and religious apologetic' (2003:51).[25] Not only that, in relationship to my earlier discussion of how Christianity is localized, my conceptual

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[25] Bowie (2003:53) goes on to argue that there is precedence for a focused study on something which one already has experience and knowledge (alluding, for example, to Okely [1978]; Okely & Callaway [1992]; and Cohen [1992]). However, she articulates the delicate balance of either too-frequent reference to 'insider discourse' depicting 'shared language and meaning', which would be more like a hagiography, or language too neutral, which although is accepted in anthropology, 'carries the risk of reducing an experience involving the heart, body, emotions, and soul, as well as the mind, to a purely cognitive abstraction'. On the other side of the argument, Ruy Blanes struggles with how atheism may affect his ethnography and relationships in his study of Roma Pentecostal churches in Portugal, arguing that beliefs 'are negotiated through a communicational process that is built on tensions, distances, and proximities…' (2006:224).

framework interpreting words pertinent to Pentecostal theology may conjure different meanings to my interlocuters.[26]

Although we share Christian faith, I am neither Roma, nor from Serbia or Croatia, or even European, and therefore I am a cultural, social, and even political outsider. The gender sphere is also a negotiation; although my identity as a woman may open up stories unavailable to men, it is still mediated by relationship. This became evident in the qualitative difference between the women's stories in the two communities, which is linked to the depth of my relationship in the two communities. There is also a 'strangeness' to my gender performance often noted by the Roma women, since at my age, it would be normal to be a grandmother. My single status and lack of children is frequently commented upon. In one encounter, a young mother of three children, whose own mother was actually younger than me, looked at me with pity when I said I was unmarried with no children. She then proceeded to lecture me on the importance of having a husband, both from a Biblical and social point of view. At first, I felt annoyed that this woman, 20 years younger than myself, was lecturing me. However, I then experienced a small epiphany when I realised that in her culture, I was to be pitied, and in my Western culture, she would be pitied because of her lack of education and poverty. This put her lecture in a different light, and I realised how often cultural values control interpretation (Field notes, September 2017).

As I began to listen to story after story, often holding significant trauma, I recognized another way in which I was an outsider. As Paul Richards noted the difficulty of a satiated

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[26] Jørgensen (2011:194) points to Keane's (2007) study of Sumba converts to the Dutch Reformed Church in Indonesia in colonial and post-colonial settings to reflect on how the use of the same words and feelings do not necessarily indicate shared meaning. Jørgensen argues that Protestant mission is a 'mission of language' with its emphasis on translation, reading and writing, and has a specific language ideology. He states, 'It is the words of Christians that create a Christian world of meaning through creation of narratives, images and personal testimonies informed by biblical texts and metaphors' (200). However, if the language in a given context has different meanings and implications, the language of Christianity (in terms of conversion, faith practice) may hold different meanings in relation to the person teaching and translating the language.

anthropologist conducting participant-observation on victims of famine (1992:3) and Skultans (1998:17) referred to the challenges of anthropological study on victims of terror to someone who grew up in a nation of peace, so too I recognized that my white, middle-class life was a narrative barrier to the stories I was hearing. Andrews (2007:489) calls for a 'narrative imagination', or the capacity to imagine the other stories and worlds with which I cannot directly identify. Although I must acknowledge that the participants' stories and experience, filtered through my interpretative lens, will miss critical pieces of knowledge (Andrews 2007), there is immense value in attuning to the intersecting 'boundaries' of our experiences—Gadamer's (1989) 'fusion of horizons'—where both I and another can gain new insights according to our vantage points.

My lack of similar life experience, however, does not negate the well-documented possibility that this research process would not take a significant emotional toll on me (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007). The 'emotional labour' involved in being a constant empathetic listener (as both a church leader and a researcher (McGarrol 2017:437–39) and often listening to sensitive and difficult subjects can lead to emotional risks and even to secondary trauma. This emphatic listening has an important role in both a pastoral care for the person and developing relational rapport. At one prayer meeting where I was not present, the group was discussing (non-material) personal gifts they could offer the church. When my name came up, one lady said that it seemed I had the ability to truly feel their life pain with them (2017).[27] The 'shared emotions completely challenges the positivistic ghost' that underlines the idea of being an objective researcher (Okely 2012:14).

However, feeling this 'secondary pain' comes at a cost. During the time I was transcribing and analysing interviews, I found myself frequently depressed with a feeling

[27] As related to me by another church leader, August 2017.

of ‘heaviness’. After being a church leader for years, confronting many setbacks, difficult situations, and hard stories, I was sometimes beset by a deep weariness, hopelessness and even desensitization (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:341). As a researcher, I thought, ‘These are incredibly difficult stories’. As a pastoral leader I was thinking, ‘How can I help facilitate healing and change?’. My emotions generated by the interviews and being involved in a poor and marginalized community not only influenced and shaped my fieldwork, but permanently influenced my life in both good and negative ways (McGarrol 2017:437; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:342). In this way, my narrative ethnography becomes collaborative, as my story and the stories of the people intersect in shared experience over a number of years (Clandinin & Connelly 2000).

At the same time, I was wary of bringing my emotions too much to the front lest it digress into a ‘privileged moment of me’ (Widdowfield 2000:202). Sometimes I felt guilty about such emotions, since I was not the one actually having lived through the trauma, nor was I engaged in a day-to-day survival struggle like many of the people (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:343). In fact, I had access to resources, self-care, rest, vacation, and many other things that participants never experienced. This guilt could at times become paralyzing (Bondi 2005:236), and sometimes I felt like a fraud, since even the very Christian model of mission I verbally espoused had at its foundation mission as incarnation, modelled in the self-giving incarnation of Christ (Bevans & Schroeder 2004).

Some researchers suggest mitigating this strain by trying to maintain boundaries of researcher-participant (van Wijk & Harrison 2013), but these boundaries are fluid and ever changing, and were not feasible considering my dual role in the community. This is evident in my different experiences in the two communities of research. Because I was not balancing a pastoral and researcher role in the community in Serbia, I was much more detached, listening to the stories with keen interest, but not feeling emotional heaviness

or a sense of 'pastoral responsibility' afterwards.[28] Ironically, my deeper bond with the participants in Community C led to more profound interviews but also greater personal inner turmoil, whilst Community B offered more reserved interviews (from the women) and less emotional consequences for myself.

My positionality, therefore, can be seen in multiple spheres: Power (coming from the West and my socio-economic status), Christianity, theology, culture, gender, friendship, spiritual leader, and being an observer and a participator (Abu-Lughod 1991; Knott, 2010:253). I often simultaneously felt an insider, by virtue of faith and deep relationships with the participants, while at the same time also feeling like an outsider, by virtue of language, culture, and socio-economic situation. I can fluctuate between these two in an instant, depending on the nature of relational exchange.[29] For example, at the end of one interview, when a woman was growing increasingly troubled with meditating on her life, I eventually turned off the tape and slipped into a pastoral role. After another interview, I moved into a 'friend' role by spending time with women in the village, eating corn on the cob, and observing everyone walking by and chatting. Through this process of narrative ethnography, I was constantly moving between the inside and outside—an evolving dialogue and dance of where I fit, where I contribute, what I understand, and what I observe.

4.4.2 Issues of Validity

Questions of validity are important to consider in narrative inquiry, given that the narrator and the protagonist are one and the same: a 'rousing tale of life is not necessarily a "right"

[28] Other researchers suggest just accepting such feelings without judgment so that one is able to more fully reflect and draw out meaning from them, thus also allowing them to become an analytic resource (Bondi 2005:237).

[29] In Knotts (2010) system of classification, I could be considered a participant-as-observer. Banks (1998) offers a four-category typology of reflexivity: indigenous-insider, indigenous-outside, external-insider, and the external-outsider. If pressed, I would identify as an external-insider; however, since insider-outsider positionality is mediated through relationships, both of these typologies are too constrictive.

account' (Bruner 2004:694). Paul Atkinson warns against just accepting a narrative at face value without regard to context: 'We need to attend to how socially shared resources of rhetoric and narrative are deployed to generate recognizable, plausible, and culturally well-informed accounts' (1997:341). Therefore, Gubrium & Holstein (2009) caution the researcher to look at the circumstances, conditions, and goals of the accounts. Other questions can help determine this: How does this particular story resonate with others in the community (for example, in the context of war or post-communism employment opportunities)? What is this person's relationship with others in the community and one's reputation? Thus, it is necessary to balance the description of events with narratives as forms of self-presentation and meaning-making.

The very understanding of validity rests on one's epistemological commitments (Riessman 2008; Wells 2011), and one can assess the relationship between these commitments and validity. From the narrative paradigm, the point is not to ascertain whether the events actually happened, but to interpret and understand the meaning the narrator is creating out of the events, decisions, and rationale (Chase 2005; Polkinghorne 2007). It is not meant to be read as an exact account of a person's whole life (Riessman 1993). In fact, Bruner notes that even as narrative can be 'unstable' since it is influenced by linguistic, cultural and interpersonal factors, these points of instability and change are the areas worth interpreting (2004:694), particularly when it comes to an encounter with a new religious narrative. This was clear when noting the difference in Hana's two interviews (Community C) in Chapter Six—she was clearly in a depressed mood when she gave her first account; during her second narrative months later, her interpretations of life events were much more optimistic.

With these issues in mind, Riessman offers some lenses by which to ascertain validity. She argues that the narratives must be *persuasive,* have *correspondence (*taking a given narrative back to the narrator), *coherent,* and have a *pragmatic* use for other research

(1993:65–70). Essentially, the researcher must be clear about what the narratives represent and therefore be able to argue for their interpretation of the narratives.

4.4.3 Ethics

Maintaining a consistent ethical approach in a cross-cultural and anthropological research context can be a complex endeavour since what is considered ethical in one context may differ in another (Andrews 2007:472). Considering the oral nature of the particular communities I studied, a one-time written consent form is inappropriate and perhaps even unethical, if individuals do not have a clear sense of the research's meaning and if the researcher then feels free to do whatever he or she wants. Further, concepts of individual rights may not have the same meaning for people whose culture does not support this idea or whose very experiences have been fraught with abuses of rights (Block et al. 2012:79; Okely 2012).[30]

In terms of my institution, the ethics board at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies deemed me to be working with a vulnerable population and therefore the project to be above minimal risk in regard to the people involved. Various scholars define vulnerable peoples with different nuances; Liamputtong argues that this is because the very definition of vulnerable is socially constructed (2007:2). Definitions include peoples who are poor and social marginalized, subject to discrimination and/or stigma (Nyamathi 1998:65); peoples with diminished autonomy because of physical, emotional, or social reasons (Silva 1995:15); peoples who are disempowered or have less access to social/political power (Block et al. 2012:71), and/or people who have undergone a traumatic experience (van Wijk & Harrison 2013). Liamputtong (2007) also points to the theorists that argue for groups that have a 'double vulnerability' (Moore & Miller 1999)

[30] Andrews (2007:498) rightly states: 'Most cross-cultural research is guided by a set of ethical considerations that are irrelevant, unrealistic, and/or possibly inappropriate and insufficient to address the complexity of such encounters'.

or 'multi-faceted vulnerability' (Radley et al. 2005:4), in this case, those individuals who are vulnerable in more than one sphere.

The longevity of the project produced other ethical issues, as research direction can change once a person is in the field. In fact, Okely (2012:48) notes that the very value of ethnography is its 'unplanned character' and suggests connecting the researcher's actual practice to ethnical guidelines. This is an ethical reflexivity that 'recognizes the inherent (and frequently unacknowledged) risk of "symbolic violence" when conducting research with marginalized or excluded populations' (Block et al. 2012:84).[31] In a veiled acknowledgement of power differentials, for example, one Roma church leader in Serbia told me to 'paint us in a good light' when I was leaving the community (Field notes, September 2017). Therefore, I developed ethical guidelines (see Appendix 2) over the course of my research, taking into account my particular context and the nature of my relationship with the participants, and in view of both American Anthropological Association's (AAA) ethical principles (2012) and the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA, 2011).[32]

In regard to Roma populations, Ruzicka (2016:160) explores the ethics of conducting research involving unequal relationships between the state and Roma groups. He questions the ethics of 'exposing' marginalized groups whose livelihoods are eked out through informal strategies and may depend on remaining invisible. He describes the complex process of remaining 'open' to fringe economic opportunities required by people socially excluded or living with stigma; consequently, survival is an 'act of adaption and

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[31] As AAA (2012:1) states: 'The complex issues that anthropologists confront rarely admit to the simple wrongs and rights of moral dicta, and one of the prime ethical obligations of anthropologists is to carefully and deliberately weigh the consequences and ethical dimensions of the choices they make—by action or inaction'.

[32] AAA's general guidelines are: Do no harm, be open and honest regarding your work, obtain informed consent and necessary permissions, weigh competing ethical obligations due collaborators and affected parties, make your results accessible, protect and preserve your records, and maintain respectful and ethical professional relationships.

resistance' (156). Exposing these through research, however, may augment further society's stereotypes of the Roma. He concludes that the key lies in epistemological approach—one must *objectify* the relationship between the state and the Roma so that the researcher can 'produce a relational model of social reality without blaming the victim' whilst the state's role in marginalization can be exposed (162).

My position as an 'inside-outsider' has the potential to help mitigate some of these ethical considerations. Not only did I recognize my research as a political enterprise in regard to Roma social marginality (Ruzicka 2016:161), but also as a church leader, inspired by Black and Womanist Theologies, I approach my research with theological frameworks of justice and freedom for the oppressed in the context of the new creation and community of the church (Hays 1997:134–135).[33] As relationship is the centre of narrative inquiry, ethical matters can be reframed into expectations of relational responsibility (Clandinin & Connelly 2000; Huber et al. 2006). Since I was embedded in Community C for seven years, I have an 'enhanced sense of trust and relational responsibility to the participants, feeling personally responsible that my research does not contribute to further pain or exploitation' (Floyd & Arthur 2012).[34] On the other hand, the longer the friendships lasted, the more uncomfortable I felt in analysing life stories, particularly the church leaders in Community C who became like family to me. As much as I had tried to decrease my power distance, analysing their stories put me back in a position of power—assuming the right to interpret someone else's story.[35]

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[33] In my theological education, I was influenced by Black theologians such as James Cone (1986; 1997, 1999, 2004, 2011) and Womanist (women of colour) theologians such as Kelly Brown Douglas (2005). I will bring these perspectives into my discussion of the theology of suffering in Chapter Six.

[34] As Coles (1997:61f) asked, 'What are one's obligations not to oneself, one's career, the academic world … but to the people who are, after all, slowly becoming not only one's "sources" … but one's graciously tolerant and open-handed teachers and friends…'.

[35] In the context of relationality, I myself as a researcher have been vulnerable in the context of one-to-one conversations and in church events, thus helping to negotiate the power distance (Liamputtong 2007; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:332–334).

I approached each participant of the community in Croatia to ask for their interview outside the church context, in an attempt to secure *meaningful* consent, in order to mitigate any feeling of pressure to acquiesce to church leadership (Block et al. 2012:78). In terms of the participants in Serbia, the pastor negotiated those interviews. As noted above, signed consent forms would not be appropriate in this context—not only because it is a highly relational context, but also because many interlocuters are either illiterate or semi-literate. I explained my research project to each person before turning on the tape recorder because I first wanted to get their consent for the interview and then get their consent to be recorded. As part of my request for interviews in both communities, I promised anonymity to each participant and told them that the recordings were just for myself to remember what they said.

However, ethics is not just about mitigating harm but can also bring positive consequences. Other researchers whose work has involved sensitive subjects have documented the relief or release some participants experienced after telling their stories, possibly for the first time, which I observed in my context (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:338, 339). In addition, the act of listening intently to another bestows a certain dignity and value to the storyteller—to take seriously their stories and perspectives, and to sympathize with their suffering and loss. Therefore, I intended my research to have value for the participants and that outcomes will be of value for the community and larger society (Block et al. 2012:74).

4.4.4 Language and Translation

Issues of language and translation are challenging in cross-cultural, multilingual research settings, particularly because of the role of language in power relations and knowledge production (Wong & Poon 2010). Language is both employed to express meaning and influenced by how meaning is constructed (van Nes et al. 2010:314). Each language creates its own meaning structures, which contributes to how people interpret social life

(Larkin et al. 2007:468). Therefore, translation is not a neutral exercise of exchanging one word for another, but an act of interpretation (van Nes et al. 2010:314) intuiting meanings (Wong & Poon 2010:152). As my study involved three languages, the dynamic act of translation from Croatian/Serbian to English changes the grammatical structures of the language, which impacts narrative form and meaning (Skultans 1998:26). This means asking more questions around phrases or sentences in order to understand the language context.

Translation takes place in relationships mediated by social context and power (Bühler 2002). In terms of social context, for example, the way metaphors are used may not be able to convey the same meaning in another language (van Nes et al. 2010:314). Some things like certain colloquialisms, curses, and strong emotional expression will sound and feel different in Croatian, Old Romanian, and English.[36] There may be multiple power dynamics—existing between researcher and the translator, as the translator's own context and experience will influence interpretation (Larken et al. 2007:469; Temple & Young 2004:164), but also in terms of the dominance of the English language and the participants' inability to access the project's final language of translation (van Nes et al. 2010:2013). How a researcher approaches these questions and the link to research validity is tied to one's epistemological position (Temple & Young 2004:163). Although the claims of the 'objective' researcher have been refuted, many qualitative researchers still operate as if *correct* interpretations are a matter of matching word to word, concept to concept, thus ignoring the influence of the first language from which the interview was conducted (Temple & Young 2004:163; Wong & Poon 2010).

Li's insights (2011) on language negotiation in narrative inquiry indicate that identification, emotion, and language choice in translation is a dynamic, complex and

[36] In Croatian and Serbian, for example, numerous and creative curse words and expressions exist that do not really translate into English.

fluid process.[37] From my epistemological stance in this project, language and narrative create and construct meaning, and is also contextually situated and produced—therefore, use of translators, language, and the process of interpretation play an important role in data analysis and understanding. This is not to say that 'all meanings are equal', but rather to acknowledge the complexities of interpretation and translation that an epistemology based in the narrative paradigm acknowledges.

Key to this dilemma is relationships—relationships with participants and the various translators (Temple & Young 2004:164)—in order to understand 'the way language is tied to local realities, to literary forms, and to changing identities' (Simon 1996). Viewing translators also as 'key informants' recognizes their subjectivities and their process in the interpretation of data (Edwards 1998; Wong & Poon 2010). The process of translation, which includes the researcher, translator, and the interlocutors, requires 'plurality and creativity' and can be seen as an interactive process, open for questioning, nuance, and even mystery (Larkin et al. 2007:469).

The Roma in the studied villages in Croatia and Serbia are bilingual, freely operating in both Old Romanian and Croatian/Serbian. In Croatia, participants use Old Romanian less frequently between themselves than they do in Serbia—this may be due to the fact that the Roma community in Serbia is much larger and therefore the social space between the Serbians and the Roma village is also greater. In fact, one couple in Serbia told me that their Serbian vocabulary was limited because they used Serbian primarily for work or market place negotiations.

I have a working use of Croatian and Serbian, although I am not fluent. In Croatia, I conducted some of the interviews by myself using Croatian and taping them. Sometimes

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[37] Li (2011:28) explores negotiating Chinese and English language within her Master's and PhD using narrative inquiry. She was surprised to find certain moments she expected to come out in Chinese came out in English, and vice versa. She became attuned to when her participants responded to either English or Chinese and began to see that their choices corresponded to how they were adjusting to a new life in Canada.

I had Tijana, another church leader, with me as a language helper. In Serbia, I had a young Roma woman from the community, Eve, who could speak Old Romanian, Serbian, and English, as my cultural insider. I intended to have participants speak Old Romanian, however, they would not speak Romanian in front of me once they realised I could speak Serbian—they considered it rude and preferred to communicate directly with me. This made the presence of my young translator somewhat redundant, although at times the people could not find the Serbian words and expressed it in their first language.

Once the interviews were conducted, I transcribed some by myself, some with help from my research assistant, a bilingual Croatian, and some she undertook on her own, which I checked for accuracy. My research assistant does not have a relationship with the Roma village, which in view of the previous discussion, has an impact on translation. I then translated some of the interviews from Serbian/Croatian to English, and my research assistant translated transcriptions from Serbian/Croatian when there were more linguistically complicated interviews that I did not feel confident in translating. Many times, I conferred with my research assistants, Tijana and Eve to clarify language issues, but also language related to the culture in terms of certain expressions (Temple & Young 2004:171). Sometimes, I went back and asked some of my informants to explain what they meant by something they had said. In all of this, I demonstrate the many relationships needed for translation and the value in the dynamic process of interpreting meanings (Temple & Young 2004:169) (See Appendix 3 and 4).

4.5 Conclusion

Using narrative inquiry in the quest to study human experience reveals the layers of particular stories and how these narratives interact within the socio-cultural context. To show a range of narratives illustrates that a particular story is not predestined by a certain social location but illustrates the creativity and range of identity construction and

meaning-making across a community. It also shows that all narratives are important because each 'embodies—and gives us insight into—what is possible and intelligible within a specific social context' (Chase 2005:667).

In addition to giving voice to the silenced (Hyvärinen 2010a; Riessman 1993), narrative inquiry can bring marginalized narratives into general societal consciousness (Chase 2005) to break the 'stranglehold of metanarratives that establishes rules of truth, legitimacy, and identity' (Tierney 2000:546).[38] Further, narrative analysis may highlight new ways in which individuals are both constrained and enabled by their social location, in particular as they narrate when God enters their story, by '…calling attention to the social and cultural dynamics through which individuals construct themselves as social actors' (Maynes et al. 2008:2). Using narrative research allows Roma voices to emerge on their own terms, and to negotiate their new Christian identity in relationship to their community and social contexts. Chapter Five will illuminate this complex process in Croatia—weaving together the strands to form of a picture of narrative reality for the leaders Marija and Josip, as well as discussing how 'ruptures' in their narratives, such as conversion or trauma, have affected and been constrained by their social and individual stories.

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[38] In one example of how narrative inquiry can challenge written history, Skultans' research in Latvia demonstrates how individual narratives can 'bear witness against the state' in a totalitarian context (1998:25).

CHAPTER FIVE: LEADER NARRATIVES AND CHURCH BEGINNINGS IN COMMUNITY C

5.1 Introduction

To summarize, Chapter One introduced the Roma in Europe, Chapter Two described the study of Pentecostalism within the discipline of anthropology of Christianity, Chapter Three highlighted the historical context of Roma in the former Yugoslavia, and Chapter Four detailed the interaction between personal narrative and the larger socio-cultural or meta-narratives of which a community is a part (Gubrium & Holstein 2009). This chapter moves into fieldwork findings and analyses the personal narratives of Marija and Josip, the Romani church leaders and founders. While analysing Marija and Josip's narratives and the other narratives from Community C (Chapter Six), the theme of trauma repeatedly arose. In light of Van der Kolk's (2015) research on trauma, I chose to centralise this theme in this chapter. I reflect upon where their life stories contradict established research on both the outcomes of complex trauma—to be defined in section three—and the socio-economic realities of Roma in Croatia, namely their post-traumatic growth and simultaneous leadership development.

In what follows, I will briefly summarize Marija and Josip's life stories in order to discern their end point, or claimed identity, and suggest that a 'renewed identity' shapes their narrative post-conversion, which is part and parcel of their leadership development (Spector-Mersel 2011). The names of people and places are either changed or obscured, including that of the leaders, to protect anonymity, in line with ethical permissions and due to the very personal data and risk of vulnerability of participants who have provided individual narratives. Next, the chapter will highlight research in trauma and resilience, engaging with the question of how an intrinsic adoption of Pentecostal theology and identity affects 'healing' and 'resilience'. Marija and Josip's process of conversion and

simultaneous process of becoming leaders is interwoven with the birth of the church and dynamically interplays with the evolution of church life—the challenges, problems, growth—in the period between 2012 and 2018.

5.2 Life Narratives of Marija and Josip

5.2.1 Metanarratives of Poverty, Neglect, and Violence

Marija's narrative has been compiled in several ways. First, she informally wrote her own narrative for a mission organization, and this is the primary script that I used for narrative analysis. Also, I have conducted follow-up interviews through the periods of 2013–2017, in addition to working closely with her in church leadership through that period of time, gleaning details of her story. I will briefly summarize the trajectory of her narrative and then offer a narrative analysis.

Marija, who is a Čergari Romani, grew up in a Roma settlement in Northwest Serbia, living with her mother, two half-sisters, and her grandmother. Her family spoke Čergari Romani in the home, but she remembers learning and speaking Serbian simultaneously, which she would speak to non-Roma neighbours. She also had Arli (a Roma group/tribe) Romani neighbours, and she learned the Arli dialect when she was around ten years old. It is important to note that the family were very poor.

Marija's mother was a violent alcoholic and a single parent, who beat her (supposedly) because of a hostile memory of her father, although Marija had no idea who he was. Her happiest memories came when she went to stay at an aunt and uncle's house in a different village, with her nine cousins, although they were also very poor; gathering around one pot to eat with their hands. Marija stated that she 'felt safe' there, although the visits were not frequent. Her aunt also took her to church once and taught her a Christian song that

would later become important in Marija's story.[1] However, when Marija began praying to God after attending church, her mother would beat her supposedly because of this adoption of prayer and religiosity.

5.2.2 Plot Climax #1—Marija's interpretation of her suffering—'God does not care'

Marija became a surrogate mother to her two sisters, but at age 12, a climactic moment arrived in her story when her mother came home drunk and tried to get in the locked house. Marija was sleeping with her sisters, but her mother managed to reach into the window, since her bed was on the ground floor, and pulled her out of her bed by her hair. Her mother then beat Marija, stripped her, and threw her out naked and bloody into the streets. After this, Marija stated, 'I was bitter toward God and said that I'll never pray again. What kind of God is this, because of who I was being beaten and suffering all of this?'. After this, although she remained home, she began to fight back when her mother attacked her and also began experimenting with drugs and anything else she knew her mother would forbid, even falling in love with a man 14 years her senior. However, she said that 'everything I did bothered me and made me sick, but I was pretending and lied to myself that it was what fulfil[ed] me … and in the bottom of my heart I felt that I didn't want to be like that, that this wasn't me'.

When she was 14, Marija's mother tried to arrange her marriage to Josip, who was 15 at the time. At this point Marjia went to the social services department and told them that although she wanted to continue school, she was being forced to marry, but they did not take her seriously and called her mother to take her home. Marija and Josip reluctantly agreed to the marriage that was negotiated between Marija's mother and Josip's aunt, and Marija moved to Croatia to live with Josip's family. There she found a worse situation—

[1] Her aunt taught her to pray one song, which she said accompanied her through life for a while: 'I have a phone that goes in the sky, when I have problems, I call Jesus.'

more alcoholism, violence, and poverty than existed even in her home life. Even worse, she and Josip did not know or care for each other, and both of them had romantic attachments to someone else.

After only a couple of months, Marija ran away to the older man she was in love with, but by then she was already pregnant with Josip's child. This older man beat her, and she was worried what he would do if he found out the child was not his—but the doctor covered for her, lying about the gestation period of her pregnancy. When Marija had the child, her new husband still could not accept him, and she eventually ran away again to escape the beatings.

5.2.3 Plot Climax #2—Marija's re-interpretation of her suffering—'God sees'

Marija's mother would not accept her back, and as a 15-year-old, she briefly ended up on the streets in Serbia with her two-month-old baby, where she describes another climactic experience in her narrative. In the middle of a storm, desperate and cold, she turned once more to God: 'Because of the strong wind and rain my baby was losing his breath, then again I cried to God. I said, "God, I know that you are here and that you gave me this child, but I don't know what to do with him. If you want, take him".' Just then, the door of the house she was leaning against opened and a Serbian woman called her into the house, dressing and feeding both of them.

Soon after, Josip reluctantly accepted her back for the sake of his son, whom he wanted, but she describes his bitterness and anger toward her, sometimes manifesting in verbal or physical abuse. She noted that Josip:

> could never love me, moreover, this time he despised me, he was bitter and hurt because his child had somebody else's last name. There was a not a single moment in which he would hide his hate towards me, although I gave birth to three of his children. My husband would still beat me, insult me and humiliate me.

Their marriage continued to be turbulent in the years leading up to 2004 when Marija was 24, and she often begged on the street with her now four children. It was at that time in her life, in 2004, that a Croatian Pentecostal woman stopped and made an agreement with

her. If Marija would not harass her for money every time she passed, she would give her one kuna[2] without asking every other time she saw her. Eventually, the woman invited her to church to receive some humanitarian help and also to attend the service. Marija describes, 'When worship started, something incredible woke up inside of me; I heard songs which I learnt as a child in that small church and I remembered exactly every word…'. A few months later, she converted, and her life began to radically change. Marija's conversion became key for Josip's conversion. Initially he mocked her, and sceptically watched her change during the months she was going to church. Strategically, Marija would pretend that she was having a difficult time in understanding the Bible and ask him to read it to her, so (as she recounted) to 'trick' him into reading the Bible. During this period Marija would no longer react violently to his temper and Josip reported that he would awaken in the middle of the night to see her in tears praying for him. Over time, this obvious change began to challenge his ways of thinking.

5.2.4 Metanarratives of Poverty and Violence

Josip's life story was also compiled over the period of several years. The primary script I use for this narrative analysis was a life story interview conducted in 2018. However, before this point, I had interviewed Marija and Josip together about the story of their marriage and conversion, in addition to gleaning details about his life in conversations since 2013. Finally, I also use a story he wrote about his marriage with Marija for a Croatian Pentecostal publication, which detailed how she became a key agent in his conversion.

Josip was born eighth out of ten children to a Čergari Roma family in eastern Croatia (Yugoslavia at the time of his birth). They lived in a city amongst Serbians and Croatians, not in a Roma settlement. They were extremely poor, living with the whole family and

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[2] One kuna is the equivalent is around 0.10 GBP and 0.13 EUR

frequently dozens of relatives in two rooms. Often, they had no blankets, covering themselves up with clothes, and food was scarce, so they often begged on the street. His parents always spoke the Čergari dialect of Romani in the home, but since they were always on the streets playing with Croatians and Serbians, the children primarily spoke Croatian, even in the home. His father was a professional musician and would go touring with his band for two weeks at a time. Without his father there, life was hard as they did not go to school and primarily lived on the streets, begging and playing, looking for food. However:

> … we also were often not aware that the way we lived was bad. It was in fact interesting to us. We were kids and we didn't understand in what kind of situation we lived. Because, like, playing was, our life was actually a game. So, so that was really hard, like hard for us, but as children we didn't understand. (2018)

His father was a violent alcoholic, so his arrival back home meant 'that every day there would be beatings, he would beat mother, beat us, and like every day we lived in some stress and fear what will happen when he comes home drunk from town, from the café'. Josip went into great detail about his father's character—his violent rages, his beatings of his mother and the ten children, his gambling and mistresses, and total disregard for the children's education or basic needs. In fact, Josip attributes their extreme poverty to the fault of his father and his drinking and gambling away his wages.

His father's disregard toward his family manifested in horrific ways, actions that Josip said his family never saw him regret because apparently, he 'mostly lived without a conscience'. For example, he sold his daughter to Italy for marriage where she endured all manner of abuse so that he could buy things for his favourite mistress; he once brought back five mistresses to the house and after events that Josip described like 'Sodom and Gomorrah', the father forced the mistresses to beat his wife. He would also punish his oldest son when he began stealing and breaking the law.

> He would tie him like a dog, around his neck, with a chain, and he made him sleep like that out in the open in some shed that didn't have a door or anything. Often that would happen in the winter. And then he would flog him and beat him, like, a lot…He would beat him, I don't even know with what to compare it, like a slave or what, like … so that, that my brother in fact hated our dad.

In a manner similar to the story recounted by Marija when explaining her reaction to her future husband, Josip did not like her at all when he first saw her and was unhappy about the marriage. Although he took her back for the sake of his son after her period of living with another man, he related that he could never forgive her in the early years of their marriage.

As discussed in Chapter Three, Josip and Marija experienced the challenges of accessing proper documentation before and after the war in Croatia in the 1990s. This prevented accessing a citizen's rights for social welfare assistance. Josip would strip metal from junkyards to sell, and he describes how the family would sometimes go days without food.

5.2.5 Cycles of Violence 'Ruptured' by Conversion

Josip also described their marriage as turbulent and related how he could be very aggressive toward Marija. Although Marija would fight back, his size and strength always allowed him dominance. When Marija began going to church in 2004, he said, 'I would mock….and say to her that she now plays a pious woman. Let her remember what she has done in her life.' When Marija told him that she was now free because Jesus had forgiven everything she had done, he replied in confusion that [her former behaviour] 'did not hurt Jesus, but me, and I need her to ask my forgiveness'. Over time, however, the changes in her behaviour began to strike him: 'Every day she became different; before when I would beat and insult her, she would return it to me, but now she surprised me with her attitude. I am insulting her, and she is quiet and doesn't answer me' (2012). Marija formally converted to Christianity in 2005, and during this timeframe of 2004–

2006, Josip began to notice that God seemed to be listening to her prayers, providing food and things they needed through church networks and friends/acquaintances.[3]

For example, when Marija and Josip were evicted from their family home after a fight with Josip's mother, they had severe problems getting money because of their lack of official documents. The Croatian Pentecostal church rented a home for them and even cooked them food a few times. Josip commented on his feelings about the church, 'They were actually, weird to me. I wondered why they are doing that. Like, who loves Gypsies? I didn't like non-Gypsies … I thought they [non-Gypsies] were disgusting and aggressive … but in the end, I let go a bit … I mocked Marija less, I saw that these people are honest, and they are doing something really out of love…' (2018). In 2006, Josip began going to the church once in a while and felt that every time that the pastor preached from the Bible, he was speaking directly to him. However, Josip told the pastor he 'was not for sale', that he could not be bought into conversion by the material things the church was doing for him.

About a year later in 2007, however, Josip describes how things changed:

> God slowly began to change my life and I slowly began to love my wife. I began to understand how much she meant to me and my love grew towards her. I did not go anywhere alone, always with her. I submitted my life to God, I met his love which I received and now I could offer it also to my wife. (2012)

However, even post-conversion, there was a difficult few years of inner struggle:

> And that (conversion and baptism) doesn't mean that my old life was instantly gone. I was non-stop struggling with it, especially to calm my aggressiveness that was in me…. Like, I was struggling with it and I saw that things are really changing in my life even though it was still hard. Sometimes I would go crazy because of someone, something, and, like I would go at her. (2018)

5.2.6 Reinterpretation of Life Story

During this time, Josip constantly battled with his aggression and tension through prayer, studying the Bible, and going to church, which he said strengthened him to not return to

[3] In an incident that took place during 2004–2006, for example, he relates being astonished when she prayed for and received a washing machine so she would not have to wash laundry by hand anymore.

his old life. However, something shifted in Josip after an experience with God in prayer, where he felt God showed him his life as though he was watching a movie of which he was the central character. Josip watched his childhood and saw:

> what my father was like, how my mom was suffering, and with us to raise us and how big of a victim she was. And then I saw the same thing in Marija, how much she is suffering and struggling, and like how she is begging with children in the street, how people are cursing at her and the children. But she still, like she was persistent in feeding us and she suffered a lot for us.

This connection between his mother's suffering and Marija's, combined with a 'big picture' view of how much they were all struggling in their lives 'shook him hard'. He had not realised just how much they had all suffered until this moment when he felt God had him watch his life as though viewing a movie. After this, his aggressive outbursts declined, and he learned to leave the house and go outside walking and praying rather than exploding.

Both of Marija and Josip's stories included other elements of how things changed during the conversion process. They began to move from abject poverty (begging on the street, being thrown out of Josip's mother's house, which was already crowded with some of Josip's siblings, to live on the streets, and often being hungry) to a situation where their new church friends helped them find a place to live and temporarily paid their rent. Around this time, Marija had obtained her citizenship, which meant they could begin receiving social welfare, this dramatically improved their quality of life.

5.3 Metanarratives of Trauma and Resilience

As briefly noted in this chapter's introduction, the prominence of trauma in the life narratives of Marija and Josip and the subsequent life narratives in Chapter Six flagged trauma and stress as significant issues affecting the formation of Christian identity. Trauma itself is a culturally shaped concept and therefore cultural frameworks mitigate different experiences of suffering and trauma (Lester 2013; Kirmayer et al. 2007a. In fact, suffering and trauma need to be understood both as a biological state affecting one's

physiology and psychology, but also something that is embedded and expressed through cultural, social, and religious means (Dwyer & Santikarma 2007:405). If this is the case, it raises the question of how Christian conversion and spirituality interact with effects of trauma in a particular cultural context. This interplay between trauma's effects and spirituality—which is key to understanding how Pentecostalism becomes localized— will be explored in the next section of this chapter (Luhrmann 2013; Rambo 2011; Koss-Chioino & Hefner 2006). The following discussion will provide critical research regarding the biological, intergenerational, and cumulative effects of trauma; following this, concepts of resilience, post-traumatic growth, and spirituality will be analysed in the light of Marija and Josip's narratives.

5.3.1 Biological Effects of Trauma

The concept of trauma has changed over time and according to socio-cultural contexts. The original meaning of trauma in Greek meant 'wound' and was originally used to refer to physical wounds. In fact, medical history shows use of the word 'trauma' that refers to a violent event injuring the physical body, while also initiating the physiological systems of repair (Kirmayer et al. 2007b:5). The American Psychological Association describes trauma as an emotional reaction to a harrowing event, which can have long term physical and psychological repercussions (Rowell & Thomely 2013). Traumatic events can threaten lives, produce fear and hopelessness, freeze responses, produce a sense of losing control and the idea that life has sense and order (Yoder 2005:10).

Both trauma and long-term stress has been shown to change or affect a person's brain, particularly for children, as will be discussed below (van der Kolk 2015). For people who suffer with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), research shows long-term changes in parts of the brain involved with stress management, the amygdala, hippocampus (learning and memory), the frontal cortex, and chronically high cortisol (Bremner 2007:123).

Research into the biological aspects of trauma has revealed that trauma changes the area of the brain that communicated the 'physical, embodied feeling of being alive' (van der Kolk 2015:3). It affects the imagination, critical to envisioning new possibilities, being creative, and increasing pleasure (16).[4] According to newer understandings of trauma, it is not just a past event, but an 'imprint' of that experience left on the mind, body, and brain (21). Van der Kolk elaborates:

> Trauma results in a fundamental reorganization of the way mind and brain manage perceptions. It changes not only how we think and what we think about, but also our very capacity to think. We have discovered that helping victims of trauma find the words to describe what has happened to them is profoundly meaningful, but usually it is not enough. The act of telling the story doesn't necessarily alter the automatic physical and hormonal responses of bodies that remains hypervigilant, prepared to be assaulted or violated at any time. For real change to take place, the body needs to learn that the danger has passed and to live in the reality of the present. (21)

Although bodies may be experiencing terror or helplessness, the feelings might be difficult to articulate, as trauma is 'preverbal': 'Trauma by nature drives us to the edge of comprehension, cutting us off from language based on common experience or an imaginable past' (van der Kolk 2015:43). Therefore, it might be difficult to organize the 'story' into a cohesive account with a beginning, middle and end.

This research adds a significant layer of understanding to my experience of listening to respondents, detailed in Chapter Six and Seven. At times women would be unwilling or unable to talk about their lives, saying, 'What can I say? It was all hard, it was a lot of suffering'. Trauma research indicates this may be indicative of the lack of language to describe their experiences. Significantly, however, in Marija and Josip's narratives, this was not the case. Despite the ongoing traumatic stress of their lives that encapsulated childhood, racism, domestic abuse, poverty, and war, their life narratives were far more

[4] During a 1994 study on traumatic flashbacks and brain imaging, the brain was activated at the limbic or the emotional brain, which triggers stress hormones to prepare the body for flight or fight. Despite the participants being in a safe place, their brain reacted to memory of the trauma as if it was happening in the moment. In contrast, the left hemisphere of the brain was deactivated (including the speech centre in the left side of the brain, called Broca's area). This prevents an individual from organizing experiences into coherent sequences, which therefore renders someone unable to 'identify cause and effect, grasp the long-term effects of our actions, or create coherent plans for the future' (van der Kolk 2015:42–45).

cohesive, chronological and self-reflective than anyone else interviewed in the church community. In fact, Josip insisted on restarting the tape and 'starting over' early on in his narrative, feeling that it was not cohesive enough.

Research has also demonstrated that traumatic experiences and toxic stress for children can have long-term consequences (van der Kolk 2015:149). Children who undergo complex trauma—multiple or chronic traumatic events—have been shown to demonstrate interference with neurobiological development and the ability to 'integrate sensory, emotional and cognitive information into a cohesive whole' (van der Kolk 2015:228).[5] Toxic stress is the 'strong, frequent or prolonged activation of the body's stress management system' (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (NSC) 2014:2). In extreme stress (such as ongoing abuse) brain regions that are responsible for fear and impulsive responses may overdevelop neural connections at the expense of certain regions that involve 'reasoning, planning, and behavioural control' (NSC 2014:2). Stressful situations and traumatic incidents are numerous among children in Community C. For example, in a 2019 session of Sunday school at the church, Marija told me that all of the 15 children except one, shared knowledge of various traumas and difficulties they were currently experiencing in their own lives including: divorce of parents, hunger, having an insecure place to live, rejection by caregiver, and verbal abuse.

A 1995–1997 study brought to the foreground the profound impacts of what are termed 'Adverse Childhood Experiences' (ACE): experiences that are proven to harm a child's brain and affect child development (Pressley & Smith 2017).[6] This seminal study (Felitti et al. 1998:245) found a 'strong graded relationship between the breadth of exposure to

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[5] Van der Kook (2015:224) argues that in America, often children undergoing complex trauma are given diagnoses such as oppositional defiant disorder, ADHD, phobic disorders, which are not the root diagnosis; rather, these are all behavioural affects from the ongoing results of trauma.

[6] This idea was first addressed by CDC and Kaiser Permanente, with Robert Anda, MD, and Vincent Felitti, MD as investigators. They conducted a study from 1995-1997 on how ACE—childhood emotional, physical, or sexual abuse and household dysfunction— affected future life and health in adults (van der Kolk 2015:144).

abuse or household dysfunction during childhood and multiple risk factors for several of the leading causes of death in adults'.[7] As van der Kolk (2015:145) emphasized regarding Felitti et al.'s study, more than half of children who scored four or more ACEs disclosed that they had learning or behavioural problems in school, compared to the only 3 percent of those who had a score of zero. Felitti et al.'s study suggested the premise that experience of ACE contributes to disrupted neurodevelopment, which can lead to social/emotional/cognitive impairment and in turn is strongly implicated in risk-taking behaviours, contributing to disease, disability and social problems, and also early death (Felitti et al. 1998).[8]

The Philadelphia ACE survey (2013), critiquing the fact that the ACE data emerged from primarily white middle/upper class participants, added five community stressors: witnessing violence, felt racism or discrimination, adverse neighbourhood experience (or war zone), being bullied, and living in foster care.[9] Poverty, experiences of community violence, and a dysfunctional caregiving situation can also cause a higher measure of trauma symptomology (Pressley & Smith 2017).

Merely taking into consideration the narratives of Marija and Josip, (keeping in mind those more sensitive and traumatic areas they may have silenced or omitted) both score seven out of ten when using the original categories of ACE (excluding experiences of lifelong exposure to racism—see Wallace et al. 2016). This does not take into

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[7] This study involved 17,421 participants from 1995–1997 and used seven categories of ACE's including psychological/physical/or sexual abuse, violence against mother; substance abuse in the household, family members who were mentally ill, suicidal or imprisoned (Felitti et al. 1998:245).

[8] In a child's brain, development and social connection are intertwined. Secure children with secure attachment develop adequate mechanisms to regulate their internal states and their response to the outer world, whereas children with insecure attachment cannot depend on others nor regulate their emotional states when responding to trauma. Sometimes, therefore, traumatized children have poor impulse control, social isolation, attention problems, and mistrust of others (van der Kolk 2007:228–29).

[9] 1784 adults were surveyed using the original ACEs and the five new ones. Participants came from an urban area from variant socio-economic backgrounds and represented diverse ethnicities (The Research and Evaluation Group 2013:4). The study indicates that, communities with disadvantaged populations are at higher risks for ACEs. The study notes that the sample size was small and that more studies of this nature need to be conducted in order to effectively compare with the Kaiser study.

consideration the later categories that would be applicable, such as living through a war and microaggressions. Sue et al. (2007:273) defines microaggressions as '… brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults'.

Both mental and physical health suffer from a higher count of ACEs. Studies show that people with four ACEs or higher have an increased risk of bronchitis by 400 percent and suicide attempts increase by 1200 percent, as well as a significantly greater risk of either being an adult perpetrator or adult victim of violence (Whitfield et al. 2003). Further, they are exposed to increased risk of cancer (Holman et al. 2016), higher rates of depression (Chapman et al. 2004), higher rates of risk-taking behaviours such as promiscuity, obesity, smoking, alcohol and drug use (Campbell et al. 2016), a greater chance of having a diagnosed autoimmune disease (Dube et al. 2009), and other health risks such as chronic headaches (Anda et al. 2010), autoimmune disease (Dube et al. 2009), ischemic heart disease (Dong 2004), and liver disease (Dong et al. 2003). The greater the number of ACEs that can be identified for an individual, the greater their risk of early death and disease (Gilbert et al. 2015).

5.3.2 Intergenerational, Structural, and Historical Trauma

In addition, research has shown the reality of intergenerational violence—that is, violence that is more likely to be passed down from one generation to another; perpetrators are more likely to report a history of neglect/abuse (Alexander 2015).[10] Children who witness domestic violence may be at risk for other kinds of stressors and may see that aggression

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[10] Alexander (2015:13–18) offers different models through which to understand the transmission of violence from one generation to another. The social learning theory in which children copy the behaviour they have seen, attachment theory, in which violence disrupts the bonds of secure attachment formation, family systems theory, which looks at wider relationships within the family as well as social, communal and historical, and life history theory, which looks at the behaviour's evolutionary adaptiveness.

and violence is an acceptable way to resolve conflict (Pinna 2016:147). In turn, those children may pass on their trauma to their child by exposing their children to 'frightened responses' when infants are distressed, which contributes to a disorganized attachment bond (Roitman 2017).[11]

The cycle of inter-generational violence is evident in the aggression that both Marija and Josip struggled with into their adult lives. Although Josip details his struggles with aggression, both Marija and Josip talk about Marija's temper as well: '…even though she is small, petite, she used to jump to my eyes and was not afraid of me'. Not only this, but the idea of structural trauma—for example, constant poverty, which makes it difficult or impossible for people to meet basic needs—can exacerbate the risk of intergenerational violence because of constant stress, as well as reducing people to a state of numbness (Yoder 2005:11).

Further, in Marija and Josip's narratives, alcohol abuse caused much stress in their lives. Foetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) can contribute to physical, mental, behavioural, and learning issues that further complicate matters (Spohr 2018).[12] The effect of FASDs are similar to attachment disorders and are often combined with them, exacerbating physical, cognitive and behavioural disadvantages, although treatments for FASDs, attachment disorders, and trauma healing are all different. If all these contributing factors are present, it is difficult know, for example, how to best help the children in their school struggles.

[11] This is based on attachment theory, which recognizes that healthy child development is based on a child securing a safe, emotional bond to a caregiver. Attachment theory proposes four different kinds of infant attachment, which correlates to adult responses: secure child/autonomous adult, avoidant child/minimize relationships as adults, anxious child/preoccupied attachment in adults, and disorganized child/unresolved attachment in adults (Alexander 2015).
[12] Some studies are postulating that alcohol can affect epigenetics for DNA interpretation and transcription, suggesting that these genetic alterations can be passed across generations (Mason & Zhou 2015). In other words, even in the absence of maternal alcohol consumption, some infants whose fathers were alcoholics exhibit FASD features (Mason & Zhou 2015). A number of Josip's siblings struggled with alcoholism as adults. He was never attracted to alcohol, and drinks very sparingly on rare occasions.

Sometimes, an individual in the Roma community recounts a traumatic event in a prayer group or discussion group in a matter-of-fact manner, or with a smile on their face, even sometimes accompanied by a joke about the circumstances they are discussing. The presentation manner is completely incongruous with the serious nature of the content being narrated. However, I never knew if this apparent lack of concern was a cultural way of mitigating trauma,[13] or if it was a result of an emotional numbness after years of chronic trauma. Chronic trauma[14] has been proven to affect generations of a family and indeed a whole society where trauma exists as an unfathomable event such as genocide, becoming what some refer to as 'historical trauma' (Alexander et al. 2004).

The concept of historical trauma expands trauma past the immediate family and into the wider community, attempting to explain the disproportionate mental and physical health issues of certain marginalised communities. The concept of historical trauma is defined here as 'complex and collective trauma experienced over time and across generations by a group of people who share an identity, affiliation, or circumstance' (Mohatt et al. 2014:128). Historical trauma includes explanations for psychological and social responses to the trauma (Evans-Campbell 2008:329); in fact, it theoretically tries to connect impacts on the body with ongoing social inequalities and trauma. Krieger (1999) explains this in terms of 'ecosocial theory':

> … how we develop, grow, age, ail, and die necessarily reflects a constant interplay, within our bodies of our intertwined and inseparable social and biological history… Taking literally the notion of 'embodiment', this theory asks how we literally incorporate biologically—from conception to death—our social experiences and express this embodiment in population patterns of health, disease, and well-being. (296)

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[13] For example, Goldstein (2003:16) relates how laughter and black humour are discursive spaces to discuss things otherwise silenced, such as a rape story: 'Humour is one way of bearing witness to the tragic realities of life and an expression of discontent—the oppositional act … of laughing directly into the teeth of suffering'.

[14] Yoder (2005:12) uses an example from Nicaragua after many decades of conflict, describing the society as: 'multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, and multiply grieving'. The research shows a lack of ability to communicate and be flexible, and loss of trust between people, increased aggressiveness, somatic illness, domestic violence and suicide, and inability to see through the eyes of another (35).

The concept of historical trauma first emerged from studies of Holocaust survivors and their descendants (Gone 2013) and was subsequently applied to studies such as First Nations people in North American in the 1990s (Brave Heart 1998, 1999), as well as Palestinians, African Americans, and Armenians (Mohatt et al. 2014). The literature argues that communities are at greater risk for mental health challenges in later generations such as PTSD, more vulnerable to sexual violence, depression, drug use, and reduced health (Mohatt et al. 2014; Prussing 2014).[15]

However, there are also diverse responses to historical trauma. Some theorists speculate that current exposure to microaggressions, new stressors, and discrimination can link to existing historical trauma and increase the overall negative effects (Bombay et al. 2014:331).[16] In other cases, however, later generations have shown increased markers of resilience, using their experiences as the cognitive framing by which they can achieve goals (Mohatt et al. 2014; Prussing 2014:445).

The toll of structural racism that most Roma have to live with in Eastern Europe is not always readily apparent, but clues can be seen in certain comments or assumptions made both by Roma and majority populations, as well as the helplessness, fear, and lack of dignity narrated by survivors of such experiences. For example, during a strategy meeting for a Roma Christian conference in 2018, one *gadjo* (non-Roma) pastor suggested that we delve into some of the history of discrimination; a Roma pastor responded that this would bring participants to a 'dark place' as the wounding is too deep and painful to confront. In Podolinská's (2017:174) analysis, she discusses how pastors seek to 'programmatically break this traditional narrative cycle'. Just as Josip had not grown up

[15] Among children of Holocaust survivors, one study demonstrated greater rates of insecure-ambivalent attachment (Walters et al. 2011).

[16] Bombay et al. 2014 argue that the Indian Residential Schools (IRS) in Canada had traumatic effects on children and future generations. Several generations of IRS attendance had cumulative effects, and combined with present day stressors of ongoing marginalization, poverty, and microaggressions, contribute to present day differences of well-being between First Nations and other peoples in Canada (320).

in a Roma settlement, he intentionally did not move into the Roma settlement of Community C because he did not want his children to develop a sense of stigma associated with residence in a segregated community.

Interestingly, Marija and Josip's children are markedly different in comparison to other children in Community C. This is observable in terms of their confidence, their ways of interacting freely with non-Roma, and their pursuit of further education. Their oldest child recently completed an undergraduate degree, their second child is completing physical therapy training and attending an evangelical seminary, and the younger two are both in high school. In contrast, in the Roma settlements where Marija and Josip are actively working, all but two young women had dropped out of school before transferring to high school.[17]

5.3.3 Trauma Mediated through Socio-cultural Context

Traumas happen in a particular social and cultural context (Yoder 2005).[18] This is not to say that there are not similarities of reaction to trauma in various cultures but certainly there are different conceptions about what is 'normal, the disordered, and the utterly unthinkable'. Thus, to separate trauma from its phenomenology risks dislocating suffering from potential healing (Dwyer & Santikarma 2007:405f).[19] In this way, defining all trauma through a PTSD frame can be limiting, particularly as the symptomology was

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[17] Croatian statistics show a slow but growing improvement in terms of Roma education over the last ten years. In a 2018 survey, when 3063 people were asked from various age groups as to whether they had dropped out of elementary school, 27 percent of people aged 19 to 25 had dropped out compared to 40 percent of people aged 26 to 40. The reasons most cited for this decision was financial issues, marriage, and bad educational results. However, out of 538 people aged 15 to 18, only 2 percent attend high school. Among the Roma in this survey, there are nine studying, 13 achieved higher education, and 15 who had registered at a university dropped out (Centar za mirovne & Ecorys Hrvatska 2018).

[18] Yoder offers the example of a woman who contracted AIDS in a particular context where that disease is severely stigmatized and where resources are limited to receive treatment (2005:11). These factors interact with the personal trauma experienced in a manner which varies from the way they would if the trauma occurred in a different context.

[19] Hedglen's (2016:33–4) study of resiliency in post-genocide Rwanda found that their concept of *Guhahamuka*, described as despair, hopelessness, excessive crying, worthlessness and suicide attempts, shared many characteristics with the Western Psychological diagnosis of PTSD. However, she argued that only understanding it as a collection of symptoms misses the full understanding of human suffering in that specific context.

developed in the Western world such as North America and Western Europe (Yoder 2005:31).

Various studies in different cultural contexts—Cambodia (Hinton 2007); Indonesia (Kirmayer et al. 2007c; Rwanda (Hedglen 2016)—reveal the complexity of biological responses to trauma embedded in different meaning-structures. Consequently, symptoms and ways of talking about the issues may manifest differently different places. Hinton (2007:442) relates a Cambodian woman's retelling of losing her husband during the genocide. 'Sense of balance' is important to 'well-being' so as she grew increasingly upset recounting the story, the interpreter began urging her to 'stop thinking and speaking about it' until she regained her sense of balance. The cultural informant noted that if she had not regained it, she would have gone to a healer or made offerings to appease her 'troubled heart'. Hinton argues that to reduce this woman merely to a Western diagnosis of PTSD would ignore cultural understandings of suffering and therefore the cultural prescriptions to help mediate the symptoms.[20]

Contextual understandings of trauma are related to how that culture defines a 'good life' (Lester 2013:755). When asked how Marija and Josip understood 'the good life', Marija and Josip noted that when someone comes to Jesus, Jesus will change them. 'Salvation' as understood by Pentecostals, alludes to a sense of well-being without sickness, poverty, sin and evil (Anderson 2002). To 'be saved' means to be rescued from sin and death and restored to right a relationship with God, others, and the world. Marija

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[20] Hinton (2007:446) argues that Cambodians responded to their mass trauma of genocide (1975–1979) through a 'complex set of ontologically resonant local understandings', and that there is no one word in Khmer that encompasses trauma. Kirmayer et al. (2007b:461) offers another example from Indonesia, looking at trauma manifestation in three different individuals from various socio-economic contexts. Each person demonstrates biological processes of embodied injury and fear, combined with the 'narrative trajectory' of the person's story, embedded in socio-cultural contexts, and set within power struggles of family, community, and national politics. Kirmayer et al.'s (2007b:462) analysis did match PTSD symptomatology, although each individual/community focused on different aspects in their narrations, 'creating order, coherence, and value from chaos, meaninglessness, and suffering—but they are also acts of social positioning, locating the person in a specific role, status, or stance vis-à-vis the interviewer and others not present'.

stated: 'We don't need to tell people how to dress or talk, etc … nobody told me, I just felt convicted and did it.' In Marija's estimation, the 'good life' partly manifests when more children are able to stay in school, families have good housing, and more people have jobs. Josip categorized his definition of 'the good life' as one that encompassed the abolishment of 'Roma neighbourhoods', creating a society in which Roma and Croatians would live side by side in peace and mutual prosperity according to the rules of society. 'There are some Roma customs that should be forbidden … I would want to see Roma in professional positions which have influence rather than just the lowest jobs like cleaning streets … I would like to see the stereotypes and misconceptions broken … alcohol would be thrown out of families … I think only God can change the Roma … no education, no programme, no EU, only God, through his servants, can really change [them]' (Wachsmuth 2017b).[21]

In terms of how the cultural contexts of Community C and B mediate trauma, it is important to note the reactions or lack thereof to ongoing trauma and stress—this will be further explored in Chapters Six and Seven. Reactions can appear to diminish or be non-existent, either a numbness or internal hyperarousal (Yoder 2005:32). However, evaluation of trauma would then be in the 'quality of relationships and in the behaviour of individuals, communities, and societies in the months, years and centuries that follow' (Yoder 2005:31–2). Marija alluded to such an external state of numbness as she recounted her experience of begging on the street before her conversion process started:

> Insulting and humiliation of the people in the street didn't bother me at all, I got used to it anyway, that was me. I was always treated this way. In school the kids called me all kinds of names because I am Romani, so they didn't accept me, and then my own mother, she would say that even my own father didn't need me, whatever she could think of. One time she even forbade my sisters to talk to me because we are not sisters by birth, because I'm a bastard that is needed by nobody, and now my husband, so insults in the street were something normal to me. I became a person without feelings, which couldn't be offended or dishonoured. (Marija 2013)

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[21] Marija and Josip disagreed on the level of responsibility Roma have for their own situation. Josip argued that Roma need to be better neighbours and change more things in their communities, whereas Marija pointed to the burden of stereotypes (thieving, witchcraft, early marriage) that Croatians and Serbians do not have to bear, although they also participate in these practices (2017).

The process of reflecting on her feelings displays post-traumatic growth; a recognition of her numb state and her inability to feel anything related to it. This was something she *was* in comparison to *who she is now*. Her conversion process was the catalysing event to begin creating new ways of thinking and processing in order to have new emotional experiences, and a new sense of security and safety.

5.3.4 Capacity for Resilience

Marija and Josip's lives bear equal, if not greater, evidence of traumatic events compared to some other people in their church community, as will be illustrated in Chapter Six, yet their capacity for resilience and post-traumatic growth also appears to be greater. This raises the question of resilience—the number of ACEs as individual experience does not always directly correspond with an adult's future prospects. One American study showed that although 50–60 percent of the population will experience a major trauma in their lives, only 7.8 percent of people have PTSD (Russo et al. 2012). Resilience can be defined as a 'multidimensional characteristic that varies with context, time, age, gender, and cultural origin, as well as within an individual subjected to different life circumstances' (Connor & Davidson 2003:76); essentially the ability to overcome stress and adversity while both body and mind continuing functioning at a normal level (Wu et al. 2013).

Researchers have demonstrated that many factors contribute to resilience in the face of ACE, trauma, and adversity, including personality, environmental factors, biology, cognitive framing and belief systems. Drawing from numerous sources that proposed characteristics of resilience, Connor & Davidson (2003:77) developed a resilience scale to determine the level of resilience in a study group. Some of these characteristics of resilience are a sense of humour, viewing stress as challenge, faith in God, adaptability to change, optimism, and close secure attachment to others. Wu et al. (2013:5) add intellect, self-regulation, physical exercise, purpose, and moral compass and further argue that women are better able to regulate their emotions than males. In terms of

environmental factors, the presence of at least one supportive adult has been shown to mitigate ACE (Pressley & Smith 2017) and even disrupt transgenerational cycles of violence (Pinna 2016).

However, studies also show that biology can play a role—certain biological predispositions may influence how a person reacts to stress (Levinsohn & Ross 2017:90). In addition, epigenetics—changes to the genome without modification in the DNA sequence—has shown how prolonged stress can contribute to increased vulnerability to mental illness (Wu et al. 2013). Wu et al. (2013:4) argue that this vulnerability depends on whether the person has any control over the stressor, having overcome a previous, more moderate stressor, and being in a stable, loving environment. Cognitive framing, that is, how both adversity and an individual facing it (to be told one is resilient) is framed in a certain context that can also contribute to how resilient a person becomes (Konner 2007).[22]

5.3.5 Integrated Faith Renewing Resilience

As faith and religion have been demonstrated to contribute to resilience, recent psychological studies show the value of religion and spirituality on health in general (Tartaro et al. 2005; Seybold & Hill 2001),[23] and mental health in particular, in social (for example prohibitions on adverse behaviours and habits, access to greater social support), psychological and biological spheres (Baetz & Toews 2009).[24] Such studies show the possibility of religion helping individuals to overcome traumatic events, as well as

[22] Konner's (2007:322) study of hunter/gatherers in Botswana illustrates how framing the adversity as necessary for people's strength and survival can contribute to individuals thriving under adverse circumstances.
[23] Tartaro et al.'s (2005:762) study looked at spirituality and health, finding that health outcomes improved, specifically with better cardiovascular effects for men and lower cortisol reactivity for both genders. Interestingly, participants who attested to greater forgiveness and times for prayer demonstrated a decrease in cortisol, while meditation and service attendance had little effect.
[24] See also: Loewenthal et al. 2000; Brewer-Smyth & Koeing 2014; Verghese 2008.

mitigating stress and promoting resilience.[25] Challenging events may increase one's faith, even in the midst of reduced well-being, or conversely traumatic events may negatively impact one's faith, particularly if there are not new 'meaning pathways' by which to process it (Hasanović & Pajević 2015). Thus, trauma can bring about new questions for someone regarding life, existence, meaning, and spirituality (Schaefer et al. 2008). Consequently, this move toward healing can be through a theodicy—the ability to attribute interpretative meaning regarding God's ultimate purpose and sovereignty over suffering and evil (Loewenthal et al. 2000; Schaeffer et al. 2008). The intersection between individuals' interpretative frameworks and theodicy will be further explored in Chapter Six.

There are also studies that show the potential of religion and spirituality to promote post-traumatic growth, as seen in the above example of Marija, even as trauma can contribute to a deepening of religious faith and experience (Shaw et al. 2005). This is partially related to positive religious coping, which involves forgiveness, support, spiritual connection, as opposed to negative religious coping in which trauma is interpreted as God's punishment, questioning God's love or power (Schaefer et al. 2008:518). Pargament (2002:168) specifies that religion's ability to be a positive influence on socially marginalized peoples is related to whether it is 'internalized, intrinsically motivated, and based on a secure relationship with God …'.

Some theorists however question the validity of a direct, causal relationship between religion/spirituality and post-traumatic growth, citing social desirability bias, unmeasured factors that might be contributing to post-traumatic growth, and concern over how to define and measure spirituality/religion (De Oliveira Maraldi 2018). In other studies, certain kinds of religion and spirituality increase anxiety (Dein 2018; Pargament &

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[25] Pargament (1997:32) defines religion as 'a search for significance in ways related to the sacred'. See also: Connor et al. 2003; Brewer-Smyth & Koeing 2014; Shaw et al. 2005.

Lomax 2013) or psychopathology (Seybold & Hill 2001).[26] Thus, the relationship between spirituality and trauma/stress is complex; as both are culturally mediated, this also connects to local conceptions of healing (Boehnlein 2007). In the case that chronic and unrecognized trauma may have obliterated healing rituals,[27] entrance into new rituals, in this case those associated with the Christian faith, can provide healing pathways as well.

Triangulating the analysis of Marija and Josip's narratives with my observations and participation in their lives suggest it would be reasonable to conclude that not all religion leads to positive well-being, but rather how God is understood (Luhrmann 2013), internalized (Schaefer et al. 2008),[28] and made a part of one's meaning-making structures. Further, Pentecostalism, with its dynamic adoption of local ontologies (to be explored in 7.4.3) (Anderson 2004) and its emphasis on the 'experiential' in the form of healings, Divine encounter, and dreams (Albrecht & Howard 2014), has the ecclesial elasticity and theological expectation for creating healing rituals and integrating faith. The following section will consider how an integrated Pentecostal spirituality contributed to Marija and Josip's resilience.

5.3.6 Internalizing Christian Identity

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[26] Other theorists argue from the empirical literature that not all religion has the same outcome for well-being (Pargament 2002; Seybold & Hill 2001).

[27] For example, now that the Roma suffering in WWII is more recognized after decades of being ignored, new rituals are being created to commemorate and remember those losses. However, after taking part in one such ritual in Jasenovac camp in Croatia in 2018, one Roma man asked me, 'Did all this stuff they are talking about really happen here?' This is probably due to lack of formal education and/or passing down of the oral memories; however, this gap results in a lack of connection between potential ritual 'healing pathways' and memory/chronic trauma.

[28] In Schaefer et al.'s study (2008:520), the possibilities of spirituality for healing and post-traumatic growth relates to whether it is an intrinsic religiosity—that is, a spirituality that is intrinsically adhered to and practised without necessary external mitigation.

A substantial part of Marija and Josip's narratives are centred around the opposing figure of a violent alcoholic parent. For Josip, it was his father, and for Marija, her mother. Both Marija and Josip claimed identities in their stories in reaction to their parent, but eventually this 'old' identity was transformed by conversion. As Luhrmann (2012:226) notes, however, knowing God requires both training and interpretation. Josip's acknowledged aggressiveness turned him, at least in part, into the man he vowed never to become: his father. His conversion and slow transformation required 'training' to address his continued aggression, interpreted in the context of God's unconditional love for him and his requirement to love his wife.

Other studies have noted this training process—in Roman's (2017:172) study notes of Pentecostal Kaale, she refers to it as a development of being 'in faith'—spiritual beliefs converted into actions in order to prove their born-again selves, and it illustrates conversion as multi-dimensional process. Fosztó (2009:124) calls this unity of self and behaviour 'sincerity' in relation to Roma Pentecostals in Transylvania. In conversion studies, Gooren (2010:4) describes the process as a 'conversion career' rather than a single event or act of will, involving various levels of individual, social, institutional, religious and cultural processes.[29] The process broadens the individual's 'universe of discourse', which Snow & Machalek (1983:265–6) note changes the narrators' general interpretative framework for life.

I argue that this process is about internalizing Christian identity—that is, integrating theology into one's interpretative framework. In Podolinská's (2017:170–71) research in Slovakia, she found that the pastors had a role in reconstructing identity by reframing the current meaning of the word 'Roma' with new content based on Christian theology,

[29] See Rambo (1993) and Gooren (2010). For a Biblical and theological perspective, see Peace (1999). Gooren examines and critiques 13 ways in which conversion has been approached beginning with James in the 1950s to Rambo's multi-faceted approach that sees conversion as a process that 'takes place in a dynamic force field of people, events, ideologies, institutions, expectations, and orientations' (Rambo 1993:5).

breaking the convert from their original networks, and connecting them to new networks of the church. This relates to Engelke's (2010) widening the meaning of 'rupture' to a realignment of self to the Christian story. However, Podolinská (2017:156) notes that such notions of a 'trans-ethnicity' are not easily imparted to congregations as pastors must navigate people through this process who are living in poverty on the margins of the majority society and have little self-esteem.

My study, in view of the previous discussion of effects of trauma, thus suggests that part of this integration and internalization necessarily involves internal healing. Luhrmann (2013:708) explores the anthropological idea of 'symbolic healing'[30] by proposing that it is the relationship with a loving God, enhanced through prayer, which promotes good health and can be a critical factor in healing trauma. The power of symbolic healing is to facilitate an externally-given symbol to become emotionally potent and real for a person, and then to 'manipulate' the symbol in order to transform the emotions (709).[31] In other words, it is important to move from a cognitive to an experiential understanding, a shift that Luhrmann (2013:711) argues is a central function of Christian prayer. Luhrmann et al. (2010) argue that a person's capacity for 'absorption'— defined as 'the proclivity to experience what is (or must be) imagined as more real' (Luhrmann 2013:711)—is directly related a person's prayer experience. In Luhrmann's (2013) study of how prayer can contribute to healing among traumatized, homeless, and Christian women in Chicago, someone who scored high on the absorption scale was likely to report vivid prayer experiences. Applying this to symbolic healing

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[30] Luhrmann (2013) uses Dow's (1986) model to describe symbolic healing as involving the following factors: 1. Experiences have culture-bound symbols in myth 2. The healer constructs the sufferer's experiences within the myth 3. The healer connects sufferer's emotions to the 'transactional symbols' 4. The healer helps the sufferer to connect his/her own emotions to the symbols.

[31] Luhrmann uses Levi-Strauss's (1963:710) example of a woman in childbirth and a shaman. In a step termed 'epistemic ambiguity', the shaman '…does not seem to distinguish between the reality of the immaterial and the material, but weaves them together, the technique which in modern literature is called magical realism'.

theory, if the healer is God, 'the believing subject imagines an interaction in which God speaks directly to the subject and asserts his unconditional and healing love' (Luhrmann 2013:712). Her research demonstrates that this prayer practice, experiencing God and 'reporting that one feels God's love directly, is associated with lower stress, lower psychiatric vulnerability, and less loneliness' (721).

Marija had earlier experiences with God, but until she was able to put them into a specific interpretative framework after she met the Croatian woman who was instrumental in her conversion, her life did not change course. Thus, the moment on the street when she was holding her baby in the storm later became part of her narrative of evidence of God's involvement in her life (Luhrmann 2012:225–26). Her claimed identity of being unloved and rejected all her life was transformed in the moment of her accepting Jesus' love for her.

> I realised that there was someone who forgives me for all the things that my husband couldn't. Jesus on the cross took all my lawlessness and guilt. I felt that I was free and accepted, he accepts me the way I am. I felt love which I never had before. God loves me so much that he gave his only born son, but I also become aware that the way Christ forgave me, I must forgive others, so I forgave my mom, and also my husband who would still beat me. (2013)

This experience was so powerful that she was able to forgive the primary people who had hurt her in her life: her mother and husband. Her transformation allowed her to eventually lead her husband to conversion.

Josip was able to confront his aggression when God showed him how much he had suffered. This 'seeing from God's perspective' is one of the practices Luhrmann (2012:111–13) identifies evangelicals as using in order to feel loved by God. From a narrative epistemology, I suggest that Josip's phenomenological horizon was fused with God's perspective, thus expanding possibilities (Gadamer 1989) for interpreting meaning. In this experiential encounter with God, Josip could understand that God intimately knew both his life and had great compassion for his suffering.

To illustrate this process further, the following table demonstrates the movement between old and new identities as it is depicted in Josip and Marija's narrative framing.

Figure 5.1: Marija

Claimed identity	Quotes		Renewed identity	Quotes
Rejected, unseen	'In school the kids called me all kinds of names because I am Romani, so they didn't accept, and then my own mother, she would say that even my own father didn't need me … she even forbade my sisters to talk to me … because I am a bastard that is needed by nobody … so insults in the street were something normal to me.'	Conversion process	Seen, accepted	'God, I know that you are here and that you gave me this child, but I don't know what to do with him.' 'I felt that I was free and accepted, he accepts me the way I am.'
Unloved	'He could never love me, moreover, this time he despised me.'	Conversion process	Loved	'I felt love which I never had before.'

Figure 5.2: Josip

Claimed identity	Quotes	Conversion Process	Renewed Identity	Quotes
Not like my father	'And I always said, like, I will never be like dad, he will never be a man, a man that I would want as a role model.'	'God slowly began to change my life and I slowly began to love my wife…I submitted my life to God, I met his love which I received and now I could offer it also to my wife.'	New man	'I saw what my father was like, how my mom was suffering … and then I saw the same thing in Marija, how much she is suffering and struggling, and like how she is begging with the children in the street…'
Aggressive like father	'I inherited his way that he always had to be right, how he was with aggression, with aggression, like		New man	'I was non-stop struggling with it [aggressiveness] and I saw that things are really changing in my life even though it was still hard.'

	everything had to be like he wanted.'			

5.3.7 Reinterpreting Life Story through the Christian Story

Marija and Josip's interactions with God spoke directly to their past trauma, enabling them to link it to their present experience, providing a theodicy structure for their suffering. In a Pentecostal framework, Marija experienced an emotional healing of her past rejection, an experience of God's love that simultaneously became evidence of God's love (Brown 2011:9). For Josip, God's revelation to him regarding his suffering allowed him to have compassion on his wife and himself, and to mourn his own suffering (Yoder 2005:53). In addition, since their past identities were centred on their violent alcoholic parental figure, the image of conversion as entrance into God's adoptive family would be particularly poignant. In Christian theology, the believer is identified as being part of God's family as an adopted son or daughter.[32] God is most often compared to an unconditionally loving father,[33] although there are also images of God as a mother.[34]

As the ability to reflect and integrate the trauma into one's life reflects post-traumatic growth; theology can offer interpretations in regard to suffering, particularly when it is embedded in a social network that shares values and faith, in turn contributing to resilience (Boehnlein 2007:265, 271). Ries (2007:141) observes Ţigan converts who relate their suffering to original sin, with conversion as their way to combat it. Marija and

[32] Romans 8:1 speaks about those who are 'in Christ Jesus' and 'led by the Spirit of God' to be children of God (v.14), those who have received a 'spirit of adoption' (v.15): 'When we cry, "Abba! [Aramaic for intimate meaning of Father], Father!" it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him' (vv. 15b-17; NRSV). See also Galatians 4.

[33] For example, Jesus's parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15 details a father unconditionally accepting and loving his returning son who had squandered his wealth and good name.

[34] For example, God is pictured as a mother bird hiding her children under her wings (Matthew 23:37) and as a mother comforting her child (Isaiah 66:13).

Josip', although they would agree that sin is responsible for evil and suffering in the world, were more nuanced in their interpretations. Marija's narratives revealed a high level of reflection on her personal suffering as a child, connecting it to her ministry and vocational calling as a church leader:

> Today I know why I needed to go through it all in life. As we serve to Roma in [place], we often come across situations like the ones I went through. I can understand them and feel exactly what they are going through. Very often I can comfort abused women, girls who feel rejected, unaccepted and orphans, mothers who worry because their children are ill, and their financial situation is very familiar to me. I am grateful to God for every situation in my life because in that way God can use me for the glory and grace of his name. (Unpublished story 2013)

This is in contrast to Josip, who did not bring his personal feelings into his account of his childhood narrative and was much more self-critical in terms of his struggles post-conversion with his aggression. He connects his critical view of himself with his relationship to God and vocational call into ministry, and in this way mitigates his own sense of weakness and failure, to a higher good:

> In the end, God was leading it all. All of it. We were, I, see, I thought what can I do, what do I know, I don't have the strength, but actually, that's why God called me, because I thought that I can't do it, that I don't know and that I don't have the strength, because in that way I could realise that God wants to work, not just for my life, but for the lives of others. I could then clearly know, aha, I didn't do that, that was God. And God was glorified. Who knows if I were different, if I relied on myself, maybe in the end I would want the glory for myself and not for God. (Interview 2018)

The movement from their old identities of aggressive violence and unloved rejection took place in relationship to the Croatian Pentecostal Church—a safe place by which to receive social and emotional support and learn how to work out their new faith in their lives (Yoder 2005:51). Their entrance into Christian ministry changed them into leaders and visionaries, a theme which will be highlighted in the next section.

5.4 Ministry Beginnings

5.4.1 Negotiating Christian Identity with Social Constructions of Roma Identity

Part of Marija and Josip's process of internalizing Christian identity involved confronting the social constructions of Roma identity. Although Marija and Josip began praying for their people, they did not know what else to do in terms of helping them, since Josip said,

‘I had [only] three grades of elementary school, I couldn’t see myself, I don’t know, in service that I [would] preach, that I [would] teach someone something ...’ Marija and Josip’s entrance into ministry and leadership reflects two factors. First, the shared identity of being both ‘Roma’ and ‘Christian.’ When they converted, neither Marija and Josip had heard of any converted Roma Christians, particularly in Croatia,[35] and in fact Josip describes his encounters with Croatian Christians and their opinion of Roma:

> Mostly they would tell us how it’s hard with Roma, how they are like this, how that’s a place, I don’t know, where the Devil himself lives and how we should, they need like the light of God’s word to go in and save those Roma from the darkness… To us it was like, um, a sense that they are saying something good, when in fact it was judging. And then, that helped us actually, to understand that here in Croatia there aren’t many people who would like to work with the Roma (Interview 2018).

A critical moment came, however, around 2005 when Marija attended a women’s conference in Serbia along with other women from her church, a Christian Roma band played some Christian music, and she was overwhelmed:

> When I came closer, I couldn’t believe, I was wondering was this a dream or reality. One big group of Roma stood in the front and worshipped the Lord, while at the very entrance to the building you could feel the presence of the Lord and while tears were running down my face, I said, “Lord, I want this in Croatia, too. (Unpublished story 2013)

For Marija and Josip, the impetus propelling them into ministry was the inextricable connection between their Roma ethnicity and their new Christian identity—an identity that in other contexts, researchers have demonstrated that it often outweighs ethnic identity (Slavkova 2003; Acton 2014; Cantón-Delgado 2017). Thurfjell (2013:163) points out that being part of such a global Christian community can be encouraging for those who are marginalized in their own countries. However, in Marija and Josip’s case, the emphasis was not so much on this new ‘supra-identity’ or ethnogenesis of their ethnic identity; rather, seeing other Roma Christians *leading* allowed them the imaginative space to completely adopt the implications of the new Christian identity—that is, it was a

[35] In fact, earlier interviews I had conducted with a Croatian Church of Christ pastor in Western Croatia and Roma Christians in Western Croatia demonstrated that there were, in fact, Roma Christians and even at one time a Roma church, which had subsequently collapsed (2012).

calling, equally accessible to all Christians, based on gifting from the Holy Spirit (Anderson 2013a).

Still, they struggled with self-doubt, even with the encouragement of their Croatian pastor and a Roma pastor from Serbia.[36] After the Croatian church prayed and fasted for one month in 2010 for the proposed mission, Marija and Josip began going with their Croatian pastor around houses to visit people in two Old Romanian speaking settlements in Croatia, specifically to convert the Roma.[37] In November 2010, their Croatian church helped to organize a Christian concert, inviting a Roma pastor from South Serbia to come evangelize and play music. Josip describes his self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy, feeling as though he did not even know how to pray for people. At one point, the Roma pastor told him to lay hands on someone to pray and he said, 'No please brother, I'm not ready' (Interview #2, 2013).[38] This external influence of the Croatian church and Roma pastor may not have been enough to overcome the discouragements and insecurities, but they also interpreted their experience with God as corroborating the external motivation, thus allowing their theology to become internalized (Pargament 2002). In other words, the learned theology (through the Croatian church and their own Bible reading) became internally validated through their interpretation of God's activity in their lives.

5.4.2 Interpreting Pentecostal Theology in Daily Life

Pentecostal theology expects direct experience and encounter with God, which affects first the personal life and expands outward into family, society, and culture (Miller et al.

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[36] The Roma church in Leskovac, Serbia was well known to Pentecostals in Southeastern Europe. The story of the Roma church there will be expanded upon in Chapter Seven. It was Croatian Pentecostals that invited this Roma pastor to help in the initial evangelization.

[37] The only training that Marija and Josip received was a two-year Bible training programme from their church where they watched video lectures and did homework in a workbook. At the end, they received a certificate of completion. However, they had no leadership or pastoral training.

[38] Marija and Josip had been observing how this Roma pastor and their Croatian pastor prayed for people and shared the Bible with them: 'He [Roma pastor from Serbia] knew that the Roma wanted to be prayed for, healings, free from witchcraft and invited people to get these healings and continue to study the Bible' (Interview 2013). Still, they felt they were just making things up as they were going along.

2013:257). This means that if a person is praying and believing, he or she can expect to encounter God (Luhrmann 2012), and certain thoughts, experiences, or feelings can be interpreted as signs from God or a movement of the Holy Spirit (Thurfjell 2013:101–102). Pentecostals expect both ultimate answers and everyday solutions to their problems (Atanasov 2008:186; Fosztó 2009:118). This happened in the early days of Marija and Josip's conversion[39] as they moved into ministry and also as they eventually gained the vision to open the church. In other words, how they interpreted specific Bible verses, prophecies, miracles, and unexpected gifts, validated their decisions to move into greater leadership and responsibility, eventually leading them to open the church.

This can be vividly seen in a climatic event which propelled Marija and Josip's ministry forward. When the Roma pastor from Leskovac (see Chapter 6) visited their village in Croatia a second time in 2011, he prayed for a woman, Katarina, who had been sick for four years and was near death—and she was healed. This attracted the attention of the local Roma community, and many began requesting visits from Marija and Josip out of both curiosity and hope for their own healing. For example, Katarina's son was living in England near a Roma woman who was from Serbia. When Katarina's son related the story of the healing in Croatia, the woman immediately called her own mother who was sick from a gangrenous leg. The sick woman travelled to Community C in Croatia, and Marija and Josip prayed for her in Helena's (see Chapter 6) home. The woman was not healed in that moment (although gradually her leg got better), but Helena and her son, along with the sick woman and her son, were all convinced that Marija and Josip were speaking the truth about God and immediately converted. In March 2012, Katarina and

[39] For example, Marija recalled a verse from the Bible that she felt that God had given to her as a promise from Joshua 24:15, where Joshua tells the people of Israel that, 'As for me and my household, we will serve the Lord.' After her Croatian pastor began encouraging them to visit the Roma villages, she used this verse to confirm they were moving in the right direction (Unpublished story 2013).

her husband[40], who had converted after the healing, were baptized at the Croatian Pentecostal church.[41]

Another example can be seen in Marija and Josip's ongoing inner struggle, which took place between 2010–2012 while they were visiting Roma in their houses, but before they started the church. Marija and Josip constantly wrestled with discouragement and the polarized tension between taking care of their basic needs and their children and a feeling of being called to minister to their people. Considering that Marija and Josip lived in a city that was 45 km away, they expressed that it felt agonizing to leave their four children—aged eight to sixteen—at home while they were visiting the Roma community. Because they were now spending so much time in the settlements, Marija and Josip were not collecting and stripping metal to earn money, so sometimes they did not have any food to leave for their children. Although people in the settlements would offer the couple food, they would turn it down, ashamed to eat if their children were going hungry. Josip expresses this struggle:

> I was really thinking to quit … it was really a big burden for me. I could not pray for people and I could not believe the things I was praying for … maybe we were doing things wrong, that we were not doing what we should. Maybe it was our will we were in and not God's … and in [our city] people were saying we were neglecting our children and not taking care of them … (Josip & Marija, interview #2, January 2013)

At one crisis moment, Marija felt as though they needed to stop going to the settlements and instead should remain and take care of their family. She was crying and praying aloud to God, chastising God that although she was serving God, he was not giving her children any bread to eat. Josip in turn rebuked her, asking her, 'Now you wallow like the Israelites

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[40] This couple took down their pictures of Orthodox saints of which they had felt protected them from evil, and welcoming Josip and Marija's weekly visits. The woman was firm in her new belief in Jesus' power, saying, 'I could never forget what Jesus did for me'.

[41] They had formerly been non-practising Orthodox (not welcomed in the Orthodox Church as Roma) and the Pentecostal Church in their area had not yet been started by Marija and Josip. It was the couple's first time in a Protestant Church so a number of other Roma from the village came to witness the baptism. This mixing of Croatians and Roma was something extremely unusual; in fact, this church had never had a group of Roma in attendance before. I wrote, 'What would their [Roma attendees] experience be? How would they feel, not only being in a Protestant church service for the first time, but one filled with Croatians and not Roma? How would they make sense and interpret the new rituals and language to which they would be exposed? (Field notes, March 2012).

when they got out of Egypt. You want back to the slavery from which we escaped…'.[42] But as she grew more upset, he said, 'Don't worry, by the end of the day, God will take care of it…'. Half an hour later, the postman came and told them that someone had sent money to them through the post office. A Christian woman whom they had met once at a Christian camp and who lived in a different part of Croatia had felt for a week that God was telling her to send money to them. Finally, she sent 2000 kuna (270 Euro) to their account.[43] Because of the immediacy of this financial help, in conjunction to Marija's prayer and Josip's faith, they interpreted this as a sign to continue their work. A final confirmation of their decision came a short while later, arising from their interpretation of a man's prophecy to them when they were at a Christian conference. He told them that God knew 'every day when we were hungry, when we had nothing and were in great need, that God knew that and he allowed it, but now He promises that we will never go hungry again and we will have enough and even more than we need'. Josip relates that since that time, they have never had to worry about food again.[44]

Marija and Josip's internal and external struggles can be juxtaposed with my own observations when I first began visiting the settlements with them in June 2011 (See Chapter One and Four). I noted that Marija and Josip had been 'sent out' by the Croatian Pentecostal Church, and as I had not yet encountered any negative attitudes or paternalism toward the Roma from fellow Christians, I assumed they had been mentored and trained for this task.[45] I observed at the time that they seemed to have confidence in their

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[42] This was a reference to returning to their former way of life before they converted, just as the Israelites wanted to return to Egypt and their slavery after God had liberated them.

[43] Such financial miracles appear in other literature of Roma Pentecostals. See, for example, Thurfjell's (2013) study of Kaale Roma Pentecostals of Sweden.

[44] This conflict between familial responsibilities and Christian calling into ministry has been written about in terms of missionary children (van Reken et al. 2017) (otherwise known as third culture kids or TCKs) and pastors' kids (PK), both by PKs and TCKs themselves and within qualitative research (Pichaske 2017). These first-person accounts and the research illustrate the pressures and burdens on a family, as well as the benefits and advantages of being the child of a missionary.

[45] For example, some months later, I was told by one Croatian Christian leader that it was a good thing I was going with them because 'Gypsies' shouldn't be leading by themselves. It was not meant maliciously but reflects the ingrained lens by which people in society view the Roma (Field notes, January 2013).

approach. This demonstrates both the limitations of participant-observation, and the dynamic nature of data interpretation, as I moved from an outsider vantage point to more of an insider over the years, hearing the stories of the past with the knowledge of the present (Andrews 2013:208).

For example, in December of 2011, we were visiting the house of Ivan and Katarina, the woman who had been healed from her illness. In the evangelical tradition, Christian discipleship and growth involves reading one's Bible, praying, and participating in the church community. However, this couple (Ivan and Katarina) are functionally illiterate, limiting their ability to participate in such expectations. Translating the Bible to practical reality for their context was something that came naturally for Josip and Marija.[46] Josip would read a few verses from the Bible every week, explaining the story over and over. When the man said it was hard to understand and remember, Josip would argue that the Bible is not a book of philosophy, and that Jesus said, 'Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 18:3). Josip also began to teach and encourage this couple how to pray, telling them that they do not need elaborate words but just 'speaking honestly from your heart' (Field notes, October 2011).

Marija expressed the humorous absurdity of our unlikely team in those early days—an American woman who could not yet speak Croatian and a Roma couple who felt like they did not know what they were doing (Conversation 2018).[47] As mentioned in Chapter Four, Tijana, a Croatian woman, and her Dutch boyfriend, Gustav also began visiting

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[46] For example, when we were studying a passage from Luke 6 regarding loving one's enemies, and doing good to those who hate you, a man immediately demanded to know what that meant for his reaction to the violent attack his neighbour across the street had recently committed upon him. Tijana, the Croatian missionary, and I found it hard to experientially relate to that situation and thus apply the Biblical passage wisely (Field notes, June 2012).

[47] In fact, we all made cultural mistakes that had consequences throughout the years. For example, in early 2012, I recorded in my field notes that Tijana made the mistake of talking to a man without his wife present, although it was just right outside the house. The wife began making accusations against Tijana, which spread gossip rapidly, and it took Josip and Marija a few weeks to smooth things over.

homes to study the Bible with people and pray for them. Gustav was a self-appointed missionary who was interested in serving among the Roma and had formerly volunteered in Roma communities in Romania. He had limited theological training, although he was attending classes at a local theological seminary in Croatia where he now lived. He came from a strict Dutch Reformed background, a Calvinist theology which was very different to the experiential and Spirit-driven theological perspectives of Pentecostalism. Tijana, who had a theological undergraduate degree from an evangelical seminary, initially followed him in this missionary service because of their relationship, and she acted as his translator as he could not speak Croatian. However, she was quickly drawn into the ministry herself, as her relationships with the Roma in the settlements challenged and eventually overcame the anti-Roma prejudices that she had grown up with in Croatian culture.[48] This apparently mismatched group would later become the future leadership team of the now current church.

After two years of house visits, Marija and Josip's process of reaching a decision to open a Roma church demonstrates how much their identity and confidence had grown. In 2012, Josip decided that God needed to speak to them if he wanted them to continue their work, and 'God spoke to us really strongly. And this is my first experience that God really spoke to me'. Both Marija and Josip 'felt joyful' at the idea of opening a church and doing it without anyone else acting as a financial or leader intermediary. Several other events transpired that Marija and Josip interpreted as further confirmation from God regarding opening the church. First, Tijana gave them a book with an inscription of a verse from the Bible stating that if one was faithful to keep to God's plan, no one could destroy it. Second, they quickly found a building to rent, and prayed that it would only be 500 kuna (65 Euro) a month, since that was all they could spare from their social welfare assistance.

[48] Tijana related that when she first visited a Roma home, she felt very uncomfortable, thinking they might steal from her (Field notes, March 2012).

When the landlord returned their call of interest, he said the building was available for 500 kuna, without any prompting from them. Just a few weeks later, in November 2012, the church opened for the first service, which I attended and took part in.[49]

5.5 The Church: 2012–2018

5.5.1 Evolving Leadership in the Midst of Forming the Church

The early days of the church reflected a mixture of joy, unpredictability and uncertainty. As the church was becoming established, we gradually added more activities. Children's programmes were a key component, and in the early days we held these in the villages among the community. We also incorporated women's meetings, and for a time a programme for youth that utilized learning outdoor survival skills as a way of encouraging Christian faith. I was not living in the Roma communities, but frequently undertook home visits. Therefore, I knew all the people coming to the church and took an active part in helping prepare for the service; sometimes playing music for the worship and sometimes preaching. I comment in my fieldwork diary:

> It is the fifth Sunday of church. When I walk into the little church, crowded with smiling faces, I feel a sense of joy and peace at this, at what I believe is God's work in [Community C]. As I walk around and shake hands with everyone, I really have no idea what they are thinking of me, of the church, of life. And yet, their warm, smiling faces say they are pleased to see me and glad to be there. I love it when certain women grab me and kiss both of my cheeks ... then I really feel accepted (December 2012).

Despite the church being opened, house visits continued to be a very important part of maintaining and deepening the Christian community, as without our occasional presence in their houses, some congregants would eventually lose connection to us and the church. In June 2014, for example, I list some of the issues that emerged after a day of visiting people: one man had stopped coming to church because he felt that another person had been disrespectful in front of international guests at the church; another woman was

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[49] The first service was a big celebration, and more than 100 people participated to mark the occasion, including Roma pastors from Serbia and local Croatian pastors. The service concluded with a feast of two roast pigs (Field notes, November 2012).

concerned she was under ‘some kind of curse’ because she was unable to pray aloud in church; others described their stress at trying to find a job and have enough money for survival; others spoke about their sickness and visits to the hospital; and one young woman secured a temporary job as a classroom helper. I write in my field notes, ‘They cannot be reduced to merely a short conversion story. We cannot merely focus on getting people to come to church or being baptized. Every element of their stories is important to God’ (June 2014).

However, there were also times of chaos, particularly because all of us were constantly confronted with situations in which we did not know what we should do. Part of this may have been due to the leadership team structure which was, as mentioned earlier, egalitarian, multicultural, and coming from a variety of theological perspectives: Calvinist, evangelical,[50] and Pentecostal. This shared leadership structure, although theologically coherent with Pentecostalism, was unusual in terms of Pentecostal praxis, which often emphasizes a charismatic leader (Anderson 2004:197) and both Croatian Pentecostalism and other studies of Roma Pentecostalism highlight the authority of the single male leader.[51]

In fact, Josip did not preach in those early days, relying instead on Gustav, which perhaps in some way undercut a potential spiritual authority emerging from charisma, and knowledge in preaching, that other Roma pastors depended on in different contexts (Slavkova 2003). I commented in my notes that I was worried Josip was elevating the

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[50] Evangelicalism implies a commitment to the ‘gospel’ or ‘good news’ that salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ; therefore, this a movement that transcends Christian denominations. Some Christians may simply call themselves ‘evangelicals’ as opposed to a specific denomination. Bebbington’s (1989:1–10) classic definition of Evangelicalism highlights the authority of Scripture, God’s sovereignty, human depravity, salvation through Jesus Christ alone, proclaiming the gospel to others, and the hope of the return of Christ to fulfil his kingdom.

[51] See for example, Gay y Blasco’s study on the Gitanos in Spain where she notes the authority ministers exercise over their congregations in making decisions linked to their ‘respectability’, although their authority also has a reflexive relationship with congregant acquiescence (1999:166). Slavkova (2003) also reflects on Roma pastors in Bulgaria, their strong authority both inside the church service and outside in the community’s daily lives. Further, Podolinská (2017) discusses the pastor’s role in reshaping Roma identity, and Ries’s (2007) observations that a pastor must be charismatic, eloquent, and confident.

status of Gustav, simply because he was white, educated, and from Western Europe (2012). When Josip finally did preach in early 2013, I wrote in my field notes:

> Yesterday was a strange service. When Josip saw that Gustav had indeed come, he looked chagrined and nervous. He asked me if I wanted to share something, and I told him I didn't have anything. When he actually got up to preach, he was so nervous sweat was glistening on his face ... not just a little bit of sweat but a thick layer of sweat that he kept wiping off. At one point, he had written down the wrong scripture and this totally threw him off, glancing at me and sheepishly smiling, apologizing to the congregation. And yet, when he began to talk about 'We are Roma people and Jesus knows us and everything in our hearts', I felt that it was so much more powerful coming from him ... that he could truly speak into their world experience ... their daily experience.

This shared leadership provided an interesting dilemma: I had more theological and group formation training than anyone else on the team, but I constantly felt inadequate in terms of language and culture, and was reluctant to offer too many ideas for fear of inhibiting or dominating Marija and Josip's process of becoming leaders.[52] At one point I wrote in my field notes that I felt I should be 'demoted to an usher' from my position as an elder, because I constantly felt that I did not know what I was doing or how to interpret what was happening.

Marija and Josip were insiders with emphatic understanding of the people's lives and challenges (although they did not speak the same first language), but without formal training, tools, or experience of how to 'plant' a church. Therefore, they also felt inadequate to the task of developing the Christian community, but for different reasons from my own. Combined with our theological differences, this contributed to many situations involving unexpected consequences, both positive and negative.[53] For example, in April of 2013, I wrote in my field notes about a leadership conflict that arose. A woman had asked us for some help moving things out of her house which we provided; later we

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[52] This reflects my own missiological and theological training, in view of Christian mission history and its episodes of cultural imperialism in which Christianization happened but not necessarily conversion (Shenk 2001). See, for example, analyses of Christian mission in Africa (Hanciles 2008; Bediako 2009; Anderson 2001), and discussions on global Christianity and theologies of Christianity (Shenk 2001; Robert 2009).

[53] In April of 2013, I noted how people had begun praying more comfortably. In the question and answer period after church, one man, recently out of jail, challenged another woman to forgive her husband who had abused her terribly. She said she was unable to and listed all of his wrongs, so everyone prayed for her to be free from hatred.

discovered it was because she was divorcing her husband, so the entire village thought that the church endorsed divorce. I wrote:

> The team's cultural and philosophical differences are beginning to more sharply define these discussions. There are differences in how we perceive the function of the church—either for spiritual needs only (so that we could avoid jealousies and fights) or to be more holistic in nature—gender roles (the men on the team should have the final word or we are all equal), how conflict is handled, cultural mistakes, and many other things.

5.5.2 Pentecostalism Transmitting into Context

I also observed that we struggled to effectively communicate and contextualize the Christian message so that the form, content, and praxis of the people's faith would be understandable to them within their own cultural framework, as related in Chapter Two (Pocock et al. 2005:323).[54] For example, my first sermon I preached in the church dealt with the 'bleeding woman' of Matthew 9:18–22, and I had already prepared the sermon before it struck me that this would be a sensitive topic to preach about in mixed company in the cultural context of Roma society.[55] I had been so focused on the theological message that I neglected the cultural context. Afterward, it was clear in the question and answer period that they did not understand the theological message I was hoping to convey. They interpreted that the blood itself must have been bad and that was why she was afraid to approach Jesus. Eventually some people declared it was shameful that we were talking about this at all in front of men and children, to which Josip asked, 'Who here is better than Jesus? If Jesus wasn't ashamed to talk about this, then neither should we be! I am a Roma man too, I know the shame of it, but the Bible is talking about it, so this is something in our culture that we can change' (Field notes, February 2013).

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[54] Pocock et al. (2005:323–25) argues that good contextualization is rooted in the Bible, approaches culture in an interdisciplinary manner (using anthropology, sociology, linguistics, psychology), dynamic, holistic, and involves both the cultural insiders and outsiders in a two-way process.

[55] Generally, speaking openly about menstruation, birth, sex or pregnancy can be shameful or defiling (Matras 2015:88). In my fieldwork in site Community B, I interviewed a man who wanted to tell me something critical to his conversion, when he went to hear a foreign Christian woman give her testimony. He said to me, 'But I won't say something about the woman, because it is a bit rude.' When I told him to not worry about offending me, he told me, 'Oh, her brother raped her, when they were little. Are you okay if we would speak about that?' (Boris & Viki, interview 2017).

As another example, we discovered that one of the baptized believers had taken her children through an undefined Islamic religious ritual since her husband was a Muslim, although non-practising.[56] The leaders did not have a clear process, or even a shared understanding by which to determine if this was inherently opposed to the Christian gospel, or merely a cultural ritual without religious signification. I wrote in my field notes, 'I reflected on this incident in light of our leadership team's struggle to find a cultural key to communicate in ways the people can truly understand. I have begun to observe that the people often give us answers they think we want to hear—not out of an attempt to deceive or manipulate, but because they want to get it right' (October 2013).[57]

5.5.3 Negotiating New Christian Identity as Individuals and in Community

This struggle of contextualizing and communication is part and parcel of the formation of Christian belonging, both in terms of individual identity (what does it mean to have a Christian identity?) and group belonging (what does it mean to belong to a Christian community?). Christian formation and belonging are both an individual and social process (Luhrmann 2012); and in fact, must be 'trained and elaborated (Luhrmann 2005). Although Luhrmann's 2012 study quite powerfully demonstrates this dynamic relationship between the social and individual in fostering the ability to hear and respond to God, there is a difference in cosmologies between American evangelicalism and the more holistic view of other societies, where 'all existing things are seen as a present material-spiritual or holistic unity…' (Anderson 2004:196). Studies demonstrate that

[56] This woman had converted after she claimed Jesus had appeared to her in a dream and said, 'I don't know your name, but I know your prayers are sincere and therefore I will answer them. You decided to go this way [towards Jesus] so you cannot anymore serve other gods, you can only serve me.' The next morning, her estranged daughter called her, and as one of her prayers was concerning reconciliation with her daughter, she interpreted this dream as a true message from God (Field notes, October 2013).

[57] Kraft (1992), a missiologist, refers to this penetration of cultural layers with the Christian message, beyond behaviours and ideas to what he refers to as an 'allegiance encounter' which deals with assumptions of reality and core values.

there is a basic, non-dual acceptance of the spiritual realm and God in many Roma groups (Fosztó 2009:123; Gog 2009:102; Roman 2017).

In 2014, I wrote in my field notes of the developing community:

> But on Sunday, I just had such a sense of feeling at home with the people. Our church is quirky and problematic, and most people probably actually have no idea what it means to follow Jesus, but a community is developing. Sitting on the couch and drinking coffee afterwards, catching snippets of conversation, rubbing a grandmother's back and hearing about her pain and health as she waits for an operation long overdue, seeing everyone scurrying around to their various jobs of cleaning, serving coffee, etc ... it gave me such a warm feeling. Will God transform these people and this community?

In the early days, however, any Christian visitor would have noted the lack of community cohesion or adoption of Christian ritual. During the service, people would frequently get up and go outside to chat or smoke. After the service, we would gather for question and answer time, with questions veering wildly off the sermon. However, these questions would help us to understand what congregants were hearing in the service and better understand their cultural lens.[58] At one point, a man had a seizure of some sort in the middle of the service, and after Josip prayed 'in tongues' loudly over him, two individuals ran out frightened and never returned (Field notes, January 2013).[59] Another time, there was a verbal fight between two men over something that had happened earlier in the village, which almost digressed into a physical fight, in the middle of the service, resulting in chaos and everyone feeling upset (Field notes, January 2014).[60]

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[58] For example, in 2012, I wrote, 'Last night, in the question time, there were some good questions and then some abstract questions regarding the Trinity and other things. Is it a sin to celebrate Christmas January 7, the Orthodox day? Should we or should we not celebrate Christmas? Is it a sin to have a Christmas tree? What does a Christmas tree mean?' Some of these questions came from the heavy influence of Jehovah Witnesses in the community, since they teach it is a sin to celebrate holidays.

[59] Marija and Josip also went to speak with one of the men who had run out of the church in fear. He wore an amulet around his neck, given to him by someone who practises magic, and they thought he had become afraid because of this amulet. He told them that after the incident, he had a dream that a Serbian Orthodox priest came and tore the amulet off his neck. The next day after the dream, the amulet broke off his neck on its own. Although he believed this had deep significance, he did not return to our church (Field notes, January 2013).

[60] I wrote, 'Later, we debriefed the incident for about 3 hours at Tijana's house, trying to decide what we should do next time. Yesterday, Marija and Josip went to go visit both houses, but I didn't quite understand what happened. For me the incident wasn't as upsetting as it was for everyone else. I think it will blow over, from the looks of how other things have blown over. But Tijana was so upset she couldn't sleep that night' (Field notes, January 2014).

In fact, the leadership was attempting to form a Christian community that coincided with our own conceptions and experiences with other churches, yet we were finding out the difficulty of rooting community formation in models emerging from other cultures and/or Christian traditions. For example, Josip expressed regret with how he handled the situation involving the man with the seizure. He said his Croatian Pentecostal mentors had told him it was demon possession, but now he disagreed, and realised that how he prayed for the man just made everything worse, because of how others had reacted. Eventually, our church helped the man pay for a private doctor to investigate the seizures.

Another example of operating the church according to the leadership's values is the openness to non-Roma, reflective of Josip's theology and ecclesiology of a 'church for all peoples'.[61] As discussed earlier, this is something also emphasized in some other (but not all) Roma contexts (Roman 2016; Ries 2007; Podolinská 2017). Over time, guests began to visit the church from many different places—from French Roma missionaries from Life and Light to an Egyptian man working in an NGO during the 2015 refugee crisis, to a mission team from South Korea, and a team of Chinese Christians from England, participating in a short-term project for us. Also, several Croatian families began attending the church, and a few Croatians from the Croatian Pentecostal church in the nearby city would occasionally visit and considered themselves 'friends' of the church. This safe place for interethnic relationships transcending cultural norms, a point constantly mentioned by Josip in his sermons, reinforced the idea of equality based on common identity as God's children.[62] Interestingly, this concept took longer to root in the practicalities of intra-ethnic, as opposed to inter-ethnic, relationships, resulting in mistrust and even hostility.

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[61] To the nearby Croatian Pentecostal church, who had assisted in the initial beginnings, it was always just known as 'the Roma church'.

[62] Within the church, people constantly referred to each other as brothers and sisters, and warmly welcomed any guests attending the church.

For example, there was a consistent problem of people accusing others of acting 'holy' in church but a different way in the community. This resulted in some congregants deciding not to come to church because of 'those hypocrites'. At one point, there was a near coup because a man we had picked early on for a possible 'leader' decided he was going to start his own church (Field notes, May 2013).[63] At another time, a group of people called the church leadership for a meeting, and they presented us with a list of things that they thought should change, because there wasn't enough 'order' in the church. For example, they wanted people greeting at the door and older congregants sitting up front while children would sit in the back. They also complained that the kids were getting into fights after they were released from their children's meeting. This resulted in a long and heated conversation, where tempers flared after one member was accused of cursing in the church after which he passionately defended his honour. The argument ended when Josip finally told them that they had just become Christians and were not ready to lead the church yet. I wrote:

> I was exhausted before long ... the passion, the shouting, the trying to listen to translation and the Croatian at the same time. It was amazing to be a part of such an experience. I think it is good they want such ownership in the church, but bad that they want to kick people out who are not acting 'properly' when they themselves just became believers. (February 2013)

This kind of Christian superiority is not unique to this community; from a theological perspective, human pride and self-righteous judgement is part and parcel of one's sinful nature. Jesus rebuked this attitude in parables and teachings as did the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 4 when he confronts the church's boasting and reminds them that all their spiritual benefits are gifts.[64] In terms of Roma Pentecostalism, other studies indicate this

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[63] In response to this, Josip commented: 'I know how my culture works … One person can be like a fly that constantly disrupts and causes big trouble over very small issues' (Field notes, May 2013). Later, this man repented in church (September 2013), but he continued to be in and out of the church when he was angry or frustrated with people.

[64] See, for example, Jesus' parable in Luke 18:9–14 about a Pharisee and a tax collector in which the Pharisee is puffed up with spiritual pride recounting all his righteous acts and the tax collector can only ask for God's mercy. Jesus concluded by saying it was the tax collector who went home justified. Also, Jesus' defence of an adulterous woman whom the religious leaders wanted to stone was, 'Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her' (John 8:1–11).

may also involve intra-group differentiations based on negative social associations with the word ‘gypsy’ (uncultured, dirty, loud, prone to thieving) and a desire to socially distance oneself from this concept (Podolinská 2017:150; Ries 2007). This will be further explored in Chapter Six.

In fact, a core community of developing Christians did not really begin to form in our church until after a time of perceived crisis. In the latter part of 2015, the leadership team had a meeting in which we each admitted our disappointments and discouragements (Field notes, September 2015).[65] Church attendance seemed to be declining due to migration (to Western Europe and Canada), fighting between families, or just lack of interest. We decided to only hold Sunday services and take a pause from all other activities, taking time to pray for the church.[66]

5.5.4 Incarnational Community Orientating to Pentecostal Theology and Praxis

This attention to prayer motivated us to begin a smaller prayer group in April 2016. The centre of Pentecostal spirituality is prayer, based in the theological importance of the Holy Spirit who demonstrates that ‘God is with us’ (Allen 2004:196), and earlier in this project I noted Luhrmann’s (2013) findings that the ability to ‘absorb’ experiences with God in a way that is transformative is directly related to prayer. This group eventually became the ‘glue’ of our church, as I wrote in my field notes in January 2017. Similar to Roman’s (2017:161) findings, ‘intimate spheres of small group meetings’ became key in both forming a Christian community and forming Christian identity and faith (See also Fosztó 2009 in regard to ‘groups for growth’ among Romani Pentecostals in Transylvania). This also began to influence our Sunday service, as more people began to participate through

[65] At this point, Gustav had left Croatia and was no longer a part of the leadership.

[66] Shortly after this, the Syrian/Middle East refugee crisis came to Croatia (2015), and most of the leadership became very active in terms of volunteering in refugee camps and helping other NGOs. This turned out to be a good time to take a break from church activities during this crisis.

praying out loud, reading Psalms, telling testimonies, and beginning to take ownership of the church building by cleaning, lighting the fire, and serving coffee.

Initially, around ten to fifteen people began coming to the prayer group, all of whom were consistent members of the church. This became a place of learning, interpreting, and shaping both the internal experience with God and the social process of the group, (Roman 2017:158; Luhrmann 2005), eventually becoming a training ground for people to lead the group themselves in 2020. Most who came were initially unable to pray out loud, one person describing that the prayer 'got stuck somewhere' in her throat (Field notes, April 2016). However, since the group was very participatory, gradually people began learning how to pray for more than just their immediate needs of health and family; they began to pray for others, for the refugees, for other churches, their neighbours, and those in the circle with them.[67] The prayer time became a place of theology being acted out (Anderson 2004); an unexpected place of storytelling and healing, as someone might spontaneously share a story of something terrible from their past, and people would listen and then pray for them.

However, the group still reflected the tension discussed earlier: learning the Christian vocabulary, rituals, and behaviour in a way that deeply resonated with them. This is evident in a disagreement Josip and I had, pertaining to the way a few people were praying in a narrative style. I wrote:

> When it first began happening, I'll admit I was confused. A grandmother began talking about her life and then declaring her belief that Jesus was stronger than those people who were putting curses on her. I opened my eyes because I wasn't sure if she was talking and praying, so she continued her narrative while looking animatedly at me. So, I began nodding and 'hmmming' along with her as if I was in conversation, only to be startled when she uttered an emphatic AMEN. 'Amen', everyone else repeated, their eyes still closed … But last week, as a woman's prayer narrated a past suicide attempt and other events before she met God, I began to realise there was something very "Psalmesque" about this style of praying. To remember past life events and to recognize where God enters the stories as a reorientation toward the future—isn't that exactly what many of the Psalmists do? (Field notes, June 2016)

[67] One lady prayed, 'Thank you God, for untying our lips' (Field notes, June 2016).

In fact, I saw narrative praying as a way of reorienting one's story to the Christian story. Josip, on the other hand, was frustrated by these conversational prayers, believing that they were more about the people wanting to gossip, than actually commune with the Divine.

By 2018, it became obvious that most of those who were part of the group were also the people who were changing the most in terms of understanding the meaning of their faith and how it affected their daily lives. For example, one woman told of her struggles in relating to her co-workers picking apples, whose conversations were filled with cursing, gossip, and negative stories. It became a topic in the group to understand how being a disciple of Jesus behaves in such a situation (Field notes, September 2018). Although not everyone in the group demonstrates growth in theological understanding and changed behaviour,[68] no one who comes to church but does not participate in the group demonstrates this kind of growth. In 2020, the restrictions placed on the church as a result of COVID-19 resulted in new ways of relating. An online Messenger group was started for the people with access to WI-FI, and individuals began taking more leadership by encouraging people to post verses from Scripture and trust God. Josip began preaching on Facebook Live, something he was very nervous to do because although he was now completely confident in preaching to his own people, this required a greater exposure to the outside world. I observed that this crisis was challenging our church and the leadership—but that the people were able to rise up into the new situation, exhibiting resilient faith and a new confidence.

[68] For example, Ana would never miss prayer group or anything else taking place at the church. However, she often brings up the same issue—accusing her (non-present) neighbour of putting curses on her house and in turn has many times cursed the neighbour. Church leaders have confronted her numerous times about this issue, as cursing someone is not in line with Christian praxis, nor is believing a curse is stronger than Jesus' protection, but it is a reoccurring theme.

5.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on Marija and Josip's narratives within the metanarratives of poverty, violence, and neglect. Their negotiated identities within these metanarratives included elements of being unloved and aggressiveness. Literature on trauma and resilience was introduced as a lens by which to help interpret and analyse their narratives. Trauma can be viewed as a 'rupture', which may have biological, spiritual, emotional, and psychological consequences. Christian spirituality can play a role in resilience and healing, but it must be deeply integrated in order to facilitate healing and allow reinterpretation of life narratives.

Through the 'rupture' of Christian conversion, including experiencing God's love and perspective, Marija and Josip were able to begin reshaping their narrative framework in order to bring new standpoints to their suffering; and yet they were still bound by the internalization of how the majority society conceptualized Roma identity. After seeing other Roma Christians, their horizons were expanded (Gadamer 1989), so that they were able to imagine the full implications of a Christian identity and conceptualize something beyond a group Roma identity (Brubaker 2004; Podolinská 2017). Their constant experiences of God as intimately involved with their family, finances, and personal situation reinforced their reliance on God's love and empowered their move toward leadership, thus deeply integrating Pentecostal theology into their interpretative frameworks.

As leaders, Marija and Josip strove to help the people in Community C know how to live out Pentecostal theology in their daily lives; however, as demonstrated by the chaos of the church's early days, this was not easily accomplished. Their approach to this effort is related to how Marija and Josip interpret the praxis of Christian identity and its connection to social change. For some pastors, this requires that they affirm *gadjo* stereotypes of who Roma are before conversion (Ries 2007; Carrizo-Reimann 2011) in

order to contrast the change brought about by conversion into God’s family. However, unlike Ries’s (2007) study in Transylvania in which Roma pastors did not emphasize the Roma as society’s victims, Josip held these in tension: assuming people’s sinfulness and need for repentance and at the same time being aware of the extreme difficulty of being a Roma in Croatian society. This tension appeared in Josip’s sermons, as he emphasized congregants’ Christian identity, but also, he put his message into the framework of particular issues, and questions of their present context, sometimes speaking only to the Roma in the congregation that ‘we know that we do this …’. This dynamic also manifested in Marija and Josip’s conceptions of social change in which the Roma would be able to live ‘normal lives’ with education, good jobs, and living integrated with Croatians instead of in their separate communities.

The difficulties of negotiating Christian identity in an unequal society manifests in the trajectory of Josip’s leadership, as he moved from low self-esteem to becoming a confident leader and continued to push beyond his comfort level as exhibited when he began preaching online in response to a worldwide crisis. Josip does not possess the strong charismatic and powerful role of a single leader compared to other studies of Roma Pentecostalism; however, his egalitarian approach also allows a more dynamic process of both individual and church growth.

The dynamic nature of Pentecostalism allowed this egalitarian and multi-cultural leadership, which facilitated a localized expression of Pentecostalism. This was most seen in development of a small prayer group through things such as spontaneous sharing, narrative prayer, and discussion regarding theology and daily life. Connecting the macro context and themes, personal narratives, and church history within this chapter thus sets up the framework for the narrative analysis in Chapter Six, analysing the difference of post-traumatic growth in renewed identity and the development of the leadership–follower relationship, which occurred between Marija and Josip and their congregants.

CHAPTER SIX: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS IN COMMUNITY C

6.1 Introduction

As outlined in Chapter Four, Spector-Mersel's (2011) narrative analysis uses 'mechanisms of selection' (inclusion, sharpening, flattening, omitting, silencing, meaning attribution) to discern the narrator's claimed identity and involves four components: plot events, story form, immediate context, and macro context. I analysed all ten interviews using this methodology (See Appendix 4); however, I chose two women (Iva and Hana) from fieldwork site of Community C as exemplars to demonstrate how the analysis elicited self-asserted identity. In section 6.2.3, I broaden the discussion to include Ana, Mia, and Helena (Figure 6.1) to discuss a shared interpretative framework that emerged, whereby the women ascribe meaning to their narratives. In section 6.3, I include analysed information from all the interviews as I begin to interact with the metanarratives that emerged (Gubrium & Holstein 2000) within the larger empirical terrain of church life and daily life. I then discuss which relevant macro socio-cultural narratives as well as pertinent theological categories have emerged from the thick data gathered.

6.2 Narrative Analysis in the Fieldwork Site of Community C

6.2.1 Gendered Stigmatization

In Community C, seven of the ten interviews took place with women—see Figure 4.1. The church attendance has fluctuated over the years due to migration and other reasons that were highlighted in Chapter Five. As of 2017, it consisted of 10–15 children, 13 men and 29 women. Although all interviewees have converted to Pentecostalism within the last four years, in general, women are the steadier members of the church, as many of the

men who began either migrated away or dropped out.[1] The women all offered extensive and rich narratives, whilst the men were more reluctant. One of the more promising male interlocuters refused the interview, whilst others have some mental health issues, which would make it difficult to conduct an interview. After my first couple of interviews with women, I realised that their stories were largely untold.[2] With this focus on the women, I avoided the gender dynamic difficulty, which could be occasioned by interviewing men who may be reluctant to be as open to a woman, or being alone with a man.[3] When I tried to conduct one interview with a man in the church in the context of his family, he was unable to construct the narrative the way he wanted, constantly interrupted by his family members (Interview 2016). [4]

Traditionally, research into Roma women has fallen into two traps: 'ethnocentrism' or 'primitivism'—the predisposition to view Roma culture as less advanced and with a tendency to crime; and the relativist—viewing women as exotic and seeing them through an essentialist lens (Oprea 2005; Aiello 2016:48). Research on Roma women in Europe has produced a small, but growing body of work, particularly in relation to Romani feminism and the women's rights movement.[5] However, in-depth studies of Roma women remain thin in Southeast Europe.[6] As Romani scholar Kóczé, notes, 'troubling

[1]This is nothing new in global Pentecostalism—the majority of membership is made up of women. Joel Robbins (2004:132) article reports that around 75% of Pentecostals are women. See, for example, studies in African Pentecostalism: Ramodibe (1996) 'Women and Men Building Together the Church in Africa.'; Kalu (2008) *African Pentecostalism: An Introduction.*
[2] This point reflects the goal of feminist research to 'capture women's lived experiences in a respectful manner that legitimates women's voices as sources of knowledge' (Campbell & Wasco 2000:783).
[3] The strictness of gender and sexual norms in Roma communities vary: see Gay Y Blasco (1999) for examples of Spain, and Gelbert (2002), in Central Europe.
[4] See Bhopal (2010:190, 191) and Biţu & Vincze (2012).
[5] See, for example: Biţu & Vincze 2012; Aiello 2016; Oprea 2005; Schultz 2012; Kóczé 2011. Romani feminism is unique in that it seeks to broaden women's choice and authority while still taking into consideration Roma norms in a particular context and valuing cultural norms (Aiello 2016:51).
[6] The European Roma Right Centre's (ERRC) 2005 shadow report states: 'Quality statistical data on Romani women's access to education, employment, health and participation in political and public life is for the most part lacking in Croatia. The Croatian government has to date failed to make public adequate statistical data on the human rights situation of Roma in Croatia, and in particular on the situation of Romani women' (2). The ERRC also concludes that some of the Croatian analysis is biased and racist, for example citing the lack of school attendance by Romani children is because of 'insufficient parental concern'. The ERRC report concludes that the Croatian government is both 'ignorant of the issues facing the Romani

trends' can be recognized in terms of Romani women's lack of schooling, joblessness, and experiences of violence: 'Romani women are exposed to multi-layered inequalities, which are disempowering and silencing' (2009:23).[7]

To illustrate this further, a 2005 study conducted on the experiences of twenty Roma women in ten different Croatian communities concluded that Romani women in Croatia are caught 'at the intersection of traditional culture and modernity and are triply stigmatized: they are poor, they are women, and they are Roma' (Šikić-Mićanović 2005:437f; see also Kóczé 2009; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2013).[8] The study shows the average age of marriage was around 16. Nine women had received no schooling, and seven attended first through fourth grades, while only two finished high school (Šikić-Mićanović 2005:439). Poor housing conditions contribute to the stress of living—lack of utilities, bathrooms, and clean water (Šikić-Mićanović 2005:440-44). Interestingly, more women had hypertension than men, and 57 percent of women complained of frequent headaches, anxiety or insomnia, and stomach pain (715). In addition, the 2005 study notes that women express feelings of helplessness because of their illiteracy. I have experienced this helplessness and disempowerment with them when I have gone with women to the hospital (which happens frequently because of all the health problems they experience), observing how the doctors and nurses hand them sheets of papers with their diagnosis and medical prescriptions—all of which they are unable to read, but which are kept in neatly stacked folders in their homes. Chapter Five discussed the prevalence of domestic violence in marginalized communities; surprisingly, Šikić-Mićanović's study notes only one case of domestic violence, which is at odds with my

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minority and unquestioned and deeply-rooted racist presuppositions about Roma inform policy in Croatia' (3).

[7] The 2011 FRA (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights) survey found that in education, employment, housing and health, the Roma women's situation is worse than that of men (2013).

[8] However, one must be careful to not reduce and essentialize this experience as if oppression as a Roma, a woman, and a poor person, can be, as Yuval-Davis (2006:195) notes, derived from the same ontological basis.

own research. The lack of reporting of abuse[9] could be as a result of men being present in the interview[10] or perhaps due to lack of privacy, as well possibly as being related to a lack of trust in 'outside' researchers.[11]

As I begin to analyse the lives of two women, Hana and Iva (pseudonyms), it will become evident how narrative inquiry displaces the concepts of essentialism. Studying their stories will demonstrate how the four analytic categories reveal the complexity of lived experience. In the interplay of the data through the categories, I will propose each person's 'end point' and an interpretative framework.

6.2.2 Immediate Context

Conducting repeat interviews with some of the research subjects illustrates the impact of immediate context on narrative. For example, interviews conducted with Hana in December 2015 and March 2016 illustrate a marked difference in Hana's attitudes towards herself and her life, leading to different conclusions and emphases, even while revisiting some of the same life events. In the first interview in December 2015, she seemed hopeless, angry, and hurt. She recently had shoulder surgery and was extremely frustrated with her family, articulating that she had done so much for her daughters and the loyalty and care had not been returned (since none of her family visited her in the hospital). I strongly suspected she was on anxiety medication during the interview because of the slightly thickened speech and her glazed eyes, which had been characteristic of other times she had taken the medicine. A constant theme that runs through the first interview

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[9] In a 2011 study undertaken in Bosnia-Herzegovina conducted by two Roma women found that 43% of the 609 women interviewed experienced domestic violence, and 76% knew someone who had (UN Women 2011).

[10] Lack of trust as a barrier to research in Roma communities has appeared in certain studies. For example, health research: Jarcuska et al. 2013; Bobakova et al 2015; or education research: Bhopal 2010:189.

[11] One Roma pastor from Romania explained the 'wall' that many Roma place between themselves and non-Roma because of the constant rejection and stigmatization. It is possible to get over that wall and have a real relationship, but it takes time and trust for this to happen (conversation with Petro noted in field notes 2016). See also comparative studies of women of colour in other contexts and why they may be unwilling or unable to take advantage of services to assist them (Rasche 1988).

is that ‘I don’t have nerves anymore … I don’t have strength anymore’ (Hana, interview #1, 2015). She had ‘silenced’ any negative assessment of her own behaviour or actions, thus the emphasis was on her being a ‘strong and wronged’ victim of others’ treatment of her (Hana, interview #1, 2015).

The second interview, in March 2016, was significantly different—she did not appear to be on the medication, she was laughing, telling humorous stories, poking fun at herself, and the sparkle was back in her eyes. I noted in my field notes, ‘So I realised that Hana’s first life story interview was influenced by the drugs she had taken and the place of discouragement, hurt, and frustration she was in. In between the two interviews, she had been in Bizovac [mineral springs used for doctor-sanctioned rehabilitation] for ten days and it seemed like she had a good time there recuperating from her surgery. Narrated life story is influenced by dialogue and context, but also present emotional state’ (March 2016). In Bizovac, Hana claimed that she had had a vision of Jesus and was telling others around her about Jesus while she was there. She also had a more critical self-assessment as she reflected on her past.

A point in Iva’s story (Interview 2016) illustrates the dialogical co-construction that can take place during the immediate context of narration. At one point, Iva misheard my question and started creating a narrative that was different from her first account, as she reinterpreted her story in order to answer my question. She had told me of her wonderful childhood—the first 15 years of her life, after which came misery. When I asked her to talk more about those 15 years of happiness, she mistakenly thought I meant later in life, so she began creating a more positive narrative about how her life was good because of her children. When I clarified my question, she returned to her original narrative. This ‘dialogical co-construction’ of story is the moment between the teller and listener when the significance comes to fruition (Ricoeur 1991). Narrative reality is thus co-created in

this encounter and is constantly re-emerging, as narratives are adjusted and emplotted anew in the context of new events and relational encounters (Fabian 1983).

6.2.3 Story Form and Plot

In the two analysed narratives detailed below, tragedy both shapes the form of the narrative and is the plot climax that everything else is built around. This form manifests either by the narrator starting with a traumatic event, or by letting tragedy or reflection-upon-tragedy become an echo throughout the narration, such as 'I have passed through everything'.[12] Events are not chronologically emplotted—in fact, when pressed, it is often difficult for the storytellers to remember dates and time periods, even offering wild guesses that upon further reflection cannot be accurate.

6.2.3.1 Iva – Interpreting Christian identity in suffering

Iva had two narrations of her life—the first was a mini rendition of her life that was told succinctly, as if she wanted to quickly be done with it (2016). After a prompt from me, asking a follow-up question about something she had mentioned, she told a different story. Aside from Iva's first 15 years of life, which she claims were 'completely happy', the rest of her selected events were a litany of tragedy: abusive husband, difficult work, survival during Croatia's homeland war, her son being shot during the war, her nervous breakdown, her suicide attempt, and the ongoing cycle of violence that presently continues between her son and his wife (See discussion in Chapter Five on intergenerational violence (Alexander 2015).[13] As she wrestled with attributing meaning to her experiences, there seemed to be much cognitive dissonance because she could not

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[12] For example, a repeated phrase would be *Sve sam pretrpila* [I suffered everything] or *da*, *tako sam ja prošla* [Yes, so I passed through it] (Ana, interview 2016); *Svašta sam ja proživila* [I lived through everything] or *svašta sam ja prošla* [I passed through everything] (Hana, interview #1 2015)

[13] As this was the same son that was shot and survived the war, this also raises the issue if he is suffering from PTSD.

reconcile her continuing suffering with her new life with God that started in 2014 when she was baptized and became part of the church.

Part of her confusion within her narrative is how she interprets the church's message as to what she needs to do to be 'successful' in Christianity, which in her mind is coming to church regularly and reading the Bible. Interestingly, this internal conflict did not arise until God appeared in her narrative. Before this 'shifted' the dialogue, her end point seemed to be: 'I somehow **endured** (*podnjieti)* (this word being used 4 times in her initial summation of her life) everything —all this torment' (2016). But when God was brought into her story, her questions and statements became more conflicted and difficult:

> Where did I go wrong, what did I do wrong?' 'I wanted that I would die, yes yes yes, that I would no longer see what is happening.' 'And then I think, I know that I have, I am sinning in everything in that, and now if God wants to or will forgive me or will not, that I do not know (2016).

As part of her questioning, Iva reflects on her 'moral performance' regarding what she has done well or how she feels she has responded 'rightly': 'To my husband I forgave a lot … I was quiet and endured [her husband bringing home other women] because of the children. And I was not stealing, I was not taking anything from anyone'. And yet despite this, Iva repeatedly reports that she does not feel 'good enough':

> But I have a sinful soul. First when I needed to go around to the houses, when my children were hungry. I needed to go look for and find something to eat. Yes, and it is like when you are going to steal.[14]

Iva's internal turmoil as recounted in the narrative then resurfaces between her internal explanation of her desire for God and the reason for her suffering:

> I would never cancel with God, but I did not keep the 'order' [her interpretation of Christian requirements] like I needed to … And I am blaming only myself that I am not available/worthy for God. I was preparing to say to the church that I am giving up … At the beginning, I loved to come to church and I was very happy, like I will keep this order and that I will come, that I will have prayer, that I will respect God like how it is needed, and now I see that I am not capable for that (2016).

Finally, within this narrative, Iva feels guilt over something that she also accuses others in the church of—that they only cry for God when they are in trouble, showing one face

[14] This is referring to the war, when she was forced to go around to abandoned Croat houses looking for food so that she could feed her children. She was still filled with guilt about it. When I asked her if she took other things (as this is the image of Roma during the war), she quickly emphasized that she *only* took food, and it was only because of the need to survive.

in church and the other face in the village. Interestingly, Iva accuses herself of the very same thing:

> In fact, this is how they say in our church, only when they need him, ‘God help me God!’ I am always in problems and I am constantly asking him to help me and crying. And God is helping me, God is helping me and making it easier for me, but here I have non-stop problems (2016).

6.2.3.2 Dreams as Communication in Pentecostal Praxis

Iva related two dreams she had since the time of her conversion which display her internal conflict. The first dream was in response to Iva’s question to God: ‘Can God prove to me that he loves me?’ In the dream, she was up high on a bridge, and below people were in a fire or moving into a fire. She interpreted that God was showing her she was separated from those people in the fire. In the second dream, there were a lot of ‘us women’ who were naked and entering through a small door. Every time a woman would enter into the door, smoke would come out, as if there were a fire on the other side. She interpreted this to mean that God does not love her because of how she is behaving and that consequently she is going to hell.

Within both dreams, ‘fire’ is used as a punishment and seems symbolic of how she sees her life (perhaps as a source of torment and punishment). In both dreams, there is a high way and a low way and yet there is a severe discrepancy in her interpretation of the two dreams. This internal conflict reveals these opposing tensions: her desire to follow God juxtaposed with her perceived failure as a Christian, her acknowledgement that God has helped her in her suffering contrasted with her anger at her suffering. This tension culminates in her strongest wish that she could just ‘disappear and not know anything more’ (2016). In fact, she included in her narrative the story of a failed suicide attempt.

6.2.3.3 Claimed Identity—I somehow endure

In conclusion, based on her selection of tragic events and the ordering them around the refrain of ‘I have endured’, Iva presents her identity as a conflicted victim—both innocent

and guilty at the same time. Her end point appears to be: I have somehow endured my life of torment, but I don't understand why God dictates this, so somehow it must be my fault. In fact, her dogmatic approach to suffering is at odds with various Christian theological approaches to accounting for suffering, which will be explored later in the Chapter.

6.2.3.4 Hana's Negotiations of Identity

In contrast to Iva's appropriation of guilt for her suffering, Hana's portrayal of herself in her December 2015 life story narration was of a fearless, aggressive person confronting the people that constantly tried to give her a negative name or a label. She ran away from her father, she stood up to her first husband, she forced her daughter's husband to divorce her and stood up to the courts, she faced down a Serbian soldier with a gun, and she saved her friend who was being abused by her husband. The verb form in the first interview was primarily an active agent: 'I went, I fought, shoot me, I made complete chaos', in comparison to the few passive form of things that happened or were ascribed to her 'I was burned on many things' 'I am kicked out' 'I was a prostitute' (Hana, interview #1, 2015). Hana did not see herself as someone who could be cowed, but rather she actively engaged in life even as others continued to try to force her into specific gender or ascribed images of the Roma.

Interestingly, in her self-reflection in the second interview three months later, she put a far more negative spin on this assessment of herself as discussed above:

> I am surprised in myself at what kind of person I was. I don't know how anyone could endure me, how they could live with me truly. I terrorized the whole house! When I go crazy, I go crazy. I don't stop until it's my way… (Hana, interview #2, 2016).

At the time of her first interview she asserted this aggression and lack of fear in a positive way, whereas in the second interview, she recognized it as someone she used to be but now perceives as negative, indicating new insights and information which (re)form her self-interpretation.

6.2.3.5 ‘Rupture’ Leading to a Reinterpretation

Part of the reason she attributes to the change is her conversion and baptism in 2014. The first time she went to church she says: ‘That day I felt something in the church. I heard the sermon and everything. Something I felt from my toes … something like ants …’ [she motions from her head to toes]. After this experience she decided to get baptized because of what had happened to her:

> Somehow, I feel that it is better to me. I was no longer so rude/evil as I was before. I was not, when I was…a wicked game I was playing. Dirty, very dirty. And now, everything is clean. If you are guilty, you are guilty. If you are not, you are not (Hana, interview #2, 2016).

She reflects again on how she used to behave prior to conversion—the revenge she would enact on people ‘returning it to them 15 times over’ and her out of control temper (almost killing her daughter in a fit of rage). Now she recognizes God’s part in her transformation:

> Really, thank God. He helped me in everything, and I see that that does not lead anywhere … it can only incite evil. And it can incite you to everything. And when a person is aggressive, and he doesn’t know what he is doing … I was capable even … capable even to murder. God forgive me, I remember my Zorica [in reference to almost killing her daughter] (Hana, interview #2, 2016).

Both interviews transpired post-conversion and post-baptism—and yet Hana reflects and draws meaning from them in two very different ways. Part of this is reflective of the narrative process as individuals constantly reinterpret their pasts, creating and recreating meaning as new events, attitudes, or circumstances come into play or the immediate context changes (Polkinghorne 1988:11; Clandinin & Rosiek 2007:37; Ricoeur 1991:32). Clearly, she moves from interpreting herself as an innocent and fearless victim of others’ behaviours to a flawed individual in need of transformation.

6.2.3.6 Claimed Identities—‘I was a fighter’ and ‘I am no longer aggressive’

After her conversion, however, although Hana reflects on how she used to be, as opposed to how she perceives herself now, things still cannot be aligned and placed into easy categories. She reflects on her transformed identity from being that of a person who was

aggressive and angry and tried to wreak her own justice, to one who lets God manage the justice.

> The good God sees. Who am I that I…? No one has the rights, no one is allowed. Dear God sees, he knows best what to decide. Before I wanted to fight, to beat someone, it was not good (Hana, interview #2, 2016).

And yet, this does not seem to have brought healing or a sense of well-being. She still relies heavily on nerve medicine (indicating she still experiences considerable stress) and even her description of how she behaves now (given that the second interview is only three months after the initial narrative) leads to queries about how she has internally resolved matters:

> Before I was aggressive, and I was everything. It was a catastrophe. Now I am not. Now I am flat in everything, ok, everything is okay. Everything is flat. Whatever. It is good for you, then it is good for me' (Hana, interview #2, 2016).

To further complicate matters, it is in her first interview where she alludes to the fact that she has a deep-rooted fear of letting her guard down and that she is 'not allowed to be happy' or something bad will happen:

> I cannot be happy one minute or I will have to pay…as soon as I allow myself to be happy, joking, laughing, something has to happen. Or if not me, something with my daughters' (Hana, interview #1, 2015).

In light of this, her end point appears to be: Before I was an aggressive person. But why do things continue to go wrong when I have been honest, loyal, and hardworking?

Table 6.1 Narrative End points

Name	End point
Iva	I have somehow endured my life of torment, but I don't understand why God dictates this, so somehow it must be my fault.
Hana	Before I was an aggressive person. But why do things continue to go wrong when I have been honest, loyal, and hardworking?
Ana	I have suffered greatly through my life, but God has vindicated me and punished those responsible for my suffering.
Mia	Only God knows me and my sufferings, but I will not take it anymore; since my son opened my eyes to God, I am rich in faith.
Helena	I was always searching to be loved after all the loss in my life, and God changed everything for me.

6.2.4 Retributive Justice: Interpretative framework linking identity and action

Each of the narrated stories wrestles with the question of suffering in these women's lives. Interestingly, an interpretative framework emerges from each of the stories that differs from the theological teaching of the church and the way Josip and Marija reflected on their own suffering. I have termed this the 'eye-for-an-eye' view of retributive justice, wherein whatever you do will eventually be returned to you.[15] This implicit framework through which they evaluate and ascribe meaning to their lives is diametrically opposed with one of the central teachings of the church—salvation by grace[16]—and at odds with the confession uttered by congregants at church (we are sinners saved by grace). Thus,

[15] I have adopted this terminology from the Bible's Old Testament (Exodus 21:23–25; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21

[16] See, for example, Ephesians 2:5–8

narrative analysis reveals a discrepancy between verbal performance at church and how an individual creates meaning in one's life.

As discussed in Chapter Two and Five, the Roma church's theology is originally rooted in the Croatian Pentecostal theology, which is both based on the teachings of the Bible and expanded in conservative evangelical theology (See footnote 50, Chapter Five) (Jambrek 2007:225). The Evangelical perspective on salvation is that it is a gracious act of the divine, 'the work of the Spirit in bringing us into full conformity with the likeness of Christ' (Grenz 2000:433). An individual who desires to be saved from sin and death, in an act of faith must turn and repent and accept this work of Jesus Christ, that is his death on the cross for our sin and his resurrection, which conquered death, in order to be saved[17] (Grenz 2000:430). According to evangelical teaching, God's grace enables salvation and sanctification, which continually frees us from sin and enables us to live as 'instruments of righteousness' (Romans 6:13; Jambrek 2007:226). Thus, in evangelical theology the concept of grace, mediated by faith, is important both for conversion and salvation as well as day-to-day living.

The church in Community C often emphasized the love and grace of God, and that salvation is God's gift to us that we need only to receive. However, this is sometimes coupled with the tension also found in scripture, well-articulated by the Apostle Paul, that this gift does not give us license to live anyway we want, but we become 'slaves to Christ and to righteousness' (Romans 6; Jambrek 2007:226). Sometimes, from the pulpit, Josip focuses on people who call themselves the 'people of God' but whose lives exhibit no spiritual fruit, or character qualities manifesting the ongoing internal work of the Spirit,[18] in which case he implies that they are not really saved nor understand what salvation

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[17] Grenz emphasizes that the dynamic of conversion consists of this personal repentance, the calling and conviction of God, and the community's role in discipleship and proclaiming this gospel (1994:431).

[18] The apostle Paul in Galatians 5:16–26 contrasts 'sinful nature' (sexual immorality, witchcraft, hatred, jealousy, for example) with the fruits of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, self-control).

means.[19] Thus Josip articulates the difference between operating theology and spoken theology.[20]

Therefore, as the operational theology is the 'eye-for-an-eye' approach rather than 'grace through faith', this framework therefore is what links identity and social action, as it 'becomes the rubric for making evaluative decisions' (Taylor 1989:34). It both orients the women's narratives but also adds weight to their internal struggle as they wrestle with their claimed 'non-guilt'. If they were not guilty of what they had been accused of (being a prostitute, murdering a child, looting homes), then why are they experiencing ongoing suffering? This seems to be a central conflict and climax point in the plot structure of the narratives.

Hana had trouble aligning this framework with her own life: she alludes to the fact that her life has not lined up with this philosophy (if her contestation that she was a hard worker and loyal friend is accurate, why is she called a 'whore and slut' and her family betrays her?) 'Where is the logic?' she asks when she has a little bit of happiness only to end up in a car accident where out of five people in the car, only she is injured. She implies here that there is meaning in the non-meaning—on the one hand, this event seems to be without logic. On the other hand, that seems to be the logic of her life. This dissonance was dramatically underscored in her whispered musing of how the outcomes of her life, when contrasted with her behaviours and philosophies, do not add up: 'If I would be a rotten, a bad mother, if I would steal …' implying then she would *deserve* the suffering (Hana, interview #1, 2015).

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[19] Josip preached on this idea in 2018, in his sermon from First Kings where the people of Israel are following after Baal instead of Yahweh (I Kings 18). He used 18:21, where Elijah challenges the people to either choose Baal or Yahweh, to issue the same challenge to the church, linking a sign of following after false gods as bearing no fruit.

[20] By spoken theology, I mean theology and beliefs expressed verbally through sermons, sharing in Bible studies, and in conversations.

Iva's narrative reveals that despite embracing Christianity, she continues to experience as many problems and misery as before. Because of her interpretative framework, she concludes that she must be responsible—not only for the fact that she feels like God does not love her and for her perceived failure of living the Christian life, but also for her tormented daily life. But even as she reaches this conclusion several times, Iva keeps fighting against this conclusion …'what have I done?' and 'I constantly have problems'. This conflict emerges on several accounts: she loves God and won't give up on him, but she is angry and confused about her life. She feels like she has not really done anything to warrant all this suffering, but on the other hand, she feels like she has not kept God's 'order' and come to church in the way that she should have as a good Christian. This suggests that she believes if she would be a 'better' Christian, her suffering would decrease.

In this particular interview, I found it extremely conflicting to navigate my roles as researcher and church leader. I felt Iva's internal battles were based on an inaccurate interpretation of what it means to be a Christian. It was difficult to watch her extreme and visible pain as she narrated her suicide attempts and her feeling that God did not love her. Therefore, at two points in the interview, I stopped her narration—the first was as a church leader and I offered a scripture from Isaiah: 'A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice' (42:3). The second time I stopped the interview because I felt it was reactivating too much trauma and at that point, I simply responded to her as a human being in need of comfort (Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:336).

6.3 Metanarratives

6.3.1 Gendered Violence in Daily Lives

As described in Chapter Four, cultural and social narratives manifest through analysing personal narratives as well as the points where an individual might have superseded or transformed the boundaries. The following section will include analysed data from all ten of the interviews in order to view the relevant cultural and social narratives from a wider lens. Three metanarratives emerged prominently: violence, exclusion, and anti-Gypsyism.

Violence, it is clear, often plays a central role in most of the narratives— all of the women, at some point in their life, found themselves in an abusive relationship with a man who was also usually an alcoholic. Tales were told of extreme domestic violence, for example, from a nail being driven into a head, to rape, to beating that caused broken bones: 'Then in Serbia when they took me to the hospital, they told me I was like I came from the battlefield. Like in the war, if I was in the war and they brought me from the war there, yes there in the hospital' (Mia, interview #1, 2015).

In fact, domestic violence and emotional abuse are not uncommon in the surrounding communities from which people are coming to the church. While endemic, the violence takes different forms. For example, Marija and I went to go check on one woman who had not been coming to church. We found her locked in her yard, which she told us her husband had done because he did not like her to leave the house without him. She seemed to accept this as normal; however, when Marija asked her some pointed questions regarding violence in the home, her facial expression became guarded, although she denied violence occurred. Later, Marija told me she knew the woman was lying (Field notes May 2015). She eventually stopped attending the church, although her husband still does. In another example, Ana relates a story of traveling with her husband when their motorcycle broke down. Her husband said to another man, '"so this whore", he said, "who jinxed me", he said. "Listen", [the bicycle man said] "not even with another woman it will not be better"'. This story, related 40 years after it happened, still seemed to shame

and humiliate Ana. In fact, the story shows a double humiliation: her husband's insult of her to a stranger, and the implicit agreement that women are the cause of all things that go wrong (2016).

All the women said they stayed and endured their marriages 'for the sake of the children'. Many of them had as children watched their fathers beat their mothers, who also stayed because of the children—an important notation in view of the effects of ACEs discussed in Chapter Five (Felitti et al. 1998). Sometimes the violence ended when brothers grew up and became old enough to defend their mothers, or when a husband realised he needed his wife to be healthy in order to perform her household duties. Chapter Five details cycles of generational trauma—and this loyalty to the family articulated in the women's narratives can certainly be linked to studies undertaken on the cycles of domestic abuse in other cultures, as a woman's 'traumatic attachment' to her abuser is typically coloured by emotional confusion because it is in the context of an intimate relationship (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010:659; Cavanagh 2003).[21] However, the individual narratives must also be put into the wider context of Roma cultural narratives, where for Roma, 'family' and kinship is one of the strongest cultural values and 'Roma will often go to lengths non-Roma can only marvel at, to preserve the sanctity and unity of the extended family' (Cahn 2000). This is not always the case, however. In 2017, a woman who had been a devoted member of our church ran off with another man and became pregnant, abandoning her children. The community talked about it for weeks and cast her as the villain in the story; and yet she had told us that she could not stand her husband's beating anymore, providing a motivation for her behaviour. Our church used this situation as an opportunity to teach about grace and praying for others. However, one Sunday, her husband began to dramatically pray in church for the hardship of his personal

[21] The link between experience of abuse in 'family of origin' and ongoing domestic violence has been well established in the domestic violence literature (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010; Stith et al. 2000).

situation being left as a single parent, eliciting murmurs of sympathy from the congregation, and I found myself growing extremely angry at how the situation was being interpreted in the community. Although Josip has repeatedly said that beating your wife is evil and 'from the devil', this has not removed the stigma from how women respond to domestic violence.

6.3.1.1 Negotiating Identity in Violent Narratives

Iva employed 'linguistic strategies' to redefine the violence in her narrative, constructing a story of a happy childhood (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010:659). She did not volunteer the information that her father was physically abusing her mother until later in the interview when I directly asked her. This 'silencing', one of Spector-Mersel's six mechanisms of narrative analysis, is significant, as silencing 'functions as the gatekeeper of the claimed identity, preventing "harmful" facts from filtering in' (2011:174). In this case, it kept her from recognizing the painful cycle of violence she experienced from her father, husband, and also her son. She felt trapped enough in gendered roles to feel duty bound to protect her violent son rather than her daughter-in-law, convincing her daughter-in-law not to call the police when domestic abuse occurred and thus perpetrating the cycle. 'I know my son is not a good man', she said, 'but he is my son.' As such, her narrative indicates that she feels trapped in this cycle of violence and hardship, and the only way she sees to get out of it is to die. Thus, her two choices seem to be 'enduring' or 'dying'.

Linking back to the trauma literature in Chapter Five, constant stress and trauma effects the parts of the brain that regulates stress management, learning, and memory (Bremner 2007:123). Perhaps unsurprisingly, many women complain of stress, anxiety, and depression, and Croatian doctors liberally prescribe medication that produces an

obvious dulling/numbing effect on the person.[22] In addition, most women have constant health issues, and while Šikić-Mićanović's (2005) study indicates that there are numerous factors contributing to that reality, past trauma is likely another factor (Holman et al. 2016; Anda et al. 2010).

In the church community, we have had women's encouragement groups, provided health seminars, and art therapy with the women. Within each of these sessions, women reveal the difficult challenges and many burdens, past and present they carry. At one women's group, Marija explained: 'Roma women are the women who are not able to dream. Everything is so hard and so broken so that every day just becomes a question of how to survive that day. What is the point of dreaming when you cannot realise your dreams?' (Field notes, December 2013).

Although the violence continues in ever-present cycles, it is too simplistic to reduce each woman's response to either a 'victim narrative' or a 'survivor narrative' (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010). In fact, as domestic violence against Roma women has often been 'hidden' (thus the lack of data on prevalence rates), there may be limited options in the cultural context by which Roma women can confront or escape the violence.[23] Buchbinder & Birnbaum (2010) suggest an alternate motif, viewing women's responses in two interdependent but polarized dimensions: strength-trapped weakness and weakness-trapped strength.[24] Buchbinder & Birnbaum argue that this captures the dichotomies in responses of those suffering from domestic abuse: 'strong and weak, active and passive, personal integrity and self-deception' (2010:671). In fact, as the

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[22] Studies on domestic violence find that women suffer from 'fear, depression, low self-esteem, denial, passivity, posttraumatic reactions and a general feeling of helplessness' (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010; Dutton 1992).
[23] Interestingly, no mention was made of any sexual abuse in the families, although I strongly suspect it also occurs with frequency. This seems to indicate that I am a safe person to tell of one kind of violence but not the other, or just that the stigma around sexual abuse is unshakeable.
[24] These dimensions are helpful because it captures the feeling of weakness and helplessness of the past and present, and the strength of recognizing this and struggling to create new narratives, breaking free from the past (Buchbinder & Birnbaum 2010).

women construct their narratives, this interplay of strength and weakness comes to the foreground as each woman confronts or downplays the violence. For example, Mia recounted that she loved her father and tolerated him beating her mother. However, after 15 years with an abusive husband, Mia finally fled, although it meant leaving her two children, which grieved her immensely.[25] Instead of marrying another alcoholic abusive man, which was the case for other women in similar circumstances, however, she bluntly stated to the new man who showed interest in her:

> That was a conversation like this. I have, I said, two sons, I will also get my children, If you want, if not, I don't need you. I got, I said, too much beatings. I don't want beatings anymore. So, if we can't do it with talking, that more then, then there's no more life. You can't with the beatings. If you beat an animal she will run away too. Eh, he says, I am not that kind of a man. I'm not an alcoholic (Mia, interview #1, 2015).

As Mia reflected on her past, her narrative reveals a woman who has had enough and takes measures so that she was finally able to break the family cycle of violence with her second husband.

Ana, who says she was 'unlucky' in marriage, elected not to get married again after the death of her second husband: 'I could have got married so many times but did not…' She relates how at 50 years of age, she went to a doctor to obtain tablets that would repress sexual desire: 'That I would not need a man. That I would not look for a man. That I have no wish for a man. I drank them two, three years, and then until now I don't have any desire.'

6.3.1.2 Theological Interpretations of Violence

The women are narrating their past lives through the prism of being new Christians and are no longer in violent domestic situations—however, for a portion of their lives, they lived in these unsafe situations. Their eye-for-an-eye interpretative theological framework allows them in some way to claim justice served to their abusers. Ana emphasized that

[25] Her children were around ten and sixteen, and her husband was not violent toward them.

her first husband ended up dead from alcohol and her second, who had been guilty of murdering their child was confined to a hospital for the mentally ill: 'That is what God gave him. That is what God gave him. What he did with his own child. His child by birth. I would not be able kill a cat, neither my children. He was a bastard, a very big bastard.' She contrasted this with her own behaviour and her desire for vengeance:

> Did I kill her? Did I steal? … If I was guilty, I would already be under the earth. So God keeps me because I was not guilty, not my fault. I can only trust in God and I pray to God during the night and during the day… I stand in front of the church and call upon God. I call upon him and ask him to help my children and me… But listen, God did what I wanted … whoever were witness [her husband's friends who gave court testimony] they all went to the grave. Yes, yes everyone went to the grave. See my experience… Whoever made evil, they all went to the grave. And if it would be my fault and if I did it, I wouldn't be alive. He did it, that's when he 'went on a trip' [died]. (Interview 2016)

Hana also emphasized her first husband's divine punishment after he sold his own 14-year-old daughter to a 30-year old man in marriage[26]:

> I said to him that he would die worse than a dog—he really did die like a dog. Beautiful daughter, daughter, daughter. It [death] came; it was, one year after daughter was married. Three days less than a year ... I said to him that God is this—meaning the dear Lord would punish him because he sold his own child. Dear God punished him (quieter). When he was dying in Osijek hospital, he was not calling for anyone. My name he mentioned, my name he called: 'Haaannnnaaa'. He did not have. God punished him (Interview #1, 2015).

In terms of negotiating between Christian identity and pasts filled with violence, there is thus an interpretative gap of meaning. In other words, although Christian theology has resources and a long history of responding to evil and violence, the women are interpreting their histories through a dogmatic justice framework that appears (among other places) in the Old Testament.

6.3.2 Exclusion and Anti-Gypsyism

Endemic discrimination is another meta-narrative emerging from the stories, a theme presented in Chapter One.[27] Despite gains in Croatian legislation toward fighting

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[26] In some Roma groups, bride price is a formalized procedure with specific rules and regulations, ensuring safety for the bride (See for example: Tesăr 2012; Slavkova 2007; Engebrigtsen 2011). However, in cases like this or in Josip and Marija's marriage as detailed in Chapter Five, it was more about obtaining quick money. In this case, the girl was sold for one box of beer and two kilograms of fish so 'he [Hana's husband] could make Christmas for his wife'.

[27] Yuval-Davis notes the various ways social divisions can manifest in individual lives in terms of 'inclusion and exclusion, discrimination and disadvantage, specific aspirations and specific identities'. This plays into how people view themselves and their communities as well as how the majority views them. She also notes

discrimination and anti-Gypsyism, a 2018 ECRI report on Croatia notes that hate speech, specifically against Roma, Serbs, and LGBQ people is on the rise. The European Commission's 2016 report on Croatia notes that there still needs to be effective 'practical enforcement' of the legislation as well as judicial consequences to anti-Roma crime and speech.[28] In fact, the structures of discrimination in Croatia do not always manifest in blatant ways.[29] While interviewing a local Roma political representative (Nikica, interview 2018), I was told that the Roma in this region do not experience discrimination in the same way as the Roma in another part of Croatia. Yet, this comment was at odds with everything else he was telling me. For example, decisions on where to allocate funding for projects always gave preference to the Croatian part of town, rather than monies being made available for building reasonable houses for the Roma, some who are still living without electricity or water. This same Roma settlement sits next a large trash mound, creating sanitary and health hazards, although the residents have weekly trash collection; part of the reason is that others from the Croatian part of town use it as a dumping site rather than paying their own trash bills.[30]

For many Croatians, their understanding of what it means to 'be Roma' presumes that members of that community live at a certain (low) socio-economic level, and have

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that social divisions will manifest in societal representation—through laws, symbols, images, etc. (2006:198).

[28] This 2016 report notes the specific measures legislated in Croatia: free legal aid is provided, awareness raising campaigns on human trafficking exist, training is given to civil servants and police officers on anti-discrimination legislation, hate crime, promoting cultural and human rights of Roma, support for maintenance of the memorial Roma cemetery, support of memorial day for Roma victims of the Holocaust, round tables on the status of Roma women in decision-making processes with national and international networks, women's protection, as well as protection of Roma children are addressed under mainstream measures and projects.

[29] Although the 'obvious' manifestations of racism still occur. Early in 2016 there was an amateur bombing (resulting in a small explosion) of a Roma kindergarten yard in Zagreb (no one was harmed). In 2011, a Roma family on the Croatian coast was terrorized by residents of a town that wanted them out, even building a fence around their property and threatening to put land mines around the fence. In 2018, a journalist reporting for Balkan Insight related that university students in Rijeka in were marching through the city centre, shouting nationalistic slogans and also 'Kill, Kill the Gypsy' (Milekic 2018).

[30] Part of this is perhaps how he was defining discrimination. Also, I believe there were some more sensitive 'political' reasons for his not openly admitting discrimination occurred in his town, if it might compromise his relationship with other authorities.

stereotypical cultural traits, such as playing music.[31] Of course, these 'categories' interact with each other; for example, being Roma may mean being excluded from a job, which effects their economic position, and means that they are more commonly found in particular job clusters such as being a musician (Yuval-Davis 2006:200; European Commission 2016).[32] Josip and Marija, the church leaders, were for example unsuccessful when looking for a new apartment to rent—although on the phone a potential landlord was accommodating, when they met, they were told the apartment was not available. They believed this was because of their ethnicity. Still, a Roma man who is on the council for regional leadership in Croatia said the situation is much improved in the country since 1999 when he formed an association specifically to protect Roma after the war.[33]

6.3.2.1 Cultural Repertoires of Responses to Exclusion

Throughout the narratives gathered for this study, we can see that the narrators display a cognizance of implicit and explicit discrimination within their stories. However, little direct discussion of the immediate or psychological impact of such prejudice is evident, even though, as discussed in Chapter Five, studies in other contexts have shown a link in poorer mental health and experiences of racial discrimination (Wallace et al. 2016). Occasionally, participants would narrate a story about a teacher who seemed to dislike

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[31] Josip and Marija's son entered university in Croatia in 2015 . When I asked if he had any problems with other students there, he informed me that most students assume he is from a different country, since they do not expect to see Roma in university. When he told them he is 'Gypsy or Roma', they express surprise but no negativity (conversation with Karlo noted in field notes 2016). See also Šućur (2005)'Poverty as a Component of the Socio-Cultural identity of Roma'. This identification of a number of cultural traits with 'being Roma' is not just found in Croatia. In Serbia, the Forum for Ethnic relations noted that Serb attitudes toward the Roma were heterogeneous: 'Roma don't like to work.' 'They have a special culture, their music is beautiful, they are gifted in the arts' (Latham 1999:208)

[32] In fact, the socio-economic situation has often grown worse for the Roma since the collapse of state socialism, statistics showing an increase in unemployment and poverty (Ceneda 2002; Guy 2001b). The reasons for this are complex; however, one major factor that sociologists and Roma leaders have agreed on is that they cannot compete in the labour market after the collapse of state socialism decreased the need for semi or unskilled labour (Barany 2002:174). The European Commission's 2016 report noted that in Croatia, few poverty reduction plans have been developed, thus the socio-economic status of the Roma in Croatia is not improving.

[33] As noted in Chapter Three, there was much tension between Croats and the Roma when Croatians returned to their homes after the war. One Roma man involved in local government told me he heard Croatians talking about refusing jobs to Roma so that they would leave the area (Nikica, interview 2018).

Roma and thus made it difficult to pass a school grade; the difficulties of being Roma in the war, or doctors being callous or assuming certain things about Roma patients, but I never saw any anger displayed when recounting direct or indirect prejudice experienced as a result of an interviewee being a Roma. Most agree that things are better now than they were in the past; however, this must be put in context with the ongoing social isolation of Roma communities.

Lamont (2016) conducted an eight-year sociological study with subjects in the United States, Brazil, and Israel, studying how micro-experiences and responses to racial exclusion are connected to the strength of group identity, cultural factors, institutions, and the macro-historical perspective. For example, the Civil Rights movement in America offers a 'cultural tool' of empowerment to African-Americans to directly confront racism, whilst Ethiopian Jews, as recent immigrants to Israel, are intent on quickly assimilating and therefore less confrontational to racism. Lamont analyses the subjects' meaning-making to see how 'institutionalized scripts' that are both products and reproduce patterns. Cultural 'repertoires' allow and restrict individuals' responses (276). My own anger at the community's lack of anger perhaps reflect the diverse socio-historical contexts in which we have grown up; the response to ongoing racism in America that is continually confronted, although some groups of white Americans deny that structural racism still exists.[34] Lamont's study argues that although victims of racism may seem passive, in reality they are often interpreting the act according to their situation and discovering creative ways to manage it.

In fact, sometimes incidents are related in a manner that seemed to indicate that the narrator was laughing or telling the incident as though it were a joke; suggesting both

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[34] Understanding and listening to microaggressions from the Roma in Community C has helped me understand my native cultural context to a greater level; likewise, my native cultural context compels me to more directly confront in the Croatian context.

widespread acceptance of such discrimination, learned coping methods, or cultural expressions of trauma as discussed in Chapter Five; an approach that may provide some insight into the apparent unchallenged acceptance of poverty, discrimination and exclusion in daily lives:

> They [non-Roma] did not love us, they did not love us… If they [police] caught the Roma, the police, then they beat them… But first, they would beat, and then ask you what had happened (laughing). But our people never looked at that, you know, never paid attention to that. Always they thought, '*neka neka'* [What will be will be]. God will give and it will be better. Everyone hoped for that (Mia, interview #2, 2016).

Educational discrimination is another area where micro-experiences manifest. Roma children's low rates (in a 2018 survey of 538 of Roma children, only 31 percent attended secondary school) (Centar za mirovne & Ecorys Hrvatska 2018) of completing secondary school in Croatia are due to many factors, many of which I have observed in the community: for example, lack of help/support in order to be successful, lack of motivation (perhaps, in part, due to very few Roma visible in higher paying jobs), and early marriage. Educational discrimination can be one of those factors. The responses (and evidence of agency demonstrated by protagonists) vary: Mia finished eighth grade schooling and can read and write, but her education came to an untimely end because she could not afford the fees for a certain educational magazine that the teacher told her she must purchase, and her parents being illiterate did not have the social, financial or cultural capital to intervene on her behalf. However, her son is on the spectrum of autism, and as a mother herself, she was so determined that they would not put her son Filip in a school for children with special needs that she went every day and sat in the classroom until the school adhered to Mia's wishes of where to place her son. Other parents may not have the skills to advocate for their children in this manner, however.

In October 2016, a conversation I had with two Roma mothers revealed the reason their children—ranging from first grade to fifth grade, were unable to read. When I asked what the children did all day since they could not read or write, one mother said that they frequently coloured on sheets of paper. The parents themselves are illiterate—and

although they are frustrated and concerned with their children's lack of progress in school, they revealed no knowledge about how to challenge such discrimination and had no belief that something could be done to remedy this discriminatory treatment.[35] When I accompanied one of the mothers to the village school to meet the teacher, it ended with an unpleasant encounter with the pedagogue, the person in charge of learning strategies, in which he reacted defensively in regards to my polite request to meet with the teacher.[36] As we left the school, the mother looked at me and said, 'You see? He was very rude. This is why I don't meet with the teachers' (Field notes, October 2016).

6.3.2.2 Identity Negotiations in Response to Stereotypes

Often in both the women's and men's narratives, they would construct their stories to implicitly challenge a stereotype, without directly discussing the stereotype. Interviewees made a point of saying something that reacted against a societal or gendered image of Roma, without specifying the image/stereotype itself (Figure 6.3). In fact, the women's negotiation of identity in response to these widespread negative stereotypes indicates the fluidity necessary to survive and accommodate the daily realities of their lives, using 'differing interpretations to move beyond the limitations imposed in the name of specific faiths, cultures, or socioeconomic norms' (Afshar 2012:1).

For example, one can see this in Hana's narrative in December 2015 as she reacts against negative gendered stereotypes emanating from other Roma. She claims she was faithful to her husband despite accusations from her mother-in-law; and when she was unjustly expelled from her home, she indicated the constant verbal abuse contributed to

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[35] Later I found out that in one of the schools with a large Hungarian minority, the teacher would sometimes speak in Hungarian, although many children only spoke Old Romanian and Croatian.

[36] In retrospect, I entered that situation rather naively. Although it was a small village school, I should have discovered the more appropriate and proper way to address the situation, in line with Croatian Education policies.

mental health issues and she began having encounters with other men. She begins her narrative:

> My story? So, I have a daughter from my first marriage. We lived seven years together, but [to them] I was always a whore, prostitute, slut, and depraved while I screamed [to them] that I was not. I had a grandfather who was 86 and I was taking care of him. I had a child who was two months old. Whenever my mother-in-law would come to me, for example [to her] I am a prostitute and slut and the next day I am kicked out. He [husband] threw me out of the house on January 12, 1984... There was snow, one-meter high, and the trees were falling down. And I was just in very thin, breezy pyjamas.

Interwoven in the events was a constant reframing of who she was, juxtaposed against what other Roma were verbally saying about her. She was therefore clear that it was 'others', such as her mother-in-law and husband, who articulated and placed an identity on her of a 'whore, prostitute, and slut', but several times in the story she argued against this identity: 'I am not', 'Yes you are'[response from those who accused her], 'I am not' 'Yes you are'. This struggle to claim her identity resulted in feeling 'crazy' and becoming a 'whore' to spite everyone. Indeed, she muses: 'What others force you to be, that person you become.'[37]

Several times Hana explains herself in opposition to some of the larger externally cultural imparted messages pertaining to Roma identity. Table 2 below identifies how she explicitly challenges these articulations within her narrative.

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[37] Relevant here is the 'labelling theory', which sees deviance as less a set of intrinsic characteristics but rather a relational process of reality construction between 'deviants and non-deviants' in the context of how deviance is understood. See: Goffman 1974 *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*.

Table 6.2 Implicit Images of Discrimination

Cultural Concept	Quote	Time
Roma are dirty	'I was not like those other gypsies. At my place, everything was clean.'	December 2015
Roma looted during the war	'Some took but it is important that I did not. I did not. I took what was mine or what people gave me.'	December 2015
Roma are lazy and steal	'Good work, good earning, everything was fair. Everything was regular, nothing that we would steal or that the police would have to come, that, no. Never.'	December 2015
Roma are often in trouble with the law	'The police are coming to others. To us, never.'	December 2015

For Mia, the theme of struggling against specific sets of negative labels from both Roma and non-Roma was also a core theme in her narrative. In her case, she articulated how internal tensions and hierarchies within the Roma community led to particular framings of identity and a conscious struggle to occupy another (positive) identity space. Mia recounted how she and her siblings 'were black', in terms of their skin colour, in the eyes of some of their relatives (associated with negative characteristics), which warranted dislike from her grandmother (who was also Roma): 'Grandma didn't love us because we were black. My mom was not black. My mom was so white like you are. She was not black. Light was my mom. And we were like dad [laughing]. We were like dad in such a black colour' (Mia, interview #2, 2016). In this case, being darker skinned fits in with the

negative racialized image of the Roma in Croatia and Serbia, and inevitably creates a starker contrast with the 'white' majority.[38]

Overall, in the sense in which labels and stereotypes abound in these narratives (as do the struggles to challenge such negative discourse) we can see the implicit discriminatory, and at times seemingly cavalier, attitude with which societal images are commonly articulated and which acts against Roma interviewees' well-being and self-interest.

6.4 Theology as an Epistemological Lens

These metanarratives of violence, structured racism, and exclusion bring to the foreground the theological categories relevant to the social processes that are both affecting and being affected by Christianity within the Roma community. The narratives discussed have raised questions of the *why* of suffering and theodicy and the difficulty of negotiating new Christian identities within the challenges of everyday life. In the discussion of anthropology and Christianity outlined in Chapter Two, I note that theology is 'meaning-making of the Christian faith' (Lauterbach & Vähäkangas 2019:5) occurring in specific contexts and circumstances (Schreiter 2015).

As such, theologies of suffering often respond to issues emerging from context. For example, theologies from places such as Latin America and the African American experience have emphasized justice, liberation, and reconciliation as part of God's mission of redemption for the world (Bevans & Schroeder 2004), critiquing structures of power. Cone (1997, 1999), a Black theologian, argues that 'theology' begins with the black experience, with its particular suffering, questions, and history. Black theology

[38] Roma in Croatia and Serbia who are 'lighter skinned' have told me stories about 'passing' for non-Roma, or non-Roma being shocked to find out that they are Roma. In different contexts, 'passing' has illustrated the arbitrariness of 'racial lines' and how a racialized society dictates access to social power and can be a form of Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'symbolic violence' (Bourdieu & Passeron 1977) where he describes how societal group power is maintained by normalizing a particular form of cultural capital, such as skin colour. See, for example, Wald's (2000) exploration of the theoretical and political implications in American cultural narratives.

argues that Christ's incarnation revealed a Christianity most fitting for the powerless and does not separate the 'saving of the soul' from the 'dignity of the body' (Douglas 2005:103, 206: Coleman 2000:45).[39] In other examples, Dau (2010:119) speaks about how theology of the cross is enacted and lived out in the Dinka people's experience in the Sudanese war from 1983–2005. They used the symbol of the cross in many different applications to depict Christ in the midst of pain and suffering, as a source of protection, and a symbol of future hope.[40]

6.4.1 Pentecostal Approaches to Suffering—*Christopraxis* and the Pentecostal present

Pentecostal scholars in general have noted the need for more a robust theology of suffering, particularly in view of the tension between the reality of suffering and Pentecostal emphasis on healing and victory (Engelbert 2019; Warrington 2008; Kärkkäinen 2014b). Engelbert (2019) notes how some Pentecostal scholars have borrowed from other Christian theological traditions to grapple with this issue (Kärkkäinen 2004), whilst others have reflected on healing and suffering from their particular cultural context, such as Asamoah-Gyadu (2004) in Ghana, and Jang (2011) in Korea. Engelbert (2019:18ff) uses the concept of *Christopraxis*, drawing from Anderson (1989; 2001) as a Pentecostal approach to suffering. *Christopraxis* refers to the ongoing ministry of Christ to the world (in accordance with the Bible), through the Holy Spirit. This concept has an emphasis on first experiencing God before theologizing, or making meaning, of the experience. In addition, out of this encounter an individual can minister

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[39] Further, Cone (2011) draws a connection between Jesus' cross and the lynching tree, one of the most potent symbols of Black suffering in America. Lynching refers to the systematic and often brutal murder of Black people outside the judicial system. The most common image of lynching was a Black person hanging from a tree. The lynching era was most prominent from 1880–1920s in American history. The lynching tree illustrated white power and black death; the cross exemplified divine power and black life (Cone 2011:39), as the cross was God's critique on power by demonstrating a powerless love.

[40] Luhrmann (2012:299) explores the question of suffering in the specific context of charismatic American evangelicalism, arguing that people's response to disappointment and suffering is mediated through both American cultural values (the right to happiness) as well as the specific cultural values of the church, which held emotional experience with God as high priority.

to another, also through the Holy Spirit, and in this encounter, God is also revealed (Engelbert 2019:22).

In the context of Community C, in which suffering, poverty, and injustice are the lived realities within which meaning-making transpires,[41] this concept of *Christopraxis* is a useful theological lens by which to understand the connection between a specific Biblical hermeneutic and God's presence manifested through dreams, healings, and experiences with the Holy Spirit. Teaching from the Bible is often directly related to the present, 'reaching forward and backward across history in a process of infinite recursion that collapses Pentecostal time into an expansive, magical present' (Haynes 2018:267). This is what Yong refers to as a 'this is that' hermeneutic—the 'this' of the present connected to the 'that' of the early church through the experience of the Holy Spirit (2010:89). In fact, since this was Marija and Josip's personal experience recounted in Chapter Five as they were developing as leaders—scripture and experience mutually reinforcing one another—so this is how they teach and lead their congregants.

Because of the many health issues in the community, healing is an important area where the people expect God will act. In fact, God's direct intervention in the form of healing is another kind of liberation theology in that it implies that the everyday material world matters (Brown 2011) rather than just concern for the human spirit. The experiences of the Holy Spirit are God's continuing reminder of the incarnation of Jesus, of 'God with us' (Engelbert 2019). For example, individuals feeling the presence of God in their immediate problems, seeing God as their 'doctor, healer, and provider', a concept

[41] In 2014, Josip and Marija's ten-year-old daughter, after watching a documentary regarding the situation of the Roma in Hungary, asked them, 'If God knew that the Roma would be so hated and suffer over so many years, why would he create the Roma? Josip recalled feeling very angry himself after watching the documentary. He said he was challenged to control his emotions, but at the same time he wanted to be sure his daughter did not blame God for what had happened throughout history. He told his daughter, 'God is not guilty for this. He did not create the Roma to be hated, that was not his purpose in creating them' (Field notes, December 2014).

which is frequently declared in prayers, taught in sermons, and preached to each other (Haynes 2018). Thus, when I visited one very sick woman in February of 2015, she said:

> God is for us and not against us. He is our father and is taking care of me even though I am sick. We are in his hands and we are safe with him. He is our father and healer. I am not afraid to die because my father is waiting for me and he is not going to trick me. I will be with him. (Field notes)

This concept of *Christopraxis* and the Pentecostal present manifests in visions and dreams as well, as people have often mentioned seeing Jesus in a dream, usually deriving some kind of message or comfort from such visitations.[42] This dynamic surfaced in Iva's life over the trajectory from her conversion and baptism in 2014, her intense physical and psychological struggles, and her experiences of healing. In a church women's group in 2013, the question was asked, 'What would you ask Jesus right now if you could see him?' Iva said, 'I would ask him if he really loves me—am I actually important to him? Will he take care of me? I want to fall asleep right now and maybe he would come and tell me—why so much suffering?' (Field notes, December 2013). That night, she had a dream where she said that 'Jesus came to her and told her he really loved her'. This gave her a deep sense of peace and joy that was visible when she recounted the story. However, her narrative interview in 2016 (described in 6.2.3) evidenced her ongoing struggle and agony to interpret her faith in the context of her life.

In 2018, two years after her interview, Iva's depression and health issues grew so bad that she stopped attending church for a period; one night she had a stroke and was rushed to the hospital. The doctor told her family that she would likely lose motion on one side and would be unable to speak. After church leaders went to pray for her in the hospital (and her family prayed for her), the next day she got up and informed everyone she wanted to go home, much to the doctors' surprise. She attributed this to be a healing from God,

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[42] One Sunday in church, there was a loud popping sound, as if something hit a window. Two men ran out to see if someone threw something at the window. Later, a teenage girl told me, 'When that noise happened, I saw a vision of Jesus standing in fire in the middle of the church. I was afraid and my heart is still beating really fast!' (2016)

and a sign of God's love and care (Brown 2011:9). Months later, however, (while telling the story, she showed me a large bag of medicine for both physical and psychological ailments), the effect of the combined drugs caused her to exist in a fogged stupor every day, captive to her bed. Finding no help from the Croatian doctors or psychiatrists (for reasons she and her husband could not explain to me), they went to a hospital in Serbia and were able to get some psychiatric drugs that restored her to a functioning level; Iva gave thanks to God for finding the right medicine. She can now work again (street cleaning), take care of the house, and help take care of her great-grandchildren. For Iva, these healing experiences were interpreted as evidence of being seen and loved, and therefore encouraged her in her Christian faith, despite the fact that her life is still very difficult, and she still suffers from a myriad of physical problems.

Thus, identity and meaning continue to be re-interpreted in people's lives as their continued experiences with God confront their old interpretative frameworks. As seen in Iva's life, this is not a linear nor quick process as trauma manifests in intense suffering in memories, physical bodies, emotions and spirituality, and through raising existential questions. Contextual theodicy, how the goodness of God co-exists with evil and human suffering, can be helpful on a cognitive level, but it is ambiguous as to how these explanations help the healing process (Rambo 2011:5). As discussed earlier, changes in the brain after trauma can be a factor as to why individuals repeat behaviours or problems without learning from their experience, rather than being a 'result of moral failings or signs of lack of willpower or bad character…' (van der Kolk 2015:3). The next two sections will discuss the role of Christian community in shifting interpretative frameworks and internalizing Christian identity.

6.4.2 Forming Christian Identity in Response to Social Context

Christian theology roots identity as being created in the image of God, and a Pentecostal sense of being 'born again' means being birthed into the family of God. Galatians 3, for

example, outlines the social ramifications based on Christian identity: ‘As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (v.27, 28).

However, in the history of Christianity, negotiating a new Christian identity in specific cultural contexts has interacted with and impacted the socio-political milieu in divergent ways (Bediako 1992).[43] For example, in the context of South Africa, missiologist David Bosch’s Christian identity was initially rooted in an Afrikaner anthropology—which at that time meant he did not view Black South Africans as fully human (Kritzinger & Saayman 2011:180f). As he began to reflect on human anthropology through theological categories, Bosch (1991a; 1991b) argued humanity was unified on the basis of it being created in God’s image and its common status as sinners, and therefore Christian community was an ‘alternative community’ to what an apartheid society offered.

In the context of Roma relationship with majority cultures as detailed in Chapter One, forming Christian identity inevitably raises questions of dignity and equality in the social sphere.[44] An ‘alternative community’, based on a theological view of humanity, is fostered by leaders Josip and Marija, based at least in part on their own experience and theological understanding. In Marija’s narrative, she interpreted the Croatian church’s help toward them through this lens:

> My husband was speechless, and he didn't understand why these people were helping us and doing all of this for us, nobody likes Roma, even our own family and friends don't need us, he said: ‘I simply don't understand’. In that way I started to testify to him that God loves us and that he wants only the best for us, but he has no other hands but ours and if he wants to help us he will use ones that can be led

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[43] Throughout history, these negotiations of Christian identity manifested in ways that were both transformative and disastrous, as individuals and the church interacted with the socio-political context of the time. Christian identity has been interpreted as a justification for violence, such as the Crusades or the Inquisition, or can morph into national or ethnic identity in a way that excludes others such as in the wars in former Yugoslavia.

[44] From Bosch’s theological perspective, to deny a fellow Christian was to deny the ‘new humanity revealed in Christ’, based on the life, death, and resurrection of Christ: ‘The mutual solidarity within this community is not prescribed by the loyalties and prejudices of kinship, race, people, language, culture, class, political convictions, religious affinities, common interests, or profession. It transcends all these differences’ (1980:223).

> by him and that all of this that these people are doing for us, they are doing it because of Christ's love, because Jesus said: 'What you did to the smallest one, you did to me'. My husband said: 'No, thanks, but I'm not on sale', although I saw that he was moved, but he wanted to be sure in his feelings and what he really wants. (Unpublished story 2013)

Although the church founded by Marija and Josip has a majority of Roma congregants, there are also Croatians, Serbians, and Americans (one other besides me). Josip and Marija have at times stated that they do not want the church to be known as the 'Roma church', although it is usually the way Croatian Christians refer to it.[45] Often in sermons, if Josip specifically refers to the Roma people as a contextual sermon point, he will often footnote it with, 'but this is not just for the Roma, but all people'.[46] Indeed the church receives many international visitors, who usually affirm from the pulpit that 'we are all brothers and sisters in Christ', to which the congregants always loudly affirm with an 'amen'.

Josip and Marija have the same broad view of inclusivity in regard to the relationship between Roma and *gadje*. When a group of French Roma missionaries visited the church in 2017 to see about possible collaboration in order to start more churches in Croatia, the four church leaders met with the group of visiting leaders. It was a complicated meeting because it involved multiple languages: Romani, Croatian, French, and Italian. When one of the leaders made some comments regarding myself and Tijana's role as *gadje* in the church, Josip quickly redirected the conversation by making a joke, claiming that my co-worker and I were 'true and complete Gypsies'. Later, he told us he was hesitant to work with people who erected barriers between Roma and *gadje*.

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[45] In the context of the countries of former Yugoslavia, this is quite common. Many Roma pastors strive to emphasize a 'church for all peoples'. In fact, Josip said he was influenced by a Roma pastor in Serbia in this thinking. Josip states, 'My [God's] house will be a prayer place for all people … and in the Body of Christ, there is no division between Roma and non-Roma' (Field notes, November 2013). In Serbia, another pastor changed his church sign from 'Roma Pentecostal Church' to merely 'Pentecostal Church' to remove a possible barrier preventing Serbians from entering (Field notes, April 2017). In Macedonia, another Roma pastor expressed that that the nationalism and ethnocentrism existing in all groups in Eastern Europe was a 'curse', and his desire was to have Albanians, Roma, and Macedonians to all be part of his church (Wachsmuth 2017a).

[46] At a 2017 conference aimed to bring theologians and practitioners together to reflect on the Roma experience, Josip was asked to welcome the conference participants. He specifically asked that he not be referred to as a 'Roma pastor' of a 'Roma Church', but merely a pastor of a local Pentecostal Church.

Occasionally in the church space, the working out of theology in everyday life is still subject to struggle, evident in this vignette: when a Croatian congregant converted and joined the church in Community C, he said God told him to do so in order to overcome his prejudices towards Serbians and Roma. His particular zealousness in his new faith frequently dominated prayer times. At one point, he shared with a Serbian woman, ‘It is hard for me to love Roma and Serbians’ (based on ethnicity). She replied, ‘It is hard for us to love you too’ (based on his behaviour, which she confided to me later).

The larger Pentecostal space outside the local church, however, reveals the ongoing difficulties of negotiating Christian identity against societal stereotypes. Several children and adults have attended family and children’s summer camps hosted by the Pentecostal church in Croatia. Although there was nervousness in the beginning (from both the children and parents), these endeavours turned out to be largely successful and allowed relationships to transcend ethnic barriers. On the other hand, several times the church in Community C attempted to send young congregants to join a youth night at a nearby Pentecostal (Croatian) church. The Roma teenagers shyly grouped in the back of the space and were largely ignored by the Croat teenagers. Further, although Roma families have attended the Croatian Pentecostal church several times for baptisms or other special events, very few Croatians have ever visited the ‘Roma church’.

6.4.3 Forming Christian Identity in Community—Forgiveness and healing

This ‘alternative community’ has thus theoretically allowed the church congregants an equal footing when encountering other ethnicities or cultures inside the church in terms of the exclusion and racism they have experienced outside.[47] Yet this new identity does

[47] One day, a Roma woman from the church stopped by my house for coffee, not a usual occurrence because my house was in a town 15 minutes’ drive from the church. As we were standing outside, a Croatian neighbour boy was staring at us. ‘Who is that, is she your friend?’ he asked me. The woman laughed and said, ‘Not just a friend, but we are sisters!’, referring to our relationship in family of God. The boy looked completely shocked as we went inside.

not necessarily easily resolve the deep psychological wounding.[48] Keshgegian (2000:15), a theologian of Armenian heritage, questions the role of memories as a 'witness' to trauma and suffering—should the memories focus on the horror, or the resilience and agency of those being persecuted? She sees one's personal narrative identity and the narrative identity of a Christian community as a dialectical relationship toward faith and redemption, which changes both those who have been silenced by suffering, and the community who is telling the story of Jesus (28). She argues that remembering, therefore, is a complex process that involves three foci: First, remembering the past suffering so that it will not be forgotten. Second, remembering the moments of agency and resilience within the suffering in order to humanize the victims. Third, to incorporate life experiences into these previous narratives in order to 'incarnate' something new in both personal and social narratives (29). These layers of memories dialectically interact with the redemptive story of Jesus' life, death and resurrection which can be transformative in that it creates a new narrative.

The importance of forgiveness, a central theme preached in the church and in Bible studies, is a key theological component to this dialectic. The church teaches that forgiveness of sins is key for salvation and being accepted by God, and forgiveness of others is key to the practice of the Christian life. This was taught numerous times by Jesus in the gospels [49] and most poignantly modelled by Jesus as he was dying on the cross in

[48] My own questions on suffering were deepened as I interacted with people's suffering and the importance of community. I wrote in my field notes early in 2017: How easy it is to minister from that 'distance' my privilege allows me—to serve 'those in need' from a position of someone who is healthy, comfortable, and allegedly 'less in need'. But when I am in touch with my own deep wounds, it causes me to remain open to sharing others' wounds as well. Not from a distance of sympathy or pity, both of which do not require emotional involvement, but as a common experience of shared humanity. And thus, instead of the 'minister serving the rest', a space opens for mutual transformation. Our prayer groups have become just this—a sharing of brokenness and prayer that is moulding us into (I hope) a healing community. Today, our prayer group will convene in the home of an elderly member who recently broke her femur on an ice patch. She sits in her home waiting for healing with few distractions (she cannot read to pass the time).

[49] Matthew 6 and 18 are both key texts for forgiveness.

front of his enemies: ‘Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing’ (Luke 23:34). Often this theme emerges in terms of community conflicts.

For example, a number of people stopped coming to church as a result of individual grievances against others that took place in the course of the week preceding a service. Some of those people have returned to the church, while others have stayed away. Most frequently, individuals complain of the ‘hypocrisy’ of certain people who come to church and then are seen cursing, drinking, or fighting with others during the week. In the early days of the church (2014), a verbal fight broke out in the middle of the church service because one man had called the police when another family’s daughter, who had some mental health issues, was walking around the community without being fully clothed. I wrote in my field notes:

> The fight escalated rapidly, with some joining in the yelling and others trying to calm the situation down. Another unrelated argument broke out in the back of the church resulting in a woman storming out. We tried to calm the two men and to get one man to step outside—but in truth, no measure seemed to be working and none of us had any idea what to do.

Throughout the week, we talked to various individuals, as the fight upset many, speaking about what it means to forgive and have grace for the other. Of course, the whole community was talking about it. The next week, one of the families involved in the fight was absent, but the other was there. Surprisingly, a man got up in front of the church and said he had something to say. I wrote in my field notes:

> He calmly shared that his brother had been brutally tortured to death during the [1990s] war. He had prayed for strength to forgive the man who was primarily responsible and when the man had finally been released from prison, he now occasionally visits him to tell him about God. ‘If I can forgive the man who killed my brother, can you not forgive our brother?’ he asked the man from the other family, looking down pointedly at him. The man quietly agreed, and that was the end of it.

Forgiveness as a theme also emerged frequently as part of this dialectical relationship between shaping Christian identity within community in the weekly prayer group or in-home visits. In one such instance during a prayer group (2017), seemingly out of nowhere, a man who had previously never prayed out loud or spoken publicly before, began sharing his story regarding his traumatic childhood with a violent and abusive father. The climax came when he was an adult and his mother became very sick; his father brought her to

the hospital but did not inform anyone she was dying. After she died, this man did not speak to his father for five or six years, describing the feeling of a 'burning rising up' (indicating with his hands from his chest to his throat) and a sense that he might explode. He said that since he started coming to the church, he hated his father less than before, but still had great bitterness toward him. I wrote in my field notes: 'He told his story for a long time, as if it was draining some infected, pus-filled wound.' His story released a torrent of others' sharing what people had done against them. After everyone had spoken, Josip directed each person to the centre of the circle, where they received prayer for the ability to forgive and receive freedom. The next week, this same man prayed out loud in the prayer group for the first time, and said that previously, he felt that there was a 'great stone on his chest and it was a hard burden to carry around, but now it is a lot easier'.

The 'alternative community' provided by Christian community is thus vitally important as it helps individuals bear suffering through love and support and maintains hope for eventual deliverance, which can also be a powerful prophetic force in the face of injustice (Cone 1997; 1999). In this sense, the community can be a form of incarnation, or Christ's presence, to be present in others' suffering, which is part of *Christopraxis* discussed in 6.4.1. Josip and Marija have often said that their past suffering allows them to understand and enter into the suffering of the people to whom they minister. This happens through listening, usually in the people's homes, to what is happening in their lives. The importance of these home visits cannot be overstated in terms of their relationship to church life. I wrote in my field notes in November 2013:

> It became clear to me then, as it should have been before, that these house visits were not just a stepping-stone to 'forming the church'. Rather, in this particular Roma village and culture, the house visits are the very core of the slowly forming faith community. It is inside the Roma home where real life is lived, where connections happen naturally over coffee, and our listening becomes the door to our understanding.

6.5 Integration and Implications

While this chapter has considered the complexities of the lives of the participants and the modes through which they reflect and describe their life stories, it is clear that there are multiple elements to their lived experiences, many of which are directly related to the harshness of their lives and status as racialized, excluded 'others'. Analysing how they claim specific identities through these narratives illustrates the complexity of time, space, and ongoing meaning attributions. Looking at the data through an intersectional lens of Pentecostalism, class, ethnicity and gender, we see how each woman grapples with the basic questions of suffering in her own way, both in relation to the structures of power that would oppose their own agency (Phoenix & Pattynama 2006:187), and their understanding of God's interaction with the world.

On the other hand, the intrinsic conflict in their claimed identities in the stories of trying to make sense of their suffering is directly related to their own interpretative frameworks. Although the 'eye-for-an-eye' interpretative framework helps to answer questions of injustice occurring in relation to their experiences with violence; in another sense, it entraps the narrator because it does not satisfactorily answer the question: 'Why am I suffering? Why am I not allowed to be happy?'. It actually leads to an ongoing existential crisis: an 'innocent's' suffering within a retributive justice framework.

Beste (2007:8) reflects on how the development of trauma theory has challenged Western liberal ideas of the 'self as a free agent', preventing victim blaming in the midst of post-traumatic systems. Further, however, she reflects on trauma research in light of theological perspectives of human freedom—how does 'freedom' to choose God interact with biological and socio-cultural changes resulting from trauma? She discusses theologians, such as Karl Rahner (1904–1984), who argued that God's grace enables every person to freely choose or refuse God, and Martin Luther (1483–1546) who argued that no external harm can hamper God's unmerited grace to save and redeem a human (9). Beste asks: 'If the heart of salvation includes a free response to God, and if severe

trauma can make this impossible, what does this mean for theological anthropology—for our understanding of what it means to be a person called to say yes to God's self-offer?' (9). She answers this question by arguing that a theology of freedom must be open to the prospect that harm has the 'power to destroy a person's capacity to realise sufficient freedom to love, self, neighbour, and God' (14).

Placing individual narratives in the wider empirical terrain of day-to-day interactions and the influence of Marija and Josip on church members, provides a more robust perspective of the dimensions involved in shifting one's 'universe of discourse'(Snow & Machalek 1983) within the conversion career (Gooren 2010).[50] Although Marija and Josip identify with congregants in terms of the severity of suffering, poverty, and exclusion, they have been able to meaningfully interpret their past suffering in a way that empowers their life vision. A frequently preached sermon theme, articulated by Josip is God being with us and understanding our suffering, giving us strength for the struggle of life, and that God is *for* us and not *against* us—this phrase even being written into a song produced specifically for the church.[51] In addition, instances of *Christopraxis* expressed by individuals through a sense of God's presence, visions and dreams, and the care of church leaders interacts with these 'dogmatic' frameworks of suffering resulting from sin. In some cases, such as that of Iva, her experiences of healings and dreams have allowed her to feel loved and 'seen' in a way that propels her faith forward.

These experiences may be seen as 'crisis points', which may either aid or thwart the shifting interpretative frameworks. Crisis points—whether moments of conversion, personal insight, healing, or events—may thus challenge our narrative interpretative frameworks when events become too threatening or too influential to disregard

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[50] The concept of 'universe of discourse' is actually appropriated from George Mead (1934) but is used by a progression of conversion theorists including Snow & Machalek (1984), Staples & Mauss (1987), and Gooren (2010).

[51] This has emerged from Josip in many sermons over the years, such as his series on the Israelites wandering in the wilderness (Exodus) and a sermon comparing Thessalonians to the church (2017).

(Ganzevoort 1993).[52] New experiences or facts must somehow be assimilated into our narratives; sometimes, this is cause for a reinterpretation of the past, ascribing new meaning onto events. The reinterpretations indicate the role of language in shaping interpretation—a shift in identity and self-image, which then initiates an '(auto) biographical reconstruction', 'giving new meaning to old events, and putting different emphases in the big 'plot' of their life story (Gooren 2010:17). Crisis points can result, for example in the lives of Marija and Josip, in 'radical discontinuity' from what came before, a 'series of ruptures with the ways in which they have lived up to the time of their conversion' (Robbins 2010a:159). Thus, even as trauma as an 'epistemological rupture' (Rambo 2011:32) 'reconfigures the imagination, affecting our ability to tell stories about ourselves and our world that are life giving and lead to our flourishing' (Jones 2019:20), crisis points of experiences and healing from God can act as a 're-rupture' of the trauma narrative to 'God sees, God heals, God helps'.

In fact, Helena's (who was converted when Marija and Josip prayed for the woman with a gangrenous leg in her house described in 5.4.2) narrative illustrates a crisis point in which led to a reinterpretation of her self-understanding. In 2013, she described having a spontaneous moment in a prayer group. She had already converted and was preparing for baptism, whilst church leaders were praying for her in what sounded to her like 'Arabic', but was in fact 'speaking in tongues'.[53] She said there was a moment when she felt something pass through her body and her heart and eyes were opened and she thought, 'This is the thing that has been missing in my life for all these years'. It was at that day

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[52] Gerkin (1979:32) describes such a crisis event as 'an extreme or boundary situation in which the fundamental contradiction between human aspirations and finite possibilities becomes visible in such a way as to demand attention'.

[53]As Pentecostals, the church leaders (not including myself), were all praying in what is referred to in Pentecostalism as 'tongues'. That is, the Holy Spirit giving a spirit language to someone to communicate prayer at a deep level.

that everything changed for her.[54] Through her narrative in her first interview (2015), Helena identified several areas of change. Emotionally, God's love filled the gap left by the death of her parents at a young age: 'Before I was in some kind of darkness, God was never on my mind, I was just focused on day to day things. I wish I would have opened up my heart to him sooner.' Helena's theological understanding has grown so she now knows why she celebrates Easter and Christmas, and physically, her prayer life sustains her through her many ailments and illnesses. Some of her theological understanding and accompanying rituals have also shifted, such as ceasing to burn candles for the dead, which is a Catholic tradition.[55] She comments:

> And now there is two years that passed, and I am not burning a candle for anyone who dies. I did not even realise that it changed in me. I have the feeling that I never burned the candles before... But now I know, that Jesus Christ is our light, that he is the one who is lighting our way. And that we don't need a candle or any other light.

There is thus a heterogeneous and non-uniform movement in transformation, a discursive process in which, as Popp-Baier (2002:52) argues, conversion happens in the continuous performance and construction of narratives in the context of social interplay 'informed, sustained, and restricted by the religious group's canonical language'. In this we see the interplay between the spoken theology and church life and life narratives. On the one hand, a confirmation bias may influence how new events are interpreted; perhaps interpreting events via a person's pre-existing beliefs, maybe because this fits more easily into the difficult life they still lead (Traut-Mattausch et al. 2011). On the other hand, in view of the spontaneous moments resulting in forgiveness and freedom, one could speculate that changing interpretative frameworks occurs for congregants at various rates and in differing time frames. Beste (2007:14) argues that God's grace to heal the harm

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[54] She also shared a 'moment of incarnation' that helped her in her journey. She related a dream in which she was at the Croatian coast. Marija came up out of the water and walked over to her and embraced her and told her, 'everything is okay'. One by one, all the church leaders arose out of the water and did the same. This gave her the confidence to know she was going in the right direction.

[55] Catholic teaching associates lighting candles for the dead as remembrance and prayer for their souls, particularly souls in purgatory. Helena understood that lighting candles for the dead helps them see where they need to go.

that limits a person's capacity to choose can be mediated through supportive and loving interpersonal relationships. In the space of community, the narrative prayer and the spontaneous telling of narrative within community, reorients a person's narrative to the Christian story (Engelke 2010).

6.6 Conclusion

My analysis presented above is not intended to create categories or uniform themes regarding the experience of Roma, identity, and Pentecostalism. Narrative analysis thus allows a particular emplotment and articulation of a claimed identity at a specific time, so as to not 'produce' a Roma identity through the analysis (Brown 1997:87). Rather, narrative analysis illustrates the complex process of meaning-making at the intersection of ethnicity, class, theology, and gender at a certain point in time (Fabian 1983, xi), categories that are themselves fluid, and exposed the implicit ways the Roma negotiate their identity against cultural tropes and stereotypes. Narrative analysis also revealed the women's interpretative framework, or operating theology, as opposed to the simple 'before and after' of conversion stories.

In the end, it appears that negotiating Christian identity has influenced each woman's identity and meaning-making (as recounted in narratives) in divergent ways, ways that are still dynamically changing in reaction to crisis points, experiences of God and the Holy Spirit in daily life, and ongoing learning. Thus, one can say Roma Pentecostalism, in the context of this community in Croatia, *was*, *is*, and is *becoming*. However, shifting discourse is not enough unless 'crisis points' can be processed in a way that links the body, spirit, and mind. Therefore, a major obstacle to a conclusive 'rupture' that leads to holistic transformation, in the way experienced by Marija and Josip, is the issue of healing from past trauma and a contextual theology of suffering which influences their interpretative framework but also needs to account for the suffering in their bodies and

mental health. As we go forward in this thesis, narrative analysis of data gathered in Serbia within a church that is several years older than this one, will provide a useful comparison of how Pentecostalism is appropriated in a similar yet different context.

CHAPTER SEVEN: NARRATIVE ANALYSIS IN COMMUNITY B

7.1 Introduction

Chapter Four highlighted the advantages of conducting a 'lateral comparison' in that it served to highlight how the role of the researcher influences the immediate context and the kind of narratives being told. Therefore, this chapter will continue to explore negotiations of Pentecostal identity in a second Old Romanian speaking community in Serbia (Community B), which shares familial, cultural, and lingual similarities to Community C. This community identifies itself as 'Romanian' internally but negotiates as 'Roma' identity in other contexts. First, this chapter will summarize the lives and ministry of the church leaders and married couple, Marko and Zora. Analysis of their narratives will be interspersed throughout the chapter, in relationship to their own analysis of the church and congregants. Second, similarly to the format of Chapter Six, this chapter will focus on the analysis of individual identities based on core selected narratives, followed by discussion of the metanarratives emerging from these and other life stories collected in Community B, and concluding with the integration of themes and implications of these multiple elements.

7.1.1 Religious and Cultural Background of Roma Pentecostals in Serbia

In Serbia, the Roma are largely Orthodox or Sunni Muslim, with some communities of Shia Muslim Roma in Southern Serbia, although Roma groups are largely neglected by the leaders of these religious institutions (Todorović 2014). Despite this, Orthodox or Muslim Roma would still celebrate parts of Muslim or Orthodox religious traditions (such as St. George's day or Saint day and Ramadan), although not usually as a part of the larger religious community. For example, Orthodox Roma would celebrate one's 'saint day' by preparing a meal, but not necessarily inviting a priest (Todorović 2014:235). In addition

to this, often practices of witchcraft or magic are intertwined with either Orthodox or Muslim rituals (Bakić, interview 2012). In the last two to three decades, however, small Protestant communities among the Roma began growing rapidly, and in fact Roma Pentecostals outnumber any other ethnic group of Pentecostals in Serbia. Todorović (2014) describes Leskovac as the 'heart' of protestantization,[1] having the largest Pentecostal congregation and two Roma churches (which was formerly one church).

The story of the churches in Leskovac is linked to both churches under study in Croatia and Serbia. In the 1970s, a Serbian Pentecostal pastor, Mio Stanković prayed for a sick Roma woman who was subsequently healed in Leskovac, Serbia. This broadened his perspective to reach out to the Roma in addition to Serbians, a reorientation he called a 'mission-within-a-mission', and in 1979 he became intentional about inviting Roma into the church. In 1980, the church had around 20–30 people, both Serbian and Roma. In 1986, Mio split the church into separate services for Serbs and Roma to accommodate different styles of worship (Alijević, interview 2012). This was the first known Roma church in former Yugoslavia (Stanković 2010; Harvey 2009). During the early 1990s, there was an explosion of Roma people coming to the church, drawn by the stories of miracles among the Roma.[2] This led to rapid growth of the church itself, as word travelled through family networks and community as many people came for prayer. By 1992/1993, a Roma man, Selim Alijević became a pastor of the church, and started gathering young leaders.[3] Prayer and prayer groups became foundational for the church—they began

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[1] Todorović (2014:229) is quite expansive in his inclusion of religious groups with Protestants, including Adventists, Pentecostals, Jehovah Witnesses, Mormons, Baptists, and Methodists. This inclusion would not be commonly agreed upon by these groups. For example, Pentecostals would not include Mormons and Jehovah Witnesses to be in their 'faith' family, based on significant theological differences.

[2] In an interview with Alijević (2012), he recounted some of the early miracles. One man had a cancerous tumour and the doctors said he would die. He came to church with his diagnosis on a paper, so weak that he was carried in. The church began to pray for him. The second time, he ran in and said God healed him and produced a doctor's paper with the new results. A man was healed of a heart problem, another man was healed out of a wheelchair, and still another was healed from deafness.

[3] Selim had been converted in the church when he was 12, and the church sent him to a Bible school in England in 1989. He recounted being very encouraged seeing how churches in England were working, and said God spoke to him about having a team of leaders, rather than just working by himself, when he returned

praying for the city, and for 15 years Friday was designated as a day for prayer and fasting. By the mid-1990s, the church was holding three services on a Sunday to accommodate the number of Roma who wished to attend. By the time it split in two because of a disagreement between leaders in 2005, it was estimated that the number of born-again Christians was 1000 people, in a local Roma population of 8–10,000.

In 1995, pastor Selim encountered René Zanellato, head of the Gypsy and Traveller International Evangelical Fellowship (French Life and Light), at a prayer conference in Macedonia. Zanellato visited Leskovac when the revival was already in process but helped raise money for a large tent that became the church building. In partnership with Next Level International, a non-Roma ministry from England in the late 1990s, church-'planting' seminars and theological training were conducted for selected young leaders, who were then sent out to plant seven churches throughout Serbia (Bakić, interview 2012; Alijević, interview 2012; Kamberović, interview 2015). As of 2020, leaders estimate 28 Roma churches in Serbia (most but not all emerging from Leskovac) and 15 church plants (defined as having no autonomous pastor) (Facebook Messenger exchanged with Kamberović, 2020; Wachsmuth 2013b, 2017a, 2017b; Stanković 2010). According to Šerif Bakić, pastor of one of the churches (Interview 2012), Serbians began to notice changes in the Roma villages as the Roma began to 'grow up' spiritually, including peace in families decrease in crime and violence: 'Before Christ, the police could come seven times [in a day] because of all the fighting… The Serbians realised that God is doing something among Roma people. The government in Leskovac loves us [the church] because we have such a positive influence' (Interview 2012).[4] At times, the pastors have been called by city authorities for mediation. The church also went to the primary schools

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to Serbia. He returned to Leskovac in 1992. He also encountered Roma leaders from the English Life and Light movement in England (See Chapter Two).

[4] Bakić chronicles his own conversion which took place after the miraculous healing of his son in the Pentecostal *Izvori* (2011). He also talks about the oppression of his people and the church's influence.

to help children succeed; before the revival and growth of the church, very few children completed high school. In 2012, Šerif estimated that 40 percent finished high school, and most of them are part of the church (Marko, interview 2019; Wachsmuth 2013b).[5]

Both Marko and Zora, church leaders in Community B, grew up in Leskovac, Serbia, which has three Roma communities. The two larger ones, where Marko and Zora grew up, consist of members from the Arli tribe, which is today largely Christian due to the Pentecostal revival. The third and oldest community is Muslim and consists of members from a different Roma ethnic group, the Gurbet. Fifteen years ago, there were fights and tensions between the Arli and Gurbet, due to dialect, tribal, and some religious differences (Facebook Messenger exchange with M. Bakić 2019). Today, however, Bakić notes that the situation is markedly different, with the young people from both tribal groups spending time together. He attributes this to the Pentecostal church's influence as young people spent more time together in church activities as more Muslims from the Gurbet have converted to Pentecostalism, therefore young people have little interest anymore in the differences. Although they still speak their respective dialects in their homes, they speak the Arli dialect in church since the majority of members are Arli. Neither Marko nor Zora's family were explicitly religious aside from celebrating the traditional Orthodox festivals. Marko's family were all converted to be Jehovah Witnesses—which Pentecostals view to be outside orthodox Christianity, whereas Zora's family is largely still not religious.

Marko and Zora's narratives are drawn from a brief early interview in 2012 and a more substantive interview in 2018. They both grew up in very poor conditions. Their parents/guardians were all marketplace sellers, and their families would spend the

[5] Despite all the positive gains, both pastors in 2012 detailed many challenges in terms of disagreements within the church regarding how to use church resources, feeling that Serbians were controlling money and using the Roma to obtain humanitarian aid/money, exhaustion, and discouragement.

‘season’, typically May through autumn, travelling to different locations to sell their products in the open-air markets, which were a part of daily life for people in Yugoslavia.

7.2 Life History Summaries of Marko and Zora

7.2.1 Poverty and Neglect

Marko, born in 1970, rooted his personal narrative in stories he had heard from members of his community about the aftermath of WWII in Leskovac, where according to him, many of the Roma men had been shot by Germans on a hill near the town.[6] After the war and during the communist regime, life was very difficult for the Roma, as they subsisted in extreme poverty and lived separately from the rest of the town. Both his father and mother came from large families (nine and five, accordingly); on his mother’s side, his grandfather was part of the Communist League and accordingly managed to obtain some level of education and employment as a result of his political membership. Marko and his two younger brothers lived in overcrowded conditions in a small room with mud floors. He commented that winter was ‘very overwhelming’: ‘…in my head there remains some pictures of that. That is something terrible. I would not even know how to describe it, how everything looked.’

Eventually his grandfather, as a result of his employment, bought a small piece of land in an undeveloped field in the ‘new’ Roma settlement, and they built a one room shack to where he and his family moved in 1976. Marko attended school but dropped out before eighth grade. He attributes this early school leaving to his own parents’ lack of schooling and lack of value placed on education, which meant that they could not help him with his schoolwork. Instead, Marko learned from his parents how to survive, in his words, by

[6] This is a documented event. In 1941, three German officers were killed in Leskovac, so the town officials were instructed to choose people for execution in retaliation. The officials recommended people be gathered from Arapova Dolina district, which was a Roma neighbourhood. 310 people were executed at Hisar hill, of which 293 were Roma, in addition to 6 Jews and 11 Serbs (Lawler 2017).

scams, thieving, lies, and engaging in witchcraft, soothsaying, and so on. He describes himself as a boy who was very 'upset' and 'restless', getting into trouble, because in essence his parents did not pay much attention to him:[7]

> I was very upset, very restless, as a boy. I was making big problems, and they could not tame me. One occasion I went to school, and there was snow in the settlement. I left barefoot … without shoes, without slippers. And then when I came to school, all the children were looking in wonder … 'wow, barefoot to school!' And when my teacher came, I sat there, and she could not see me. But then the children said, 'Teacher, teacher, Marko came barefoot'. 'How barefoot?' she said. She came to me and looked. 'What are you doing? Are you crazy? So, what, Why?'. And then I said that I don't have anything to put on them, you know, but that I did not want to miss school. Wow, she cried. To her it was really sad.

Marko began noticing Zora when he was 13 and she was 12, as she began to develop into a beautiful young woman. Rumours began to circulate around the community regarding who might 'steal'[8] Zora for marriage, if her parents did not arrange her marriage. When Marko's family was away for their business, Marko and Zora wrote letters to each other; even though there had not been a parental emphasis on remaining in school, thus illustrating Marko and Zora's degree of literacy. Marko's parents opened one of the letters and saw that Zora had drawn herself and Marko holding hands. After this, his father advised him to bring her into the house for marriage, otherwise someone else might 'steal' her. Consequently, she moved in and Marko's parents helped them to survive.

Zora is the oldest of two brothers and four sisters, and as her parents divorced when she was very young, she lived with her grandparents prior to marriage with Marko. Both of her parents had remarried and consequently had little to do with her. Zora's father remarried multiple times and then ended up in jail. Zora remembers being poor and neglected, noting: 'I grew up in a childhood without love.' Her grandmother worked hard

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[7] He uses the word 'abandoned' him; however, he does not use this in terms of a physical abandonment, but an abandonment of parental responsibilities to guide and care for him.

[8] 'Stealing' is referring to a man convincing a woman to marry him without the parents' consent. Marko attributes early marriage to the fact that if there is a beautiful girl, someone wants to marry her before someone else takes her. He contrasted the cultural difference in Leskovac with Northern Serbia: a girl needs to be a virgin in Leskovac, whereas in their area of northern Serbia there is not such a big emphasis on that. He explains the value of virginity in Leskovac has been influenced by their Muslim background, whereas this Muslim influence is not present in their community in the North: 'our [from the south] background is Muslim … that is left from the Muslims…While in the north it is not so… And we [generically speaking regarding communities in the north, not from the position of the church] do not care about if someone has sex before marriage or no.'

as a cleaner in people's houses so had little time for her. When she fell in love with Marko and decided to marry him at the age of 12, his family was part of the attraction. To her, they seemed to have a better life than she had previously experienced.

Early on in their marriage, Zora said Marko had 'kept bad company', going out in the morning and not returning until evening, and he constantly 'cheated' on her, while she had to stay in the house according to custom, which she attributed to 'the Muslim part of life': 'When a woman marries, she must be in the house. The man can go around, he can have five women in a row. He will come again to you. So, they are all brainwashed [laughing]. Or I loved him, in fact, and I did not want to make any problems.' For Zora, she attributes the fact she stayed with Marko to the fact that his family seemed to care for her, something she lacked in her own childhood.

7.2.2 Tragedy and Answer to Prayer Leads to God

When Zora was 14, she had the first of two children who both died at birth, with the second child being born and dying when she was 15. Marko attributes these devastating deaths to the beginning of the couple's journey toward God: 'And so we started in pursuit of God. That is, God started pursuing us, not us for him … from that we were search[ing] for help from God.' At that time, because of their business, the couple and their family were spending the winters in Leskovac and the summers in northwest Serbia. When they were in Leskovac, they began attending the Roma Pentecostal church in that town. Other converts and leaders from the Pentecostal church came to counsel them on their bereavements, advising them that only God could help them, and therefore they must not seek help from soothsayers and through witchcraft.

In painful desperation, they agreed: 'We said, ok, if God can help, let him help us and then we will, I don't know, thank him and go to church. God heard of our condition, request, and gave us twin sons. So, we converted…'. In 1988, Zora was 17 when their twins were born, and their birth was seen as an answer from God; but both Marko and

Zora confessed that it was not an 'honest conversion' and therefore they drifted away from the church after their prayer was answered. Around 1992, when the twins were four, they moved to northwest Serbia permanently, because they said they had better conditions and opportunities for their lives and market produce business. They already had friends and made more money in northwest Serbia, which contributed to their decision-making progress.

7.2.3 Negotiating Christian Identity within Gendered Morality

In the first 11 years of the twin's lives, Marko said he was a 'big problem', a condition he ascribes to the fact that they had married so early that he felt he had not experienced any life. He was running around with lots of other women and this caused significant problems in the marriage. These problems culminated in a separation for a few months in 1999 when they were both 29, until Zora said that they should return to church because only God could help them: 'If we started going to church, if we started following God, praying to God, our lives would change. And then we went to church. And really this is how it was.' They began attending a Protestant Pentecostal church, comprised of Serbians, Slovaks, and Hungarians in a nearby town. They both felt 'touched' by God upon returning to church. They repented again and began to be more active in learning, participating, and changing, in terms of what the church and Bible taught. Soon, they were baptized.

Both Zora and Marko experienced a personal transformation or 'rupture' after this final encounter with the church and God. For Marko, he ascribes his 'restlessness' in life and with women to the time before he did not know God and his own self-centeredness and lack of interest in his children: 'Only I was important. How they were, that was not interesting to me, then, in that time. Therefore, they [the twins] did not finish their school, elementary school.' He also attributes this omission to support his children's education to the fact that he had had no parenting himself: 'Unfortunately, I was not then converted,

I didn't know how to raise them, how to educate them because I was not properly raised.' However, he attributes his change in parenting to his conversion: 'It is a completely different story today, because we understand some something totally different [as compared to his parents] … it is from the spiritual changes that came when we converted to God.' Through the teaching of the Bible and the teaching of the church, Marko was able to change his ideas of family and morality.

7.2.4 Healing and Forgiveness

Zora described how God helped her forgive her family for her childhood and she was then able to feel love for them and other people. When she was seven, her mother tried to reconnect with her, perhaps feeling regret that she abandoned her. Zora describes:

> … I accepted this, but I did not have emotions, nothing towards her. She always cried when she was visiting and so on… And until I met the Lord. When I met the Lord, God told me to forgive and everything. Everything changed in me and I began to have sympathy and so on… God helped me to get [feel] love toward the old ones [family].

This was not an immediate experience, but a slow process of receiving God's love and feeling God's love for other people, and in turn a 'healing' of her feelings toward her parents. Although her father is dead, she now has a relationship with her mother, prays for her, and is trying to evangelize her.

Marko also tries to evangelize his family, who are all Jehovah Witnesses, and he comments that the best witness is their changed lives. Marko comments: 'Everyone loves us, because we, we, we no longer look at people like we used to. And that respect that we show them, the love that we show them and every time when we are going to them, we pray for them, and we talk to them about God.'

7.2.5 The Holy Spirit and Calling into Ministry

Two or three years after their final conversion experience and after they had been attending church in north Serbia for a couple of years, around 2002/2003, Zora brought a reading from the church home, putting it on her wardrobe to serve as a visible

encouragement and exhortation for her. Suddenly, she heard a voice, which she now identifies as the Holy Spirit say, '"Why is that here? Why do you not share that with people?" And then God inspired me to testify when I went to work at the market.' Zora said, however, that she did not meet with very much success until Marko also decided to serve in ministry, partially in response to the influence of Zora and a feeling of being called by God. They started with simple endeavours, such as putting Bible verses on the flowers they were selling.

In 2004, Zora began to evangelize one woman in the marketplace while she was working, which occurred because she (Zora) was constantly singing, and the woman asked her if perhaps she did not have any troubles. 'We have [troubles], how could we not, but our problems, our troubles, we put in Christ's hands. He worries for us and therefore we can sing, we can be joyful.' Soon the woman began coming to church with Zora and Marko in the town 20 km away, since there was not yet a Protestant church in their town, nor a Roma church in their *mahala* (Roma settlement). Because the woman had never been to a Protestant church, she brought candles with her in order to light one as one would in an Orthodox Church. Marko and Zora explained that such rituals were not important for Pentecostals. Eventually, in her home, Marko and Zora began a home group in the Roma community, with Marko teaching and leading the group. By 2005, the family hosting the home group was baptized. More people joined the home group, and Marko and Zora used one of their market trucks to take their fellow Roma and drive them to the church 20 km away every Sunday.

The leadership of this partner church helped them to evangelize other Roma, prayed with them, sometimes spoke in their newly developing church in the village and encouraged them in numerous ways. However, certain things were also challenging. In the early days, when the pastor of the partner church died, Marko noted certain attitudes surfaced:

> Some of the [church] members [of the partner church] did not accept me very much. It was very hard for them to accept Roma, because Roma are different. Always they are different from the others. And we cannot say Serbians, because here in the church you have a multinational community where you have Croatians, Hungarians, Serbians, and Slovaks, and everyone is mixed … it was, [a], very difficult moment when we needed to suffer something and so on …'

Marko and Zora related how it proved particularly difficult for the partner church to accept the presence of Roma children, as they were 'restless' compared to the other children in the wider congregation, probably due to different parenting and social values.

Driving the group from the village on a weekly basis to the church lasted for three years until they were stopped by the police and given a ticket for having people riding in a van without seats. This forced Marko and Zora into making a decision on the future of the Christian community, and in 2008, they began holding their own services in the Roma settlement, where the municipality allowed them the use of a building in the middle of the settlement. Marko led the church, although he and Zora had not undertaken Bible school training. Later, they attended a Bible school on most weekends from 2011–2013 to develop their knowledge, fitting in studies between their daily working life. From 2010–2015, they used a bigger space for the church, sharing the location with a Catholic group who held their own separate services until some political changes in the village forced them out of the building. For a while, Marko and Zora even began personally paying for a bus to transport people to the church 20 km away, but this proved to be too much for their personal finances to sustain. They began to pray and trust God to lead them somewhere else where they and others could worship, although they had no money to pay for premises. Eventually, money came through unexpected sources, such as Christians groups from different countries, and they were able to buy a large house in the Roma settlement, where they now hold services.[9]

[9] To renovate the building, money occasionally came through partnership networks. For example, some Chinese Christians from a mission organization became aware of the poverty of the Roma in Serbia and began connecting with Roma pastors in 2013/2014. They became occasional donors to Marko and Zora's church building project.

7.3 Narrative Analysis in the Fieldwork Site of Community B

Although there are many familial, lingual, and cultural connections between Communities B and C, the feeling of the village is very different. I wrote in my field notes in 2017:

> The village obviously feels much bigger than [Community C] since it is 5000 people. The three shops in the village are owned by Serbians, and the bakery by Albanians. I have the sense that people are just scrambling and working for survival every day. Most people are working in scrap metal, some people on the markets, selling things to vendors or [are] vendors themselves. For example, Eve's mother takes her van and goes everywhere to find chickens which she brings back to sell [to] people. My hosts, Dragan and Mina, were telling me all the ways they look for money, as Serbia is such a hard place to live. They also told me that when it is time to work in the fields, people work for at least eight hours, sometimes needing to commute as far as two hours each day, only for eight Euros. I guess they are working in the black market … that someone gets a contract with a farmer to plant potatoes or harvest potatoes, and he keeps most of the money for himself and hires out some Roma to work for pittance.

In addition, and in contrast to Community C, more men are involved in the church. The men come together for prayer on Mondays, and fewer women come. Marko does most of the preaching on Sundays and leading prayer meetings during the week, except when they have guest preachers traveling through the village or coming from the church in the town 20 km away. In contrast to Community C in Croatia where both Tijana and I have preached regularly, there are no models of females preaching and teaching. As in Croatia, church attendance has also fluctuated over the years because of emigration from Serbia, and a flow of people joining, leaving, and sometimes returning to the church. In 2018, the church consisted of around 50 baptized individuals, although different numbers, both baptized and unbaptized, attend each Sunday.

7.3.1 Immediate Context

As mentioned in Chapter Four, I first visited this village in 2012, and as Community C had considered Community B its 'sister church', I already had many contacts there before my formal research began. Consequently, I was warmly welcomed into the people's homes when visiting in Serbia; however, I soon realised how much personal relationships and the context in which one is known to a community has an impact on the quality of interviews, especially with women. Liamputtong (2007:57) connects informed research

to depth of rapport with participants, particularly for vulnerable groups (see also Booth 1999; Miller & Tewksbury 2001). Most of the interviews were conducted with family groups, with the man as the primary speaker, and the women hesitant to say anything. I write:

> I was convinced that if I could just get the women alone, they would open up to me. But it wasn't their husband that was the problem (or maybe it contributed but [was] not the whole problem), rather it was that they have little relationship with me. Therefore, I realise me asking questions and listening to their story is in a different style to what I was doing in my community. It is hard to compare without the [same depth of] relationship.

Sometimes, more difficult details would emerge after I had been in the house for a while, as people began to relax with me, still in family groups. In addition, some of the people I interviewed were relations of people from the community in Croatia. In that context, it seemed that I was more readily accepted by virtue of family relationships, and knowledge of my long-time involvement with the community in Croatia.

I had met my language helper, Eve, in my first visit to the village in 2012, before my PhD work began. At that time, I spoke little Croatian, and pastor Marko invited her to serve as my translator, since even as a young teenager she had an aptitude for languages. In the course of interviewing pastor Marko, her story was related to me as an example of how God's healing of sick people was a method of evangelization and testimony. Eve had an operation that unexpectedly resulted in a twisted intestine. She needed another operation to repair it, which the doctor said would be very dangerous. The doctor related it was a 1000 to one chance that the intestine would resolve itself on its own. Marko and Zora came to the hospital and prayed for her. She began to feel better and the doctor said she was healed. Eve began to weep as she was translating her own story, remembering what God had done for her, but then confessing that although she had attended church in the year after the healing in 2009, the last couple of years since then she had become more distant from the church. She said: 'This year, I am not going, and I don't know why. God gave me everything, and I did not respect that'. At that point, Marko told her that 'God loves you' (Interview 2012). The phone rang, interrupting the moment, and the

atmosphere lightened, returning to the pastor's story. Since that point, I saw her occasionally on visits or on joint mission work.

I also interviewed Ljuba, Eve's mother, and because of my relationship with Eve, she gave me an extensive interview with very transparent details concerning her husband's affair and the subsequent impact on the family. As Chapter Four demonstrates, interview situations fundamentally shape both form and content of the interview (Gubrium & Holstein 2012:32). Because of the mother-daughter relationship, I assumed she would offer me a guarded telling of her life. However, at times I became uncomfortable at the graphic account she was narrating, very aware that these details concerned Eve's father, who had since passed away. Although the story of betrayal was painful to listen to, Ljuba revealed that her long, detailed narrative was also intended to be a motherly dispersing of wisdom for her daughter:

> But God forbid, that she (Eve) falls in in such problems, but I wanted her to hear something, so she doesn't do what I did [long pause]. And that's why I talked and opened up. Because some things you don't think with your head, what you do, but later there are a lot of consequences.

Afterward, Eve told me privately that she had not heard many of those details before and it was painful to listen to them. Although it was not my intention, this demonstrates how my very presence acted as an 'active subjectivity' and therefore coproduced this intimate story (Gubrium & Holstein 2012:33). As such, I was unsure of whether I had caused some emotional harm to Eve. I wrestled with the idea that my research had the 'potential to invade, distort or destroy this private world of both the participants and myself' (Sque 2000:25) by unearthing painful memories. On the other hand, it also seemed as if Ljuba was empowered by the research (Mishler 1991) to tell Eve her painful story, which she had previously been unable to communicate. Although I did not ask about her husband's affair, she chose to tell me.

In light of the different circumstances of the interviews in Community B, my analysis transpired from different approaches. In some of the interviews, I was able to apply

Spector-Mersel's (2011) six-part analysis, gleaning the end point, or the identity put forth in the stories. Other interviews were too sparse because of unwillingness to share too much detail with me, while others used a conversion narrative framework to tell their story. Despite the diversity of storytelling methods and the consequential challenge of analysis, I was able to use these various layers of narrative for analytic bracketing (Gubrium & Holstein 2009)—in order to ascertain the metanarratives and cultural dynamics at play in Community C (See Appendix 4).

7.3.2 Story Form and Plot

As previously mentioned, I had less contact in this village, and also fewer repeated interviews. Therefore, both degree of contact and opportunity to gain additional information were less. I interviewed 20 individuals and/or family units (See Figure 4.2) on three different visits. In addition, I visited over the span of five years for church or social activities; and sometimes congregants from Community B would visit Community C for shared activities. As in Community C, the stories were event driven rather than chronological, a method of narrative storytelling characteristic of oral communities (Ong 2002; Camery-Hoggatt 2005). The following chart depicts data provided by selected individuals to highlight examples of their end points. I selected these particular narratives because of the detail and reflection in the stories—individuals who narrated freely with few prompts. In the following discussion, I will highlight two of the narratives subjected to a deeper analysis as exemplars, (those of Ljuba and Lazar), in order to demonstrate the meaning attribution and the end point of the identity they put forth in their life stories. In the chart below, some interlocuters are not assigned an end point; because they co-constructed their story with another family member(s) (Luka and Mina; Mladen and family) or the narrative was too short, telling only one life incident with the rest being told by the husband (Viki).

Figure 7.1 Identity End points

Names	Main plot event	Meaning attribution	End point
Filip	Abandonment by his mother, Grandson's healing	God's mercy saves	I survived the hard things in my life because of God's mercy and because I am diligent and hardworking
Dragan	Curse/sickness	I found God through my troubles	Evil tormented me, but God saved me when I looked for him
Luka and Mina	Daughter's scoliosis	God is big, we saw how he was with us through everything	Co-construction of narrative, no end point
Lazar	Daughter's exploitation in Germany	Don't rely on anyone but God; I have everything I need right here	Through God's 'school' I learned how to be content; but how to forgive the past?
Sofija and Nemanja	Daughter-in-law's death	I have a strong faith in God, God helps me	Life is a battle and I am really suffering. I'm trying to take care of everyone alone, but it is impossible. But when things get difficult, God gives me strength
Ljuba	Love story spanning love, hate, pity, husband's affair	Now I ask God: Lord, show me your way. I can't do it alone	I did everything for love, but it wasn't enough. But God saved me in multiple ways
Mladen and Family	Shooting in the forest and 10 years in prison	We met God through the problems and suffering	Co-construction of narrative, no end point
Miodrag	Degenerative dystrophy	I am thankful for my wheelchair because it keeps me dependent on God	God gives me joy, he is the only one I can rely on
Ruzica	Always hardship	Nothing is ever good for long in my life	My life is a disappointment, but God gives me strength to keep going
Viki	Her sickness	I suffered a lot, but thanks to God, now I don't even take medication	Narrative too short for EP
Elena	Studying the Bible with Jehovah Witnesses	God leading her to the right church	My life has no meaning without God: I must put my life and future in his hands because he is the only one who will not disappoint me

7.3.2.1 Ljuba—Identity negotiations in marriage

As mentioned above, Eve's mother, Ljuba, 46, related her narrative in front of Eve since she was my language helper. Ljuba and her husband joined the Pentecostal home group in 2004 and were baptized in 2005, but her story was not structured on a conversion narrative; rather, Ljuba's interactions with God spilled through the narrative structure of a 'love story' in three parts. As both form and content are equally important in narrative methodology (Eakin 1999), it is significant that the story of the affair was not an incidental detail, rather shaping the entire the narrative. Ljuba offered a quick synopsis at the beginning of her story:

> And I want to tell you, there are three periods. Man has three periods. First phase is when you really love someone, when you meet a boy, you love him a lot, right. Then comes second phase, hate. When a person falls in love with another person, you hate him because he hurt you, humiliated you, rejected you. You know what I'm telling you? And then comes the third phase when you feel sorry for him. That I know from experience.

In the first phase, she and her husband 'married' in eighth grade (around the age of 14 in 1987/88) but had nothing to live on, living in one room alone with a nylon door and eating plums. But she related, 'We lived from love … I mean, it was hard, but in all of that we loved each other very much and then everything was good for me … we made possible out of impossible.'[10] Later, after her husband's mandatory year in the army at age 18, which was required of all men during the State of Yugoslavia, and by making use of Ljuba's own salary from working as a fieldworker, the young couple were able to accumulate enough to acquire a house and some possessions. They also had two children together (Eve and her brother) during this phase of their young adult life.

[10] Both sets of parents were against the marriage. His parents took him away and married him to another woman, but Ljuba was already pregnant. Because she of this, she aborted the child so she would not have to raise the child alone. Eventually, her husband came back to her.

7.3.2.2 Confronting Gendered Expectations

In the second phase of the story, which leaps ahead years in time to 2007/2008 when her children were teenagers, her husband became involved with another woman, a non-Roma woman who, to add to her grief, was also Ljuba's friend. He mortgaged the family house and took the money for his new woman and they ran off to Montenegro for a year and a half. It was a stressful time for the family since this was in 2009 when Ljuba's teenage daughter (Eve) was in the hospital with a twisted bowel. In addition, the interest rate on the house tripled during this time, so that the bank threatened to repossess the house as she couldn't meet the mortgage payments. However, a lawyer, who was a friend of Ljuba's, took pity on her and discovered that the deed to the house was jointly in her name, and therefore the land was half hers. Indeed, the family came very close to being evicted. On the day the men from the bank came to repossess the property, Ljuba was very nervous about standing up to the 'educated people'. She said, 'They know article this, article that, but I had Jesus. I had God. The first thing I did, I prayed to him, God, Jesus, Holy Spirit to give me wisdom. To give me knowledge of what to say, how to talk and how to behave…' When they arrived, Ljuba greeted the bailiffs and offered to sell them her half of the house for 100,000 euros. They replied:

> 'Madam, are you sane, do you know how much money that is?' I said, I know, how can I not know? This house is not for sale, but if you want to buy it you will pay me 100,000 for my half, and I will go to Belgrade to buy an apartment and rent it out. And I said, you won't be able to stay here. Because we are Gypsies. And I will make your life miserable if you stay here. And he said, 'Madam, we bought this house for three thousand euros.' [And I said,] you bought his part, not mine. And for my part I ask 100,000.

The men left her alone after seeing proof of her ownership, but despite the challenges facing the family, her husband did not send her any money for the children or to pay the mortgage on the house. Ljuba was therefore required to undertaken work labouring in the fields to pay off the house loan. This particular vignette is a seemingly fantastical part of Ljuba's story, raising questions as to what other factors were involved in driving the bank representatives away and deflecting them from repossessing the house. Josselson's (2004)

application of Ricoeur's (1970) hermeneutics of suspicion applied to narrative research is helpful here, in order to deconstruct this story. The construction of this particular event reveals the contrast between strong agency versus a weak victim. Her husband's betrayal left Ljuba vulnerable (an all-to-common cultural discourse), and yet she constructs her narrative as a 'resistant strategy' (Chase 2011) in a way that challenges the cultural discourse of a poor, helpless Roma woman dependant on men and yet betrayed by him. As Spector-Mersel (2010) noted, this portrayal of ourselves as victims or heroes has likely connections to how we behave every day. Indeed, Ljuba still works many hours a day conducting her own chicken selling business. Her attitude is relentlessly positive, despite her long hours and her severe varicose veins that give her pain and difficulty when she walks.

During the second phase of the story, (abandoned with children to look after and a mortgage to pay) Ljuba related three different situations that illustrated her anger regarding the affair. Her depth of pain was evident when her husband humiliated her in front of others when he said, 'Who are you? I don't need you anymore, you are garbage'. Her helplessness reveals itself in her musing: 'I did everything, just to keep him, but I couldn't. All for love … but he didn't want to. You can keep someone when he wants to, but when he doesn't … I don't know what to say.'

A climatic situation illustrating her anger arose when she decided to seek out proof of the suspected affair, although her friend had assured her that she would never sleep 'with a Gypsy' so as to calm any suspicion that Ljuba might have.[11] After discovering where her husband and friend were meeting, Ljuba went to confront them and found them naked in his truck. She dragged them out of the truck and began beating them in a fit of rage.

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[11] It seems that Ljuba did have suspicion, because after her friend said this, Ljuba warned her: 'You have met the good Ljuba but pray that you never meet the bad Ljuba.'

After the violent assault, she said to him, ‘I don’t need you. From that moment, I hated him.’

7.3.2.3 Claimed Identity—I did everything I could, but God saved me many times.

In the third part of the story, her husband returned in 2009, a miracle she attributes to God:

> That was God’s work. He did the impossible to the man [in changing him]. Me as a wife I couldn’t do it, kids didn’t have influence on him anymore. He was lost… But the time came when God said stop! Enough! You were wandering, you did what you wanted, now you have to get back to your family… And now he called me, he says to me, can I come home? Because the house is not his anymore, now it is mine. You know? Because he left everything, I say, I couldn’t wait for him to say that. To come home. Because I still loved him. I want him. Always. I say, ‘come’.

She was able to forgive him, but they became ‘like brother and sister’ because she was haunted by the image of him in the truck with his lover, an episode that she refers to as the ‘biggest mistake she made’ because it prevented her from going back to any kind of physical relationship. He told her because they could not have a physical married relationship that ‘you are making me go to another woman again’. At that point, she gave him his freedom, although they continued to live together. Although they had both been converted and baptized in 2004, this indicates their marriage relationship was not dictated by Christian values, being faithful to one’s spouse. At the end of 2014, he was diagnosed with cancer, and she began to pity her husband and take care of him in his terminal illness. Ten days before he died in 2016, her husband said he regretted what he had done, and he would not do it again if he could go back in time. At some point during this final phase, Ljuba indicated that she had wanted to have a physical relationship again (presumably because they had become closer), but because of how sick he was, it was too late: ‘Then we both cried because we didn’t cherish when we could do it.’ Ljuba concludes her story focusing on forgiveness:

> I have peace in my heart. Because I have him [God]. He gives me the strength. Because he gives me the strength, I couldn’t be calm. I forgave. Before he died, I forgave him. And I asked for his forgiveness for the mistake I made with him, because I wasn’t right. I think you understand me. In some of the things I wasn’t right, and I asked him to forgive me. He forgave me. And I him and he me.

Although it was clear Ljuba constructed her story for the benefit of her daughter, there was an evolving sense of agency in the story, as she lost power when her husband left her, gained agency when God began helping her, and came to a place of peace and forgiveness when her husband ultimately returned to her. Although Ljuba accepted him back, she retained the power in the relationship, dictating their physical relationship and sleeping arrangements. There was no reflection on her husband's failure as a Christian in terms of his unfaithfulness, rather the story was about her process. Accordingly, the end point of Ljuba's narrative illustrates the two winding threads: her powerlessness and God's help: *I did everything for love, but it wasn't enough. But God saved me in multiple ways.* Metanarratives of the influence of Pentecostalism and gender, power and agency within Ljuba's story will be explored further in 7.4.2 below.

7.3.2.4 Lazar—Re-interpretation of life narrative

Like Iva's narrative in Community C, Lazar's meaning-making became more convoluted after I began asking questions. Lazar's primary narrative, told in front of his wife, was a self-contained unit. In 2010/2011, his wife's brother's family offered to take his 15-year-old daughter to Germany, arguing that she would have more opportunity for a better life. Lazar allowed her to go because he hoped that once she had papers to be allowed to live legally in Germany, perhaps his sons could migrate there and also have a better future so that they would not have to struggle with a subsistence life of stripping metal to earn money. However, it soon became obvious that the brother-in-law only wanted to use Lazar's daughter as a servant for his family. The daughter was able however to send her family a coded signal that something was not right; Lazar then collected his resources to enable him to afford the trip to Germany in order to rescue the girl. The resulting financial hardship (using all his money to go to Germany), as well as the severed family relationships that followed, were very difficult to navigate.

Lazar related how the difficult experience had been like a 'school' of learning from God. By trusting in other people to help make things better for him, 'we accused God of being a liar, we did not believe God', but as God says, 'Do not worry, I am here'. Through this 'school', he learned that they had everything they needed in Serbia: family, shelter, and food, and they did not need to pursue a better life elsewhere. Interestingly, he and his family had only converted four years prior to the interview in 2017 (this conversion process is explained below). Since this incident happened before they converted, Lazar's meaning attribution, consequently, was articulated and seen through the 'current' eyes of a Christian. This example illustrates the idea of a constantly 'shifting hermeneutic' as Lazar was required to reinterpret this event after a new event—his conversion—took place (Gubrium et al. 2012). This narrative and Lazar's subsequent reflection on its meaning ended the first segment of the interview with this participant.

The second narrative segment of the interview transpired when I asked about his childhood. Lazar's manner changed and he became extremely reluctant to share information, switching to Romanian to tell Eve, the translator: 'It was very hard, I don't want to share that. It was a lot of suffering, a lot of suffering.' Nonetheless, without prompting, he did continue to narrate the story—his father died, and his mother abandoned him and his two younger sisters to marry someone else, when he was only 15; thus, Lazar became the only provider for his sisters. They were extremely poor, living in a tiny room. Lazar, who had already completed primary and secondary school, would take a cart and go try to find scrap metal in order to get enough money to feed himself and his sisters for the day, and also to be able to afford to send them to school.[12] Lazar did not speak to his mother for 30 years because of her abandonment of her family.

[12] Lazar described how he slowly built up his business, first earning only enough for each day. First, he worked by collecting the scrap metal (iron, motors) in a cart and would drag it with twine tied over his head. Eventually, he bought a horse and was able to collect much more. Eventually, the boss who ran the city's garbage dump encouraged him to get his driver's license and lent him money to buy a van to be able to transport even larger loads.

7.3.2.5 Healing Leading to Conversion

In the third narrative segment, Lazar related the story of his son's healing at a local hospital in 2012/2013, which was intricately tied to his own recognition of God as the true God. Lazar had already been exploring Pentecostalism by attending Marko and Zora's church, although he admitted that he was attending church just because he was bored after work. At one point, however, he asked Marko how a person knows if this God is the true God. Marko answered: 'Ask God to prove himself to you, that he is the real God.' Lazar, however, soon forgot Marko's challenge.

Within that same year, Lazar's youngest son became sick, with X-rays showing three spots on his lungs, although Lazar did not know what they were, the doctor told him his son needed to be in the hospital for several months. When Lazar returned home, he remembered Marko's words, and began to read the Bible, where he saw the text, 'When you pray, enter the room, kneel and pray'. So, he went in a room and prayed and started to cry: 'I said, God, if you are the true God, help me. I will follow you. I cried and I prayed.' When Lazar returned to the hospital the next day to bring his son food and money,[13] his son had been cleared to leave. Lazar did not believe it, so he found the doctor, who then showed him two sets of X-rays. The first showed the spots and the second, which had been taken that day, showed clear lungs. 'Then I remembered suddenly, that is what I prayed for. I said, "Doctor, I prayed, and God heard my prayer". He [Doctor] turned and said, like this, "that God is sustaining you ... hold on to that God".'[14]

[13] Lazar mentioned that the hospital was not very good, and he knew his son would have little to eat. In hospitals in Croatia and Serbia, patients usually provide their own drinking water, juice and supplemental food, and bring their own pyjamas.
[14] Lazar's son was still healthy at the time of the interview, four or five years later.

7.3.2.6 Forming Christian identity—Negotiations of suffering and forgiveness

An internal conflict surfaced in Lazar's second narrative segment, regarding the Christian mandate to forgive his mother and other family members who had wronged him. At the time he began going to church, five to seven years before the interview ['I don't know exactly when I began going to church'], he began to read in the Bible about forgiveness. Other Christians, including pastor Marko, told him he needed to forgive his mother. 'But how?' he asked. 'You don't know how it was with me. God knows. Sometimes you don't have anything. Sometimes [sisters] are crying, going to sleep hungry.' Lazar explained the tension between saying you forgive, but not really forgiving: 'It is not a problem, I forgive. But that is not true. Somewhere in the depths you didn't forgive … I don't know how to explain that.' He described how his friends in the church told him, 'Forgive, not because of her, but because of God'. However, Lazar says he has no feeling for his mother in the way a son should have for his mother. Lazar admitted he would be lying if he said he really forgave and never looked back at the past suffering. He then asked me rhetorically, 'But show me this kind of person, who cannot look back?'[15]

The third narrative block of his sons' healing and recovery seemed to reorient Lazar out of his inner conflict with his past suffering and forgiveness. However, it is apparent that Lazar wrestles with a deep quandary—the reality of what God has done for him and the demands of his Christian identity clashing with his response to his past suffering and trauma. In the second narrative section (when discussing his childhood), Lazar would speak 'Christian language' with a focus on everyone being sinners and the necessity of living in grace, but immediately reverted to a painful memory of trying to take care of his

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[15] His mother was not the only one who betrayed him. At another point in the story, Lazar related how he was eventually able to build a house, get married, and start a family. However, the plot of land was in his father and mother's name. After he built the house, his sisters and his mother tried to make a claim on it. He paid each of them a sum of money to close the dispute, so that his children would be able to inherit the house. When I expressed surprise that his sisters, for whom he had sacrificed himself to provide, had caused this issue he said that he was also surprised, and that they said some bad things to him: 'They returned evil to me … I did good, but they returned evil. But it says to forgive …'

young sisters when still a child himself. After recounting the third part of his narrative, Lazar stated that he was glad to remember this miracle of his son's healing to remind himself what God has done for him. His end point of the narrative was therefore: *Through God's 'school' we learned how to be content; but how to forgive the past?*

The interviewees from this village, many of whom had been Christians for much longer when compared to respondents from Community C, had a greater tendency to bring conversion into their stories and use more of a Christian framework through which to interpret their stories. This could demonstrate that the interweaving of Christian language and conversion has become a way of conceptualizing and organizing experience (Bruner 2004:708). In addition, their tendency to organize through one or two events reveals a priority both of what was happening in the immediate context of the narrative, and what they associate as a significant event through which to interpret their lives. The fact that narrative methodology is concerned about what narrative form and content reveal about the person's presented identity and meaning attribution as well as the macro context (Lal et al. 2012; Josselson 2011) relives the pressure of having to determine whether each narrated event actually happened (Chase 2005). On the other hand, Spector-Mersel's (2011) method of analysis was more difficult to use without the extensive time and knowledge I had built up in relation to the community of Croatia, because it was hard to determine a chronology of life events as compared to participants' narrated life stories.

7.4 Metanarratives

Similar to the analysis in Chapter Six, the following section will use analysed data from all 20 of the family units in order to discuss the relevant cultural and social narratives that were interacting with the individual narratives. Metanarratives that emerged prominently include categories from Pentecostal theology, culture, and social: the effects of poverty,

gendered discourse, the role and prominence of miracles, daily experiences of God, suffering, and forgiveness.

7.4.1 Poverty and Resilience

The grinding nature of poverty emerged in each of the narratives collected as something to have been survived in childhood, grappled with as an adult, and endured in the present. For most of the interviewees, their childhoods were very poor. Similar to other research regarding Roma in post-socialist countries (Barany 2002:172–76) many Serbian Roma interviewed mention that during the period of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1992), they had held regular jobs and life was easier for them. After the war, and following the end of communism, most of the factories closed, leaving many Roma out of work and experiencing discrimination if they seek other employment. Since 2000, many of the jobs available to members of these communities are field jobs in the summer (as undertaken by Ljuba when she was abandoned by her husband) or collecting and stripping metal.[16]

For example, another interviewee, Boris, explained that his dominant memory of his childhood was poverty. At first, he lived with his grandmother and his mother, as his parents had divorced and he never saw his father. When he was four, during the warmer months his mother and grandmother would go work in a nearby village, and would receive payment as food: bacon, potatoes, beans. They would leave Boris a piece of bread for the day. Sometimes, he was so hungry that while walking home from playing with the other children he would fall asleep in the grass. His mother remarried when Boris was ten, and he stayed with his grandmother; his grandmother would beg for some potatoes and bread, and his primary words to sum up his early life were ‘alone’ and ‘hungry’. As an adult,

[16] This is still a viable means of income in Serbia; whereas in Croatia, entrance into the European Union required people to start a ‘firm’; with all the taxes and paperwork, this became impossible for some people.

this experience of hunger clearly affected his decision-making as he and his wife made an unusual decision to have only two children so that the family would not be too poor. Like many, Boris stated that he had held a good job in a shoemaking factory until the war started in 1990/1991 when he was around 30 years old. Today, the family struggles to piece together income to survive. From May to September they work in the fields: 'We go to the fields and dig, pick apples, pick whatever there is! Everything in agriculture. I was in Slovenia a couple of times. I worked there, me and my wife. We picked apples there. And so, we make ends meet…'

7.4.1.1 Poverty as Identity

As discussed elsewhere in this thesis, as the Roma have often been relegated to the economic and social margins, they have developed 'the craft of living under the conditions of resource scarcity (Ruzicka 2016:16), a truth exemplified by the narratives of Boris and others. In fact, pastor Marko noted that the economic situation was difficult for every ethnicity in their part of Serbia, but in some ways the Roma were doing better because they already possessed the skills to creatively survive: 'The Roma are very powerful people. They know how to manage/get along.'[17]

Marko, however, is critical of his people's ideas about poverty and survival. Marko believes amongst the Roma there is a 'give me' mentality that is opposite to the Gospel, which supposes that people should cultivate an ethic of giving to others and dependence on God. He believes this claimed identity of being poor is almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, preventing people from changing their mentality and approach to poverty.

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[17] Creative survival can be seen to apply to multiple areas besides the economic sphere. Sofija works as a security officer, in charge of ensuring that no one is taking goods from the factory where she works, as employees depart the premises. However, she is afraid that if she reported stolen goods carried by employees, that she might be attacked in revenge after she leaves her job at the end of the working day. To save herself and yet mitigate her conscience, she thus 'turns a blind eye' to pilfering and says, 'God, forgive me, I pray to God. Because if someone stole, he stole to eat it. But this way I don't have a problem with anyone.' However, Marko and Zora would not approve of or condone such practices of ignoring theft.

> And then they [his people] come and say why do we not get anything, they [another community they saw on social media] got it. I say, ‘because you have’. ‘But we are poor’. It is not true! And I know that they are not poor. In what sense are you poor? Now, which category of poor? For oil and sugar and flour you have, that I know you have. For that you are not poor. Maybe you are poor, you think you are poor because you do not have a Mercedes, that is okay, but, but you have oil, you have a house… In that sense, you are not poor.

Instead, Marko wants:

> To awaken their awareness, that they are in the position of giving, because God cares for me. So, I do not need to take from anyone’s hand, if it is God’s will that someone gives something to me, I will get that. I don’t need to ask anyone … I don’t want to be a beggar… If I believe and stand in that position that I am not a beggar, that I am not poor, that I am rich in Christ, that Christ has already provided me everything in advance what I need for life and devotion because that is his promise and that is his Word.

Despite this criticism of his congregants, people’s narratives were replete with testimonies of how God took care of their needs. In fact, often their conversion was based on God’s responsive care for their personal needs and concerns, meaning, for example, they earned enough to provide daily food. Lazar’s experience with his daughter whom he rescued in Germany, for example, reoriented him toward what was important in his life in terms of basic needs and in retrospect was identified as connected to an understanding that God will provide that which is required.

7.4.1.2 Forming Christian Identity in Daily Chaos

Part of this discrepancy in relation to how Marko and his congregants view notions of poverty might pertain to how language or narrative interacts with ‘lived experiences’ recounted by participants (Engelke 2010:196). Sofija and Nemanja, another interviewed couple (see Figure 7.1 above) were in a life crisis at the time of the interview—he was dying of cancer and she was forced to become mother to her two grandchildren because her daughter-in-law had died, and her handicapped son refused the responsibility. Between taking care of the children, supporting her dying husband, helping her handicapped son, all whilst holding down her security job at the factory, her narrative was an intertwined collage of pain and tears, desperation, her own strength, and testimony of God’s provision for her. In this crisis-driven, chaotic narrative, the borders of what ‘fits’

in a Christian narrative become blurred (Roht-Yilmaz 2019:124). For example, on the one hand Sofija says,

> For example, I pray. God can't reply straight away for a prayer, right. He can't right away. But later you see that everything is ok in the house. I don't ask for money, I don't ask, I only ask that we have… that we have harmony in the house, protection and such. I am not asking to be rich. I am not rich, I was never rich. You see how it's like here. We always pray. When … at least me, I don't know about him [husband], but I hear him. And when it is most difficult, I say, God, take me or let me live. I break. And then each time I pray, he is always there. E! So, I say, without God I couldn't do anything. Anything!

On the other hand, she says:

> But I can't do all of it. I am really trying to do everything, but I can't do everything…We keep, yes, we are suffering … [it is a] battle for life. I've been working so many years, and I don't know why I'm working. Who knows if I will live to see my pension?

Thus, Sofija's interpretations of her current crisis and suffering were not a linear progression of gradual transformation, but real-time grappling with how to interpret the chaos of her life—some events eliciting an interpretation of God's involvement in their lives, recounting of other events manifesting articulation of her pain and desperation, and still others her own self-sufficiency in ensuring the family's survival.

7.4.1.3 Pentecostal Perspectives on Poverty

Marko and Zora's perspective on poverty also stems from their own experience of God providing for them, conjoined with their Biblical understanding, and their relationship to other Roma pastors in Serbia, as well as knowledge and experience drawn from other contexts. From 2011–2013, early on in their ministry, they attended a Bible school in Serbia for two years, which hosted many guest teachers. Because of their personal study of the Bible as well as their life experience, they did not unequivocally accept all the teaching. For example, their theological interpretation of how to understand and live in poverty counters some prevailing wisdom of their own teachers who come from Western Europe: '… some themes were very hard, which, many of that we did not accept. There were some who came from Sweden, who taught. To me it sounded like the prosperity gospel, you know. So that, some things we did not accept, but ok…'

The prosperity gospel, usually traced to the Word of Faith movement originating in the United States, is prolific in some expressions of Pentecostalism (Anderson 2013a; Coleman 2000). Coleman (2000:28) describes 'healing, prosperity, and positive confession'—statements that claim God's promises as a present reality—as key theological components within this Pentecostal expression. Poverty is seen as a curse and this mode teaches that 'it is possible and right to have health and material wealth as part of God's blessings in life' (Núñez 2015:151).[18] Interestingly, most Roma pastors in Southeastern Europe are against this, contrasting other Pentecostal movements in impoverished communities, such as in some African Neo-Pentecostal churches, where it is believed that healing and deliverance leads to material and spiritual prosperity (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:393).[19] These African Pentecostals' interpretation of Scripture was mitigated by contextual issues and needs, which makes the comparison to the Roma interpretation of wealth and poverty in Scripture all the more noteworthy.[20] In contrast to a context of poverty that seizes the ideas of the prosperity gospel in order to maintain

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[18] Many early Pentecostals in America came from impoverished contexts. Influential teachers such as Oral Roberts had grown up in the Dust Bowl of the Great Depression and began emphasizing Bible verses that promised material prosperity. By the second half of the twentieth century, certain forms of Pentecostalism had normalized the enjoyment of wealth, thus making this faith attractive to more affluent people (Kay 2013:265).

[19] Although some scholars argue that the prosperity gospel was imported to Africa from America (Gifford 1990), others argue that the focus on material resources emerged from the declining economic situation in Africa in the 1980s (Ojo 1996). Both could be true—the prosperity gospel originated in the USA (perhaps tied to cultural expectations of the 'American dream' as an attainable right for everyone), but needed to find resonance in a receiving culture that interprets it into its particular context. In the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Church, the doctrine of 'Spirit of Poverty', the belief that people are poor because of their spiritual condition and the ongoing influence of ancestral spirits, rose to prominence in the 1980s (Maxwell 1998). Central to the Redeemed Christian Church of God, a Nigerian Church that has spread globally and has over five million members, 'health and wealth' 'encompasses physical, spiritual, mental, material, psychological, and social well-being'. It also includes human dignity, which means the right to employment and safe environment (Adogame 2013:194–96).

[20] Despite the criticism from other Christian denominations regarding the prosperity gospel, scholars such as Schliesser (2014) and Togarasei (2011) argue for the positive influence the prosperity gospel teaching has had on poverty alleviation. Togarasei (2010:349, 350), for example, critiques the common criticism of the 'prosperity gospel' that it chiefly benefits the leaders instead of the members, arguing instead that the 'prosperity gospel', with its holistic understanding of life, can help poverty alleviation through entrepreneurship, creating employment, encouraging generosity, developing a positive mindset, and encouraging a holistic orientation toward life.

hope, Roma pastors in Croatia and Serbia, also from a context of poverty and marginalization, teach that God will supply one's needs on a daily basis.

On the other hand, the Swedish Word of Faith Movement, *Livets Ord*, has established mission influence across Europe—particularly Eastern Europe, Ukraine, and Russia—since the mid 1980s (Coleman 2013; Coleman 2000).[21] Emerging from a wealthier context, Coleman (2013:382) notes that notions of 'prosperity' from *Livets Ord* are not only material but manifest in missional ambition, an '… unlimited realm of missionary potential' (Coleman 2000:112). This expansive vision connects to some Roma pastors' vision that Roma Christians are key to revitalizing Europe and blessing the nations (Wachsmuth 2017b). In addition, some approaches to physical healing by Roma pastors adopt the idea of 'positive confession' in relation to praying for healing, although this is not the majority approach.[22] Although it would be difficult to trace how much or what kind of influence the Swedish Word of Life has had on Roma Pentecostals in Southeastern Europe, the globalizing effects of media, conferences, Bible teachers, and missionaries have been demonstrated in the wider Pentecostal movement (Coleman 2000; 2013; Robbins 2004).

7.4.1.4 'Rupture' as Social Transformation in Pentecostal Praxis

Although Marko critiques his people's understandings of poverty and disagrees with the theological tenets of the prosperity gospel, he does envision a holistic transformation of his people.[23] In his view, evangelism is thus of first and primary importance in terms of

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[21] This movement, emerging from past Swedish revivals and influenced by movements from the USA, was started by Ulf Ekman in 1983, and resulted in a congregation in the thousands, an international Bible school, and network of ministries and schools internationally (Coleman 2000:90). In 2014, Ekman converted to Catholicism.

[22] For example, one Roma pastor from Southeastern Europe visited the church in Community C and conducted a prayer healing service. He prayed for people and then encouraged them to walk in the reality of that prayer. In one case, a woman was encouraged to put down her cane and walk around. The leadership was uncomfortable and disagreed with this theological approach, as per our conversation after the fact (Field notes, March 2014).

[23] People would generally consider their poverty alleviated if they had more resources, for example, a viable income and good health. Factors such as education are not emphasized by congregants as a way to improve

social engagement, but it is not the only orientation toward wider society, as is found in the focus of some Pentecostals (Anderson 2012). Instead, Roma pastors in Serbia see alleviation of poverty and the 'good life' holistically in terms of the family, socio-economics, and spirituality. In other words, 'rupture' is not just about personal conversion, but community transformation as well. These pastors specify that they want to see communities experience a decline in crime, increased educational levels, the growth of skills required to develop new businesses, more reading, better integration with non-Roma, peace and mutual respect in the families, decrease in abortions, spiritual growth, and changes in worldview (Wachsmuth 2017b). As mentioned, this kind of 'uplift' of Roma communities, associated with Pentecostalism has been documented in places such as Bulgaria (Atanasov 2008), Slovakia (Podolinská & Hrustič 2010; 2014), and in Leskovac in Serbia (Wachsmuth 2013b). According to these pastors, all of this 'uplift' however, is rooted in a changed life brought about by Jesus: 'They need to be new-born in Christ and have a spiritual change in the life of the Roma and non-Roma people' (email exchange with Alijević 2017). In other words, new life in Christ has the potential to transform, but this transformation is not equated with a 'right' to prosperity.[24]

This holistic thinking is more in lines with what Miller & Yamamori (2007:67) refer to as 'progressive Pentecostals', standing in contrast to older generations which

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life. For example, Eve, my language helper, said she is the only one attending university from the entire village of 5000 people. However, one of my interlocuters, Dragan told me that he did not think it was good that she was away studying because it takes her too far away from her family.

[24] One such rupture can be seen in Filip's life, who was converted when his grandson was healed (detailed in 7.4.4). Filip's mother abandoned him after his father died when he was seven. Although he lived with his grandparents, they were not able to provide for him. His poverty was acute, and he was forced to steal food to survive. He spoke of his anger as a child, ripping his mother out of a picture, leaving only himself and his father in the picture, which he showed me. When his grandparents died when he was fifteen, he left Croatia to find his mom in Serbia. When he found his mother, he confronted her, asking her how she could have abandoned him to such a fate. She told him that she had been only twenty-six and was not sure if her new husband would accept him. However, his stepfather was kind to him. When Filip converted, pastor Marko asked him if he was angry at his mother, and told him that he must forgive, as God forgave him. When his mother broke her hip, Filip cared for her, brought her food, cut her hair, washed her. He attributes this to the fact that 'God gave him mercy' in order to do this, otherwise he would not be able to offer love and service to her after she abandoned him. He says, 'Forgive and you will be forgiven, isn't it so?' Filip also nursed his stepfather when he was dying of cancer, and the stepfather ended up giving his home to Filip rather than his own children.

emphasized personal holiness.[25] Anderson (2012) and Miller & Yamamori (2007:43) point to a growing body of Pentecostals who engage with society towards transformation—a continuum of action spanning humanitarian relief work to programmes that intend to effect structural change. Miller & Yamamori (2007:32–3) argue that Pentecostalism can transform social contexts in three ways:

1. Through offering hope and alleviating the pain of poverty and suffering by the promised future life in God's kingdom.
2. Positive impacts on social welfare, contributing to uplift by such things as prohibitions against drugs, alcohol, and adultery.
3. Theological teaching that all are all equal, created in God's image and partaking of His Spirit.

This continuum of action is difficult to navigate, and compassionate action can have unintended consequences.[26] Most of the Roma pastors in Serbia would agree that giving charity does not affect lasting change; and yet sometimes peoples' survival depends on it. One Roma pastor in northwest Serbia combines the two—delivering feeding programmes in the harsh winter months as well as teaching people how to plant gardens and sell produce in the summer months (Subotin, interview 2017). Other Roma churches in Serbia have begun kindergartens to help give Roma children a head start in language and learning opportunities, as well as supporting child sponsorships, delivering microloans for businesses, and encouraging adult literacy/learning. Pastor Marko, juggling his own self-employment and the responsibilities of the church, has little time

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[25] Such (earlier) Pentecostals merely pray for the salvation of the world, convinced that they need to be separate from the world. These Pentecostals 'spiritualize' their social issues, blaming the demonic, personal moral failures, with the solution being personal holiness and supernatural action, such as waiting for Christ's return to establish his final kingdom before change can come.

[26] For example, in Calcutta, an Assemblies of God church realised that their feeding programme was creating a 'culture of poverty', in creating a dependence that repressed other creative and sustainable strategies for survival; but they did not know how to retreat from the dependency they caused (Miller & Yamamori 2007:49).

for this kind of extended work. However, he has confidence that what God did for him—changing his perception of life, work, and marriage—can also happen for his congregants (Wachsmuth 2017b).

7.4.2 Gender and Pentecostalism

Gender and religion, when considered as intersectional domains, highlight different aspects of faith-based identity and practice, as can be seen from narratives both in Communities B and C. Woodhead's fourfold typology of gender and religion offers a starting point by which to understand possible dynamics and outcomes of religion intersecting with established gender norms: religion can legitimate existing gender inequality; it can subvert the inequality from inside the religion, provide access to power from the outside, or disrupt and redistribute the power from the outside (2007:571).[27] Gendered outcomes thus depend on not only how individual churches interpret certain biblical passages in their religious practice, but also on the complex negotiation between normative teaching, leadership, cultural expectation, and individual interpretation. Such outcomes are wide-ranging, from classical Pentecostalism where women have a much more constricted role, to other charismatic forms of Pentecostal churches where women can be recognised as leaders.

Brusco (2010:81) is highly critical of the ways in which women are 'interpreted' in Pentecostal studies, specifically critiquing Anderson (2004), and Miller & Yamamori (2007). She argues that although women's rates of conversion to Pentecostalism are higher than men's, too often explanations are either functionalistic or are interpreted from the lens of Western feminism, failing to recognize gender as a 'culturally constituted institution', which varies in different contexts. Brusco (2010:85) argues, 'If we allow

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[27] Woodhead's (2007:570) typology stems from the starting position that gender can be defined as interconnected power relations in the historical process. Religion is part of these power relations in ways pertaining to the concept of 'sacred power', gender relations, social or political power, and leadership within the religious community.

women both value and agency, we can begin to see conversion as stemming in part from a linked set of processes that renegotiate gender and family relationships and personal identity, especially in climates of crisis'. In other words, women's experiences with Pentecostalism must be embedded in their local, family, and social context, taking seriously their own narratives and experiences.

Studies on Pentecostalism and gender have demonstrated how women's situations in certain societies and in families improve after the adoption of Pentecostalism (Martin 2001). Brusco's (1995) study demonstrated that Pentecostalism confronted *machismo* by reorienting the man toward the family and relinquishing vices. The Zimbabwe Assemblies of God 're-socializes' a converted man away from violence, alcohol and smoking and towards marital fidelity (Maxwell 1998). Similarly, in this context, pastor Marko's conversion settled his 'restlessness' and refocused his attention on his wife and children, thus bringing his attention into line with Zora's needs and concerns.

Martin (2001), however, highlights how the theological impulses of Pentecostalism present a certain paradox. Women have used Pentecostalism to 'rewrite the moral mandate on which sexual relations and family life rest … they have been enabled to institute a family discipline, sanctioned and effectively policed by the church community, which puts the collective needs of the household unit above the freedom and pleasures of men…' (Martin 2001:54). In addition, the belief in the gifts of the spirit allow women, although often restricted in terms of official leadership, equal empowerment of the Holy Spirit for prophecy, spiritual experiences, healing, and tongues (Powers 1999; Martin 2001).[28] However, the egalitarianism created by the Holy Spirit conflicts with certain ways of interpreting Biblical passages regarding male headship of families which can

[28] I visited a very conservative Romani Pentecostal community in Romania where women would not be allowed to preach or teach, but a travelling prophetess was allowed to prophesy over both men and women (Field notes July 2015, Bucharest, Romania).

reinforce traditional cultural hierarchies. Put another way, with this particular Biblical hermeneutic, there is both an equality before God, and a 'God-given inferiority and submission of women to men…' (Powers 1999:322).

This tension between empowerment and submission can be seen in Community B. For example, Zora was the first one in her marriage to receive a call into ministry, yet she articulates that things did not go well until she and her husband began serving together, and she submits to him in terms of ministry decisions. When undertaking interviews within family contexts, many of the women stayed silent or deferred to the men to speak first, one woman even using this dynamic as an excuse for not having to speak. When her husband asked her if she wanted to speak first, she said jokingly, 'You have the priority because you are the head of the house'.

7.4.2.1 Gendered 'Rupture' in Roma Pentecostal Theology and Praxis

However, Brusco's argument to view gender as 'culturally constituted' is useful in terms of questioning cultural assumptions behind gender and Pentecostalism, as well as interfacing specific cultures with Pentecostal theology. Allowing Pentecostal theology to interpret a gendered 'rupture' in a Roma context, Pentecostalism can be a radical liberating force within gender relationships, both reinterpreting and honouring what it means to be a 'Roma woman'. In 2016, I facilitated a discussion, including both men and women, at a Christian Roma conference regarding the role of women in ministry. Three Roma women shared their stories of being in ministry, and afterward there was a riveting conversation regarding the question of 'what is a good Roma Christian woman?' Most of the Roma women were firm on the necessity of being submissive to their husbands and following their leadership, as both honouring their culture and their interpretation of the Bible. However, two of the married Roma women who shared stories, coming from Serbia and Albania, were clearly leading the ministries in their communities, and their husbands were helping them (the woman from Albania laughingly referred to herself as

the Roma Mother Theresa). This is parallel to Cucchiari's (1990:688) findings on Sicilian Pentecostals who have conservative theology counteracted by women having substantial roles in the community and within ministries. This tension of intersecting realities is nothing new to Romani women. Romani feminists have been challenged regarding the possibilities for being both Romani and feminist (Brooks 2012) and on the modern realities confronting what it means to be a 'true Roma woman' (Gelbart 2012:27).

The 'structural ambiguity' of culture, theology, and daily practice thus allows both genders to find new balances of power and prestige (Cucchiari 1990:702). Church leader Marija in Croatia, for example, decided that it is not proper for herself as a 'Roma woman' to preach in the church while her husband is sitting in the congregation. However, she has no problem with me or Tijana leading, although Tijana is also married but not Roma. This vignette illustrates how her decision *not* to preach could be influenced by cultural pressure, personal struggle, and personal marriage dynamics—but not purely based on a clear Biblical hermeneutic.

In 2015, I interviewed the Roma pastor in Toflea, Romania, where there had been a large Pentecostal revival, as described in Chapter Two (Wachsmuth 2017b). In the early days of the church in Toflea, women were often confined to their homes, illiterate, and had 'bitter spirits' because of their restrictive lives. However, the pastor's viewpoint radically shifted when he read Luke 8:1–3, which details how women also followed Jesus and financially supported Christ's ministry. He said, 'My eyes were opened, and my mind completely changed. I realised that we had to change our perspective of women, that they also had a place to serve God.' The pastor then began to challenge cultural perceptions by beginning family camps where both women and men would study the Bible together. This initiative was first met with suspicion by both men and women, but later embraced by the community. The pastor's wife then began weekly prayer sessions for women and

started a bi-annual publication to educate and encourage women regarding how they could contribute to God's work (Field notes, July 2015).

One could note the applicability of the gender discrepancies in Toflea—women evangelists were key in beginning the revival in the 1990s, but it seems once the church was established, they quickly lost this role. In 2019, the pastor, in partnership with Romanians in America and Romania, started a Roma theological school. Women are not allowed, but the vision is to start a specific programme for women in the future.[29]

Returning to the question of how Pentecostalism can be perceived as a 'liberating force' for certain gender constraints requires an analysis of the assumptions behind 'freedom' and 'liberation' related to gender. For example, there may be a difference of interpretation in terms of how 'liberation' is defined by the Western women's movement (Brusco 2010:88). As Abu-Lughod (2002:788) asks as she explores questions of culture, the meaning of women's liberation, and Muslim women, 'Might other desires be more meaningful for different groups of people? Living in close families? Living in a godly way? Living without war?'

Part of understanding the interface of local culture and whether or not Christianity is 'good' for women is to understand the existing cultures around certain texts of the Bible. In ancient Mediterranean societies, women were held in low esteem, and this was often expressed with hostility in literary texts (Scholer 1998:10f).[30] In this context, Jesus'

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[29] Women in the Toflea church all wore head scarves while praying in adherence to their literal translation of Paul's admonition for the women to cover their heads as sign of being under authority of their husbands in 1 Corinthians 11:5–6. Such practices reflect the mixture of cultural and religious traditions. Romania is an Orthodox country, also teaching women to cover their heads when entering a church or praying, and many Pentecostals (both Roma and Romanian) kept that tradition. However, some Roma women who are not practising Christians also cover their heads.

[30] Scholer (1998:10f) quotes from a prayer from Jewish tradition in the *Tosephta, Tractate Berakoth* 7.18:'R. Judah says: There are three Benedictions which one must say every day: "Blessed be He who did not make me a Gentile"; Blessed be He who did not make me a woman"; "Blessed be He who did not make me an uneducated man".' Scholer also refers to Plutarch, a pagan Greek author from the second century who advised that women should accept their husbands visiting prostitutes, should not have their own friends, should remain at home, and not speak publicly. However, it has also been argued in Rabbinic Judaism that this blessing was merely an acknowledgment of the different duties encapsulated in maleness and femaleness, and not derogatory (Segal 2005:38).

dignifying treatment toward women[31] and the apostle Paul's injunctions, who assumed women would be prophesying (1 Corinthians 11) and had female co-workers (Romans 16), would have been a significant 'rupture' in terms of how women were viewed at that time. In fact, listening to the pastor's changed perspective of women helped me understand how radical Paul and Jesus were in their time. Although in a Western liberal perspective, the Roma women are still 'supressed'; the changes the pastor instituted radically impacted perspectives on female anthropology and their flourishing in their context.

Part of how published literature interprets the way in which gender affects and is affected by Pentecostalism relates to whether the study is conducted from within or outside the movement, and also the theoretical basis through which the researcher approaches the study.[32] From *within* the tradition, Pentecostal women scholars argue that a Pentecostal hermeneutic has both encouraged the position of women and *also* has led to the marginalization of women (Powers 1999; Gabaitse 2012, 2015). Scholars studying Pentecostalism in the Roma context point to the heterogeneous effects of such a form of Christianity, based on other factors including individual struggle and appropriation (Gay y Blasco 2012); themes that are highly relevant to our consideration of intersectional domains of gendered lives within a Pentecostal Christian community.

Attanasi (2013:243) helpfully reformulates the question of whether Pentecostalism is 'good or bad' for women, by asking instead how it, or how it does not, empower a woman's agency, flourishing, and freedom. In Attanasi's (2013) study of Pentecostals in South Africa and Mariz & Machado's (1997) study in Brazil, they find that relationship

[31] See, for example, Jesus' conversation with a Samaritan woman in John 4:27 in contrast to his disciples' shock that he was talking to a woman. After her encounter, she evangelized her town by inviting them to come listen to the man who 'told me everything I ever did' (vv. 28–30).

[32] For example, feminist studies may draw very different conclusions from anthropologists. Powers (1999:322) critiques conclusions drawn by Elaine Lawless (1988) on Pentecostal women pastors, calling them 'condescending' and arguing that she does not appreciate or understand the inside dynamics of the Pentecostal movement.

problems play an important part in conversion and Christian life, as has also been demonstrated by my own research in Communities B and C. Attanasi (2013:247–48) finds that more than half of the women in one congregation she researched had non-Christian husbands—of those, more than half of the men had committed adultery and more than a quarter had physically abused their wives. She concludes that in this context, Pentecostalism 'impedes' women by teaching them to stay with their abusive or adulterous husbands. Attanasi's results also conflict with previous research that shows women converts can gain certain social support and benefits perhaps available through the church; instead, her research showed how women remain in the church even when they lose the support of others (252). This finding allows room for another dynamic of Pentecostalism—the feeling of support from a God involved in people's everyday problems.

7.4.2.2 Pentecostalism Empowering Agency

Ljuba's story illustrates empowerment arising through her Pentecostal identity, even as the cultural metanarratives restricted her options, such as having an abortion when her in-laws forced her husband to marry someone else. In contrast to other studies that emphasize church teaching that empowers women toward more confidence in material concerns (Mariz & Machado 1997), Ljuba gains her confidence and empowerment from God's involvement in the detailed concern of her life. Ljuba is thus an active agent in her story, demonstrated by the three confrontations discussed above: when she found out about her husband's affair, her confrontation with the bank agents (male), and her own self-reliance when she had to support her children on her own. Interspersed with her own active agency, is a belief in God's protection and help, which empowers her boldness. For example, she gives credit to God for giving her the wisdom to outwit the 'educated people' [bank agents], and that 'God, Jesus, proved himself a lot in my life, that he exists. Because he did a lot for me'.

Interestingly, gendered conceptions of independence are visible in how Ljuba is seen through a male's eyes. Lazar (whose story was analysed earlier and is a close family friend) commented in his 2017 interview (in reference to another story) that Ljuba works very diligently: 'She is [like] a man.' He meant that she was strong and could work without stopping. Lazar then commented that Ljuba's husband, who used to work with him, did not know how to work and rarely spoke. In that, 'he was like a woman. He just kept quiet'. Ljuba's shaping of her story highlights the ways in which she resisted the gendered roles and expectations to the extent that the only way for her male friend to describe her was 'she is a man'.

7.4.2.3 Pentecostal Liberation as Self-control

Despite her displayed resilience and strength, Ljuba also wrestled internally over her moments of rage when she lost control, interpreting this as an offense to God, but also illustrating a lack of freedom to control her own passions (Mariz & Machado 1997). One time, she states she felt like killing her husband and her friend but 'God is good. God did not allow that. And that's where God saved me. That's what I want to tell you, a lot of times God showed me mercy and love. And without drugs to calm down [anxiety medicine that many Roma women take]'. As she recounted in her narrative, she came to a kind of climatic moment with God about her rage, asking God why she loses control when she does not want to: 'Why do you let me fall so much?' At that moment, she felt that God told her He was the judge of them [husband and friend]:

> And that morning, I got up and found God's solution, how much love God has for us and I say, that is the last time I do something with my strength. Why don't I ask from my Father [God] advice? Solution? What to do? How to do this? And since that day, before I went anywhere, I asked him, Lord, show me the way. Lord, don't leave me. Holy Spirit be with me. Don't leave me, I can't do it alone. You go forward and I will follow you. Tell me what to do … my strength only led me to failure. But you need time to figure that out. Because … we are born in sin. That sin we have since we are born… But we are not to nurture the sin.

In this sense, adhering to the moral requirements of Pentecostalism is not a limitation, as Mariz & Machado (1997:52) argue, rather it allows women such as Ljuba the freedom to

practise self-control, a ‘fruit’ of the Holy Spirit according to the Apostle Paul (Galatians 5:22–23).

7.4.2.4 Pentecostal Liberation as Restored Dignity

Cucchiari’s (1990:698) narratives shows how three Sicilian Pentecostal women were all ‘liberated’ through their conversion, within the context of Sicilian patriarchy, from bitterness, dependence on men, and were in time healed to love again. Similarly, within the constraints of her patriarchal culture, Ljuba’s narrative reveals how she was freed from her bitterness and rage and given the confidence of God’s care and concern for her and her family, in contrast to her husband’s unreliability. The comfort of God’s nearness and the empowering sense of his help was healing in terms of the dignity robbed from her by her husband’s actions and words. Cucchiari (1990:703) refers to experiences of this type as the ‘redemptive system’ of Pentecostalism, as in relation to women it ‘provides women with a religiously sanctified basis for inner moral rejection of the negative claims the hegemonic system presses against their social value and against the scope of their legitimate activities.

Noticeably, in contrast to specifying Biblical teaching that encouraged her to accept her husband again as illustrated by Attanasi’s research (2013), Ljuba articulates over and over that it was her love for her husband that compelled her to immediately accept him again when he asked to return to her. Bizarrely, despite their Christian faith, she allowed him ‘freedom’ to find other women when he returned. This seems to indicate that at least in Ljuba’s life, gender norms were still governed by cultural realities, rather than a Biblical ethic. Thus, there is no direct challenge to patriarchy or traditional roles in the church (Anderson 2013a), although the presence of God gave Ljuba the courage to challenge certain power structures, such as the male bank agents sent to remove her and her family from her home. However, Ljuba’s primary liberation came through the

restoration of her dignity and a sense of being loved and cared for that was not dependent on men.

7.4.3 Pentecostal Approaches to Local Cosmologies

Another metanarrative that emerged from reviewing the multiple narratives gathered in this village was the intersection between local understandings of spiritual reality and Pentecostal teachings. Other studies of Pentecostalism, particularly in Africa, have highlighted the role Pentecostal churches have in confronting, defeating, and restricting the spiritual hierarchies of ancestors, spirits, and demons (Núñez 2015:149). Often, as Núñez (2015:150) argues, churches in Africa attribute poverty, misfortune, and illness to the practice of witchcraft or consulting traditional healers. This connection is cohesive with African traditional religious where human and non-human, material and psychic energies are much more closely intertwined than Western views of the natural and supernatural. Therefore, the process of healing, 'whether caused naturally or supernaturally, can be dealt with through the power of the Holy Spirit often working through the specially anointed people of God (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:390). This discussion illustrates Robbins' (2003) argument regarding the paradox of Pentecostalism outlined in Chapter Two, accepting the local spiritual ontologies as a means of addressing them. This at least partially accounts for Pentecostal's success in Africa as it provides the theological structure 'through which the fears and insecurities of African Christians are dealt with' (Asamoah-Gyadu 2004:392).

In many of the narratives gathered in fieldwork site Community B, the acceptance of an active spiritual realm is indicated by the fear of curses with congregants seeking healing among local and internationally renowned healers, accompanied by an acceptance of the need to confront the demonic. For example, Zora relates that early on in her ministry when she was leading the 'sisters' in prayer at someone's house, she developed an acute fear of a picture of Mary hanging on the wall, and she thought it was a conduit for evil

spirits. In 2007, Marko and Zora attended a seven-day seminar in Leskovac, sponsored by an American group specializing in healing and deliverance to learn how to free people both from fear and from evil spirits.

Many narratives gathered included stories of sickness, both psychological and physical, and subsequent seeking healing from 'magic people'. As Asamoah-Gyadu (2004) notes in the African context, the line between psychological, spiritual, and physical causes is often blurry in narratives. Some scholars have shown the importance of context and culture to illustrate historical functionalist explanations for supernatural beliefs. For example, Shaw (2002) connects reshaped memories of slave-trading with beliefs of 'rogue spirits' and witches who have stolen human lives in Sierra Leone; whilst Ashforth (2005) examines belief in evil forces in post-apartheid Soweto, South Africa. In such explanations, agency is connected to magic; either using magic to gain control over others or explaining a loss of agency. The fear of curses in both Communities C and B can also be related to this loss of agency—a helplessness of the supernatural acting with evil intent in the physical realm, which drove individuals to seek help from people who had access to the supernatural.

7.4.3.1 Pentecostal Responses to Spiritual and Physical Sickness

The above section refers to a Pentecostal faith that addresses local ontologies and contextual problems in order for 'reinterpretations' of life events that change the 'universe of discourse' (Snow & Machalek 1983) in an individual's conversion process (Gooren 2010). In the context of the poverty and marginalization of the Roma in Croatia and Serbia, this lived reality demands a faith that is tangible and addresses individuals' everyday concerns. Often, this everyday concern was regarding health and illness; therefore, a quest for healing was an inextricable part my informants' conversion story. For example, Dragan and Mina's 'primary narrative' was Dragan's acute sickness in 2000, which seemed to be a combination of physical and spiritual malady and pushed him

on a spiritual and physical journey to seek help. In his interpretation, someone put 'black magic' (which he said was mercury) in his coffee. Dragan explained that whoever puts such a curse on someone becomes 'like his boss' (taking away his agency) because they can control you with supernatural forces, and this curse was therefore intended to kill him. After he drank it, Dragan said he saw something that had eyes, horns and a tail, with numbers in the tail like a thermometer. He became very physically sick, and many people thought he would die, and this sent Dragan on a quest for healing. He visited a famous medicine woman in southern Serbia. She gave him an amulet and made him wash in lilac water, which had apparent healing significance for the medicine woman.[33] 'I believed, that that woman will save me. I didn't know about God… After seven days I came home.' When Dragan returned home, he had terrible visions of dead people and demons on the ceiling, which terrorized him and left him in a greater state of fear. He also went to a famous magic man in Bosnia to 'get it [the vision] out of his eyes'. Dragan brought home a picture of the healer, but when he put it up on the wall, Mina had the feeling that the 'picture was following her' around the room. However, 'When I [Dragan] saw that there is no use of it, then I washed my hands of it. And then I knew that only God can help me, no one else. So, I was looking everywhere to save myself, but I couldn't find anywhere.'[34]

As part of this spiritual seeking journey, Dragan and his wife attended the Jehovah Witness Kingdom Hall Church for about six months, but he 'didn't feel love. I didn't feel any zeal' and they eventually determined that God was not there. Finally, he visited the Pentecostal church where Marko pastors, still wearing the amulet that the medicine woman had given to him, and although the music was very strange to Dragan, he still

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[33] At this point his wife interjected, 'Now you are washed by the blood of Jesus.'

[34] In his wife's version of the story, her fear of this picture made her receptive to the Jehovah Witnesses who were visiting her. She briefly became a Jehovah Witness and asked them to convince her husband to remove the picture. She thought it was better to seek God with the Jehovah Witnesses because you did not have to pay them like at the Catholic Church. She also mentioned that when Mina was young, a nun would come into the community, gather the children, and took them to a church to learn to pray and read.

prayed: 'God if you are here, prove it to me. When they started to sing, I got goose bumps. I felt something in me, but I didn't know what. I know that now, that it was God's presence.'[35] A man from America who was visiting prayed for Dragan in his sickness, and later as he and Mina were driving over the Danube river, Dragan made a decision. Although the medicine woman had told him that he would die if he took off the amulet, Dragan decided that if he died, he would be with God. 'I threw it in the water. Let me die. And then I felt complete freedom, that God freed me from it ... '

Dragan and Mina have reinterpreted this past experience with witchcraft since becoming Christians. Similar to Roht-Yilmaz's (2019:124) study of Roma fortune-tellers in Estonia, God's protection after conversion, takes over from the power received from spells and charms. Dragan said, 'I know there are evil forces, demonic forces, but I am not afraid anymore … I believe today that there is black magic, but I don't believe in it anymore.' When I asked them if they still believe it was a curse, Mina answered: 'No, we don't believe that. Now we believe in the living God.'[36] In other words, they believe that curses and black magic and demons exist, but they do not have to be afraid, because God is stronger and as Dragan stated, 'God is in me. I believe that Jesus is with me and he promised he will never let me go.'

It should be noted how the meaning of 'belief' has linguistically changed over time and may have different nuances in distinctive contexts (Smith 1977). For example, the concept of 'belief' at one time had connotations of attributing lordship or fealty to something or someone in contrast to a more recent Protestant credo belief of mental assent to something you cannot see. Dragan's use of the word belief refers to the former definition (fealty) but over time, his allegiance and understanding of 'belief' changed.

[35] Mina related how pastor Marko spoke in simple Serbian, which was easy for them to understand, in comparison to the Jehovah Witness church. Their primary language of use at that point was Old Romanian.
[36] At this point, Dragan sitting on the couch uttered a loud, 'Amen!'

This re-appropriation of traditional practices and conceptions to new Pentecostal beliefs is similar to the conclusions of a study conducted on a Congolese migrant church and Nigerian migrant church in South Africa where while 'African entities are given "a real" status, the church asserts that by being "born again" (Pentecostals), members are protected from such malign influences' (Núñez 2015:161). [37]

In Dragan's belief system, one must actively engage when evil comes near: 'A lot of times those evil thoughts attack me, but I chase them away, you know. Before I was afraid, I admit it, I was. I am afraid now, it's not like I'm not, I am. But when that fear comes, I chase it away. I pray to God that he takes that away, you know.' He believes that staying close to God helps someone fight the devil:

> As David [from the Bible] said, it is good for me to be close to God. That's what I want for all people. That they come to God. That they get closer to God, that they have security in him. Because the evil one comes and attacks, he attacks the man, and the man has to fight it. Day after day, the man learns, every day.

7.4.4 The Pentecostal Present—Miracles and divine encounter

In addition to dramatic healings, 'experience', meaning a personal encounter with the God, is a key Pentecostal component across time and geography (Miller et al. 2013), referring to the activity of the Holy Spirit who is 'God with us' (Anderson 2004:196). The 'experience' can mean a 'sensory impact on consciousness', but it also necessarily refers to subsequent memory and interpretation of that experience (Kay, 2013:259). Kay (2013) argues that for Pentecostals, there is a similar relationship between religious experience and spiritual reality, and 'sense experience' (experienced through one's senses) to material reality.

[37] Núñez (2015) relates an example of a Zimbabwean woman attending a Pentecostal church in South Africa. While she attributed her problems with her husband to *Umnyama*, or bad luck, the pastor's wife told her that it doesn't exist; rather, it is the devil. Her own reinterpretation was that it does exist but cannot affect her since she now knows God (Núñez 2015:161).

In many cases, the ‘experience’ recounted by participants consisted of a physical or emotional healing of either the individual or someone close to them, and as in other contexts, this was often key to conversion and/or transformation, as mentioned in Chapter Two (Pfeiffer et al. 2007). Despite the numerous claims of miracles as part of the Pentecostal experience in many contexts, they are a difficult and rarely addressed phenomenon from a social science perspective, partially because of the difficulty in assessing if the miracle is ‘true’ or not (Pelkmans 2015; Pargament 2006). The ‘truth’ question, however, depends on definitions and cultural contexts and cosmologies. Historically, the Western observer has ‘bracketed out’ the validity of miracles, looking through the lens of an unenchanted world and blind to ‘the relativity of our own essentialising discourse’ (Bowie 2011:133); or in other words, reading ‘much of the world’s experiences through the nonexperiences of much of our Western academic culture’ (Keener 2011:2012). However, Bowie (2011:123) challenges the idea of ‘separating belief systems and peoples into bounded categories’ and instead argues that globally, there is a way of ‘perceiving the world that is ubiquitous in non-Western societies (although not shared by everyone) and is also present within Euro-American culture (as a minority viewpoint) in which the ‘miraculous’ is part of the natural order (134–35). If unexplainable events happen, how they are interpreted according to cultural expectations varies (Bowie 2011:123). This is illustrated by the global phenomena of Pentecostalism, which is present in both Western and non-Western societies, because the cultural expectation for miracles is part and parcel of Pentecostal theology (Anderson 2002; Keener 2011).

In this context, it is difficult to ‘bracket out’ the truth claims when health issues are of prominent concern and medical assistance is not always optimal, leading people to seek healing through a variety of means, as also seen in other contexts such as China

(Währisch-Oblau 2001:93).[38] Further, as miracles and healing are a primary reason for conversion, perhaps it is more substantive to assess the 'affect and effect' (Kapferer 2003) and the ways in which the community determines the truth of a miracle (Pelkmans 2015; Roht-Yilmaz 2019). For example, early in the church's existence, Marko noted the profuse number of people having visions; however, he noted that these were not always 'from God'. They must go through a discernment process to see if the vision is coming from a 'witchcraft spirit' or from God (Interview 2012). In fact, Pentecostal pastors, whether in Southeastern Europe or among Rom Pentecostals in Estonia (Roht-Yilmaz 2019) sternly condemn, and even discipline, any association with magic once a person converts, as they believe it relies on Satan's power instead of God's.

In other words, although Pentecostal acceptance of local ontologies may lead to a greater expectation of supernatural healing, they believe magic relies on human agency trying to manipulate the spiritual world, while the Pentecostal position prays and asks for healing from the Divine. This differentiation can also be seen when miracles do not lead to conversion or transformation. Pastor Marko alludes to a 'spirit of witchcraft', in which people just want to use the church or Pentecostal healing in the same way they would a magic person but have no further interest in God after that (Interview 2012).

7.4.4.1 Healing Resulting in Conversion

In 2004, Filip's narrative recounted how his nine-month-old grandson was born with a hole in his heart and that the child also had a withered hand and foot. Filip and his family heard about the group that attended the church 20 km away from Community B and the family also went to the church one Sunday in order to seek help for the child. A visiting pastor prayed over the baby and stretched out the baby's hand and foot, so they were no

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[38] Pelkmans' (2015:186) study in Kyrgyzstan compares Pentecostalism with the proliferation of magic in that context, in that it allows 'agentive power' and 'simultaneously embeds people in new solidarity networks'.

longer withered, and according to Filip, it happened: 'Immediately, Immediately, Immediately! In a moment!'[39] Filip said the prayer lasted about ten or fifteen minutes longer, and then the pastor announced that the boy no longer had a hole in his heart. The following Thursday, Filip's daughter took the boy in to the hospital for a check-up in cardiology. When the doctor could not find the hole, he called the medical staff: 'This little one, he said, he had, the X-ray showed he had a hole on his heart, but now, there is nothing. He said, I don't know what you did, but with this only God can help.' Thirteen years later, the boy plays football and is in full health. At the moment of the healing, Filip said he accepted the Lord: 'When we saw what had happened, then, we believed that God did it. That was his work. God's miracle.'

Pelkmans' (2015:184) study identified several factors in order for something to be recognized as a miracle: a favourable outcome, something unexpected, absence of alternative explanations, and as a result of prayer. Bowie (2011:124) defines miracles as a 'bending of the structure of the universe in our favour'. In the words of Mina, one of my interviewees, when the people see 'something without a solution, and when we see how God helps us, we know it is God. No one else can do that' (Field notes March 2017). In addition, the narration of a miracle becomes part of the 'oral theology' (Währisch-Oblau 2001:97) of the church, and an evangelistic method to the outside community. In this case, Filip had heard that people could be healed in this church, which is why he took his grandson there. The man who prayed for the child only enters the story as the vehicle for the healing—the protagonist of the plot is God as both the initiator and power driving the miracle. I did not see the X-rays as they were not kept as proof—the proof for the family lies in the fact that the boy is healthy and active. Bowie (2011) points to Turner's (2008) directive that Occam's razor may be best applied, rather than inventing convoluted

[39] When I asked him if he saw that happen, he said, 'Yes, everyone saw it'. A few churches had gathered there to hear this guest pastor.

explanations in order to deny the possibility of other cosmologies.[40] New Testament scholar Craig Keener in his book *Miracles: The Credibility of the New Testament Accounts* (2011:1–3), addresses philosophical, theological and anthropological responses to miracles in various historical time periods, particularly in light of the pervasiveness of miracle claims today. He does not advocate for miracles claims to be accepted as proof, however he argues for the validity of eyewitness accounts, and that supernatural claims should at times be included on the table with other scholarly explanations.

7.4.4.2 Experiencing God as Key to Validating Christian Identity

Other instances of spiritual experience recounted within narratives were far more ambiguous in terms of whether it was a 'miracle truth', or a direct answer to prayer, but all of these experiences were still deeply significant for the person to whom it occurred. Milan was very sad his wife was not coming with him to church, but during one sermon he 'felt the presence of God. I felt how God looks at me. The prayers I sent to Christ he always hears. The feeling of the Spirit's presence every time tells me that I don't need to worry.' He began to pray for his wife to come, and after one year he asked her again to come. She mocked him, but he left for church and started praying once he was in the church. After singing songs, everyone in the church was praying, but everyone turned to the door when they heard it creak open and saw his wife enter. 'Then everyone started crying because everyone knew my, my motive, my pain, my feeling, what I wanted. Everyone cried.' And in that moment, Milan[41] said that:

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[40] Occam's razor is a principle frequently employed by theologian and philosopher William of Ockham (1285–1347/9), which argues for simplicity in the case of two competing theories of explanation.

[41] Interestingly, this story did not have the same interpretative meaning for Milan's wife, Sandra. Sandra said that she did not know why she went that day. She felt very overwhelmed walking in church because everyone started crying and reacting to her presence: 'I asked when he [Milan] is coming to the house. Why is everyone crying, what is this? Where did I come? I could not anymore come to this church, with everyone crying. They are not normal. And everyone was like, hugging me …Yikes … "Sandra, you came, you came!"' Despite her inability to articulate her own reasons, Milan kept encouraging his own interpretation upon her, asking 'Did you feel something that you needed to be there?' To which she had no clear answer. And again, 'Did you think it was up to you?' She finally acquiesced with 'No, it was not up to me'. In fact, she began coming to the church after that incident.

> God has confirmed the truth that he exists, and he is watching. Now he is here somewhere among us. The feeling is, that he is alive. He gave me confirmation and from then on, I said to Christ that I will follow him as much as in my power, and I told the Holy Spirit that he will always be a help to me, who is everything to us, that he helps me in everything that I can persevere until the end of life …

Mladen's narrative was also structured around story after story of 'proof' of God's involvement in his life and answering his prayers. As an 18-year-old, Mladen saw his father shot seven times and then lay fighting for his life in the hospital. Mladen said he did not know God at the time but tried to make a deal with him: 'God, if you take my father, take my eyes [i.e. I am willing to lose my sight if you save my father]; but if you save my father, I will always speak about you.' At another point in his life when he tried to give up smoking, he prayed, 'God, if you exist, burn my throat every time I try to smoke'. In each case—Mladen's father lived and his throat began burning when he smoked—he interpreted this as the active reality of God's presence in his life: 'I understand that and also know that without God, there is nothing. 'At another point in his story he said, 'When I was in the greatest need, God showed me the way. I wanted to go through a wall, no, come on, God led me through a door. Always he helped me… How much we go through our strength, it is not good … and when we stop and pray for God to open, open the way.'

This experiential knowledge of God is an 'emotional knowing', which provides the base for intellectual beliefs; a social and imaginative practice that also takes practise (French 2017:265). This recognition of a world where miracles and hearing from God both supersedes the sensate world (French 2017:265), and yet as it is normative to daily experience, blurs the boundaries between the material and supernatural. Recognizing the ongoing experience of God is mediated by the Bible and church teaching; however, as is shown by some of the previous examples, sometimes congregants interpret problems in

creative ways that allow them to function in their daily lives, assures them of God's presence, and still satisfies the demands of their Pentecostal identity.

7.4.5 Making Meaning of Suffering

As discussed in Chapter Six, the belief in the immediacy of God's presence is thus part of how many are able to both 'conceptualize' and interpret their suffering. Research has shown how a Pentecostal framework can reshape suffering into meaning, by providing a coherent narrative about the world (Flory & Sargeant 2013:301). Life events, when interpreted within a Pentecostal framework, offer meaning, purpose, and the possibility of healing. Rather than being religion in the abstract, the immediacy of the Divine in the everyday life of a person embeds the answers to the problems-in-context.

People's ability to construct meaning from their suffering appeared to be directly related to their current peace of mind, thus construction of meaning was divergent in the narratives. Some people were reluctant to divulge or put into words their hard lives. For example, one woman said, 'I suffered a bitter life, so then when I think of that, I don't want to speak of that. I had plenty of problems and everything'. This woman was largely disconnected from the church and had told me off the recording that she had given up looking for God. It seems that her inability to process and interpret her suffering was linked with her disappointment with God to accomplish what she hoped. In addition, she seemed quite lonely, despite having children and grandchildren and expressed bitterness with the state of her life.

For other respondents, in retrospect, their experience of suffering is what led them to God. As Dragan says, 'That's how I found God, through my troubles … and maybe if that didn't happen, maybe I would never come back to God, I don't know. Only God knows… Because when a man is in trouble, he looks for God. And when a man doesn't have troubles, he doesn't look for God, you know.'

Ruzica and Miodrag, however, had different approaches to interpreting their suffering. Ruzica's narrative was full of expressed disappointment, hardship, and suffering from childhood to adulthood, with the only points of joy being when she got married, when she met God, and her grandchildren. She sums up: 'How can I explain to you? Disappointment, disappointment … I cannot say that I had something good. Always I have this sadness … I want to surrender it [to God], but again I will take it.' She says Jesus gives her strength to continue and comments that when she feels her situation is hard, she realises that others have it harder because they do not have God. Although she expressed this sense of support from God, her sadness and heavy burdens seemed to be almost a physical presence in the room as I was interviewing her.

Her husband's demeanour was radically different. In 2000, Miodrag suddenly lost all of his muscle strength and was confined to a wheelchair with a type of progressive muscular dystrophy. The couple looked for help from doctors and magical healers, finally going to the Pentecostal church that Marko leads to see if he could be healed. He was not healed, but Miodrag said that he believed that God stopped the disease from progressing, and accordingly he was baptized in 2005. However, he claims his biggest and most important change was his 'new heart, new thoughts, seeing the world with new eyes'. He expressed the fact that he was thankful to be in the wheelchair and that he knows that he will not be sick in heaven (Interview 2012). After his wife spoke of her sadness, he authoritatively said it was his turn to speak and said,

> I am a happy man. The happiest. Because I have God. Nothing else I believe in. I don't believe in doctors anymore. They wrote me off, so let them, so what? I am seeking him [God] and I am joyful. He [God] says, "throw all your worries on me." …I don't trust people anymore, only trust in him. People disappoint me. Brothers disappoint me, and he, him, never… Here is my God... My God will cure me. And if he doesn't cure me, again I will search for him. (Interview 2017)

At one point early in their conversion, when Ruzica was also sick, the couple asked God why they were both unwell. After a minute, they said they heard a voice say, 'I can help you, but you will leave me then, you will get rid of me then'. Miodrag replied, 'If your

will is that I am in this chair, then let it be so, as long as I am with you'. Miodrag related this story, but his wife agreed with it.

As has been noted, religion in general can provide a framework for people to find meaning in their suffering and to assist their spiritual growth, beliefs, and emotional/psychological healing (de Castella & Simmonds 2013). In de Castella & Simmonds (2013:552) study on Christians undergoing trauma and post-traumatic growth, a deeper relationship with God transpired as well as transcendent experiences, but this was in relationship with the individual's seeking, learning and sense-making of the suffering. Changes in self-perception were reported, as a subject's identity was increasingly interpreted through their spirituality (553). This pattern can be seen in Miodrag's assertion that his well-being was entirely in God's hands.

In fact, narratives of suffering and illness, without relief or miraculous healings, can be told in a variety of ways to show God's care in the midst of suffering or to explain the purpose God has through the suffering endured. For example, Monnot (2016) discussed how people offered public narratives of suffering in a Genevan Pentecostal service. They ascribed meaning to their narratives by articulating God's purposes through their sufferings, all the whilst testifying how God did meet them in their suffering and through their ongoing belief in his ability to heal.

7.5 Integration and Implications

This chapter has provided divergent narratives of how individuals have appropriated Pentecostalism to respond to their daily challenges (Eriksen et al. 2019). The most common reason people converted as illustrated by the narratives gathered, was a tangible experience of God answering and responding to their immediate problems. Their lives have been marked by the hardship of poverty, suffering, and daily survival; consequently, most of their narratives revolve around the immediate present and the times when the

Divine entered into their space to help them. Some of their meaning attribution in regard to their life events would not necessarily be consistent with standard Pentecostal theology, nonetheless, it reveals the creative ways in which participants both survive and operate within a Pentecostal praxis. Währisch-Oblau (2001:97) terms healing testimonies as 'liberation stories', or 'stories of protest', as people who do not merely acquiesce to their circumstances. This is certainly apparent in many of the narratives, seeking help and healing in many different locations before finding it in God within the Pentecostal church.

Despite their vocal allegiance to God, many narratives also reveal the urgency of protagonists in proving themselves: Lazar worked hard to prove he would not end up in jail, challenging an assumed determinism tied to being a 'bastard' without mother and father; Filip emphasized his 'diligence', which won over his stepfather and mother, and Sofija attempted to take care of everyone in her family. This may illustrate the implicit arguing against cultural stereotypes and assumptions embodied by these participants, as I illustrated in Chapter Six.

7.5.1 Conceptions of 'Rupture' in Community B

Central to Marko and Zora's vision for their community is the hope for deep transformation for each person within the church, and they share their perception of how their congregants have changed: 'We started to preach the correct Word [the 'correct' interpretation of the Bible], and people began to change their ways of life, their ways of thinking …'. They also stressed that as a result of this some people were healed from chronic or terminal conditions such as cancer, twisted bowels or epilepsy. Before the intervention of God into their lives, they believed that their community lived in lies, theft, alcoholism and witchcraft. Now, however, Marko and Zora stressed that congregants no longer go to fortune-tellers, they no longer offer food to the deceased spirit after someone

dies and have changed some of their dietary customs such as eating dead animals.[42] In addition, many people officially married (with a state licence) in the church rather than following traditional informal early marriage customs discussed earlier in this chapter.

Despite these 'successes', Zora and Marko also expressed their discouragement when people stopped coming to the church or continued in certain behaviours. To this end, the pastoral couple pray, support, and teach, but it is 'very difficult'. As Marko says:

> Concerning the converted ones, they are only slightly converted. You are calling for conversion … and people are coming. And whether through emotions or what, I don't know, in general people raise their hands, and want prayer, they want that we pray for them. They want something good from God. But later, when they are coming to the knowledge that God is asking something of them, that they need to glorify God, that they need to have changes in their life, to some this is very difficult. Some would, I don't know, start, try … somewhere they stop or leave … and then it happens, that one is leaving, another one is coming, you know.

Marko is also critical of too much emotionalism in churches (see Thurfjell 2013, whose findings contrast this) critiquing different Roma churches in other places he has visited. When someone starts preaching or teaching the Bible, 'they all sleep, they don't listen to you ... but if you pray loudly, if you praise God, if you sing. They sing and they also jump. If you need to preach, they … simply cannot listen.' Both he and pastor Josip from Community C prefer robust Bible teaching rather than extensive emotional displays.

From their descriptions, it would seem Marko and Zora conceptualize transformation through experiential relationship with God as ways of thinking and behaving, living in love and humility. This has synergies to the manner in which social scientists define 'spiritual transformation' in a variety of ways. Pargament (2006:18) defines spiritual transformation as a 'fundamental change in the place of the sacred or the character of the sacred in the life of the individual'. Koss-Chioino (2006:47) also links this change to behaviour, identity, purpose, and attitudes and notes that these changes are frequently connected to experiences and can be quick or transpire gradually. Hefner (2006:120–22)

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[42] Eating animals already found to be dead is a practice primarily engaged in very poor communities in both Croatia and Serbia. Although this seems merely to be a practice because of poverty and hunger, I have heard Roma Christians in both Western Croatia and Serbia condemn it and use it as a mark of personal transformation when someone stops doing that after conversion.

connects transformation with healing in Christian praxis—part of God's work in the world is a picture of 'wholeness' of the world, which entails both physical and spiritual healing. Transformation, then, is not just a spiritual experience, but it can result from one; it is also not simply a conversion experience, although in the Pentecostal worldview, conversion is the first step to transformation.

7.5.2 Obstacles to Pentecostal 'Rupture'

Marko suggested several reasons why change and growth are so slow in his community.[43] First, because of the difficult life experienced by Roma, as 'some things they carry in life are very hard for many':

> The biggest, the biggest challenge is to change their awareness regarding that position of poverty. And what is changing then, because there are people, people who converted, who are converted, maybe in them they don't have the strength, for some, some, some change, they still don't have the power, but they are, their intellect changed. Their way of thinking has changed. They can see from the perspective of the kingdom of God. They can see. Um, it is very hard to do it in practice, you know, but they have changes in their mind, exists a change. And there are people who really have changed. People who have love, who are humble who think differently, you know?

Second, the 'flesh', meaning the pull of the 'world' vis a vis spirituality and praxis. Third, a fear of failure or a fear of lack of resources limiting religious engagement:

> Fear of trying at all. In order to change something, you need to start working, you know … many times, we organize something, prepare something, we go to some conference, seminar, lecture or something, and they are afraid that if, if they now give some of their time for something … that um, they will lose their jobs, that they will not have enough for this …They think that I must work, and I cannot serve God, I cannot do this, and I cannot that, and everything is somehow connected.

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[43] It was not just Marko who noted the discrepancy. In one very uncomfortable interview with a husband, who was a believer, and a wife, who was not, the woman seemed very angry at her husband's 'God-talk' and sat in the corner smouldering as we talked. I myself noted, 'He spoke in generalities and platitudes, about what God had done, but not giving specifics. Then he asked me if I knew some organization that helped finance poor people, which was an uncomfortable moment.' His wife accused him of being a hypocrite, saying one thing and doing another in church. If he really believed in God, she said, he 'would be working like an ant'. In reply, he said she needed to go to church to have her faith shaped and get back in touch with God. She did not want to share very much with me but said she had suffered a lot in her life and is not going to church because she is cursing and saying nasty things through the day, so she would feel like a hypocrite. I wrote: 'I left my researcher position for a moment and got involved, challenging her understanding of the gospel as 'works-based' instead of accepting God's grace. She was not too responsive to this, but I guess I was being a little obnoxious without earning the right to tell her that (Field notes, March 2017).

Marko identifies with these difficulties, particularly because he experienced many of the same things in his own life. However, he does not seem to link transformation with spiritual healing—the need to process, accept, and heal from the past suffering. This does not seem to be part of the available cultural or theological discourse.

The struggle to live out one's conversion, noted in the literature in Chapter One, was discussed in Chapter Six in terms of 'crisis points' within a conversion career (Gooren 2010), which have the potential to shape new interpretative frameworks. This discussion can be broadened beyond Roma Pentecostals through the lens of anthropology of Christianity; although a Pentecostal worldview equates conversion with a 'complete rupture' from one's past, such challenges bring to light questions of the complex negotiation between past and present, between personal narrative and the larger cultural narratives. Breaking with the past is often not a one-time thing, but a long process (Robbins 2003:225; Engelke 2010:189), as the convert can be seen as a 'divided subject' (Robbins 2010b:641). Robbins (2010b:638–40) discusses Badiou's understanding of cultural change in the context of the Apostle Paul's conversion. For something to cause change to the social or cultural structure, an event would have to possess elements outside of the culture's recognition, require people to recognize and follow these elements, and have the ability to connect new understandings to the situation. Robbins (2010b:641) illustrates the 'divided subject' depicting the Pentecostal revival among the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea as the struggle of being 'one that works constantly to overcome the particular life it has led in light of its newfound fidelity to the event and its universal implications'. Indeed, this very struggle against the past helps direct Pentecostal practice in sin-avoidance and behaviour change and thus becomes 'a meaningfully endless process' (647).

7.5.3 Negotiations of Christian Identity in Daily Challenges

In this context, the 'event' is God's immanence within the congregant's problems, causing a reorientation in meaning-making. However, it seems that 'new understandings' of God's involvement in their world constantly needs to be connected to the challenges of daily existence. If individuals cannot resolve and heal from past suffering, this might accordingly thwart the ongoing transformation process.

Mladen's exchange with his father, summarized earlier in this chapter, illustrates the complicated dynamics interacting with connecting a new Christian identity to one coming to terms with one's past and therefore reorientation for the future. During the period just after the war in the 1990s, Mladen's family struggled to survive and some of the men went into Croatia to chop down some trees to provide heating in the winter, actions which were illegal. A police patrol found them and began shooting, and the men returned fire. Mladen's father shot and killed two policemen in this exchange, and although he ultimately survived being shot seven times, he spent ten years in prison paying for this crime. Mladen's brother was also shot seven times and lost his arm. After the father was initially released from prison, he was very angry at Mladen and his mother's new commitment to Christianity, even threatening to bomb the church. Mladen and his mother fasted and prayed for him:

> 'You are tormenting me', he [father] said. We prayed for him, me and mom, fasting, fasting, fasting and praying to God, and God touched him. He came to church in the [village]. 'Come', mama said, 'Do you want to come with us to church?' He said, 'No'. One Sunday passed. Second Sunday … Third Sunday. And so one day he said, 'Okay, go ahead and I will come'. And we always prayed and fasted. When he came to church, he sat down, he watched, Marko preached. He cried. God touched him. And when his mom died, he didn't [even] cry. Hard, hard, concrete hard [describing his normal emotional state]. And when he came in the church, he cried. He said, 'What is this? I have chills [goose bumps] …' And so he is now first to arrive at church.

However, it seems that Mladen's father still wrestles with both complicated culpability and regret, his own suffering in the prison, set in the context of trying to provide for his family. This evidenced by his reluctance to tell me the story as part and parcel of his conversion, and the following exchange with his son:

> Father: And for this that happened [killing the police officers], I regret. But what now? I did my thing, jail.

Mladen: God loves you.

Father: I regret very much that it was like that, but what can I do now?

Mladen: That passed.

Father: It didn't have to happen so, but it did. When the devil, when the devil doesn't sleep…

Thus Pentecostal believers experience the struggle between good and evil (Robbins 2010b) in difficult living situations, which complicates the praxis of Pentecostal identity in social life. Their narratives are replete with God's saving presence, and how they have changed as a result of their encounter with the divine, reinforcing their Christian identity (Roht-Yilmaz 2019:115), and also orienting themselves in the Christian story (Engelke 2010).

7.6 Conclusion

Narrative inquiry revealed layers of interpretative pathways when comparing Communities C and B. As discussed earlier in this chapter, I was initially frustrated with my efforts to elicit rich narratives from the women. However, consideration of literature on narrative methodologies helped to reframe my expectations and understanding of the stories I was gathering. In light of the equally important narrative components of the 'telling' and 'content', I came to realise that one must be careful to treat these limited narrative accounts from the women in Serbia as also revealing meaning albeit 'differently' from those gathered in Community B. The role of silence or deferment in the performance of narratives can also reveal much about culture, experience, and meaning-making. For example, Gubrium & Holstein (2009:87) analyse Abu-Lughod's attempt to encourage Migdim, a Bedouin woman to 'tell her life story':

> She became interested in, rather than frustrated by, Migdim's repeated evasions. Abu-Lughod would orient to the idea that the contrasting stories that Migdim would tell were the meaning-making work of culture, even if they were not the stories Abu-Lughod initially wanted to hear… Migdim's response shed light on the need for ethnographic fieldwork that could capture the importance of experience on its own—often timeless—terms.

Likewise, my seeking of the women's 'life stories' in Serbia did not elicit the 'stories' I was looking for. I was conscious of my 'positionality', as an outsider and non-Roma, but

thought that my shared gender and mutual Christian faith could overcome this. In fact, I underestimated the power relations inherent in such an interaction (Abu-Lughod 1993:4), particularly in light of Roma history. I also believed that I offered them narrative freedom by telling them 'they could start anywhere they wanted and tell me anything they wanted'. Instead, this frequently caused uncertainty and confusion: 'I don't know what to say'; deferral: 'My husband can speak'; seeming reluctance to visit the past: 'It is all suffering and hardship, what can I say', or a quick summation involving marriage, children, work. All of these performances suggest important things about the women in this particular context. Importantly, their lack of prior relationship with me perhaps made them unwilling to construct their narratives without a good sense of their audience, coupled with their reluctance to speak in front of their husbands or dominate their husbands' narratives and their lack of vocabulary to make sense of their own hardship and suffering. As Abu-Lughod (1993) notes, it is the researcher who must orient herself to the meaning of the story in the particular place and performance of the story. In this case, if race, class, and gender are 'deep reservoirs' for self-construction (Gubrium & Holstein 2000:105) and offer available language of discourse, the silence or deferment of the women is deeply significant.

This chapter has detailed narrative analysis in community B, exploring metanarratives emerging from the content of the interviews, as well as what the form of the interviews revealed about meaning-making in the context. Gender, daily challenges and hardship, addressing past suffering, miracles and divine encounters are all important elements which contribute to how individuals negotiate their Christian identity within their lives. Pentecostalism responds to local cosmologies and questions by emphasizing healing, freedom from demonic oppression, and everyday answers to prayer and yet significant 'rupture' in a way that aligns with Pentecostal concepts of transformation is a challenge

for many in the Community. In the final chapter I will summarize the findings and themes in this thesis before comparing the narrative findings from Communities C and B.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This thesis consists of an ethnographic study, which uses a narrative methodology to investigate how Roma interpret their identity in their daily lives, undertaken in two Old Romanian speaking communities in Croatia and Serbia. The communities share familial, lingual, cultural, and religious connections. Two different Romani couples introduced Pentecostal Christianity to each community. Within this thesis I sought to answer the following central question: **How do Roma Christians in Croatia and Serbia negotiate their identities in their daily lives and across their life course?** My research shows that Roma Christians integrate new Pentecostal narratives in divergent ways depending on multiple factors, including gender, healing, unresolved trauma, and interpretations of suffering. The way Pentecostalism is localized in these contexts is related to the socio-cultural context—and the extent to which Pentecostal identities are holistically integrated and incorporated into daily life is determined by how an individual responds to the above listed factors.

This final chapter will briefly map my argument by tracing pertinent themes that have arisen in each chapter. Next, it will offer a brief comparison of the two communities, using the method of narrative inquiry, discussing similarities and differences in meaning-making and identity negotiations. Finally, it will present my central findings, leading to a discussion of the contribution to knowledge made by my research, point to the project's limitations, and conclude by offering suggestions for future research.

8.2 Mapping the Argument

This study is sited in the complex interactions between Roma groups and the societies in which they are embedded (Marushiakova & Popov 2013). I clarify my dual use of 'identity' in the study: first being 'self' as a 'reflexive modality' (Leve 2011) and second as a social-political construction symbiotically mediated between society and Roma groups (Guy 2001a), which emerge from historical and social processes. This process, discussed at length in Chapter One, occurs because all too often states have attempted to assimilate or force Roma groups to become part of mainstream society using harsh or violent measures (Marsh 2007). Today, many Roma groups have disproportionate poverty levels, particularly in the Balkans (Müller & Jovanovic 2010) and suffer from anti-Gypsyism and discrimination (FRA 2017b). I argue that the Old Romanian groups of this study are in a nexus of identities between Romani-speaking Roma, Romanians, Serbs, and Croats (Sorescu-Marinković 2005). According to the identity negotiation theory, they negotiate their identity depending on the situation and with whom they are speaking with the goal of attaining security, connection, and inclusion; thus, they demonstrate a creative nimbleness in their intercultural communication (Ting-Toomey 2009:493; Ting-Toomey 2015:420).

I further geographically nuance the socio-economic and political situation in Chapter Three by tracing the perception of Roma in Yugoslavia in the twentieth century. These perceptions are visible in the evolving Constitution of the Socialist Republic and new nation states (Sardelić 2011, 2015) as well as in Roma activism (Crowe 2007). Within this chapter I also highlight how societal perceptions of the Roma in Croatia and Serbia often fall into the use of negative tropes and stereotypes, as illustrated by hostile and inaccurate narratives, which are enabled by a lacuna of documented Roma experience during the war in the 1990s.

The increased governmental and trans governmental focus on the Roma since the turn of the century (Council of Europe 2012b) has illuminated gaps between policy and implementation (van Baar 2011a), part of which are due to how Roma identities are conceptualized by the majority society (Mayall 2004; Marsh 2007; Csepeli & Simon 2004); this manifests in daily interactions at the grass roots level. I suggest in Chapter One the incompleteness of neoliberal governmentality and a human rights framework to close those gaps and suggest that a Christian theological framework may expand the possibilities of human flourishing through social processes (Cannell 2006). Presenting the rapid growth of Pentecostalism among the Roma since the 1950s, I summarize in Chapter One how Roma identity has been studied in reference to Pentecostalism, emphasizing a 'new kind of diaspora' (Cantón-Delgado 2017) and a 'vehicle' of ethnic identity (Acton 2014) in which social change is induced by a 'new morality' (Strand 2014:123). Within this discussion, I also noted the difficulty of discipling converts after conversion (Hrustič 2014; Wachsmuth 2017a); proposing two additional lenses through which to broaden the discussion of how Roma are interpreting their new Christian identities in their daily lives. First is the lens of trauma research discussed in Chapter Five, which is proposed in view of the kinds of stories that emerged through undertaking narrative analysis of collected data. The second lens proposes using Pentecostal theology as an interpretive category, in order to broaden the analytic lens through which I study how respondents draw meaning from their faith in their daily lives.

In Chapter Two, I located my study in the anthropology of Christianity, and argued that this discipline has created space to study Christianity on its own terms (Garriott & O'Neill 2008). In particular, I highlighted the ways in which the anthropology of Christianity has discussed change or 'rupture' (Robbins 2007, 2010) manifesting through language (Harding 2000), 'metakinesis', or body and emotions (Luhrmann 2004); changing customs, rituals, habits, or behaviours (Bialecki et al. 2008) in a way that can

align with modernity but should not be conflated with it (Engelke 2010). This furthers my earlier suggestion regarding the incompleteness of only using a human rights framework as an epistemological lens. To conceptualize Christianity only through a neoliberal framework of what is ‘good’ for humans in society may well just be another tool to satisfy state goals of social integration (Cantón-Delgado et al. 2019).

Pentecostalism, as a dynamic, non-hierarchical Christian movement, manifests differently in diverse contexts by adopting local ontologies (Robbins 2003; Anderson 2004). I thus keep my study in conversation with the literature on global Pentecostalism in order to dispel any idea that Roma Pentecostalism is ‘unique’, an approach which could further exoticize Roma research (Marushiakova & Popov 2011). Some global tendencies do however emerge in this study:

1. Pentecostal revivals happen (although not exclusively) among disenfranchised people and break down gender and ethnic barriers (Ma 2009; Hollenweger 1986).

2. Pentecostalism emphasizes an intimacy and immediacy with the Divine in the form of miracles, visions, and dreams (Albrecht & Howard 2014), a worldview that is often already part of the local cosmology.

3. Expectation of Divine healing which is holistic in nature (Macchia & Moltmann 1996).

In Chapter Four, I detail how I made my choice to use narrative inquiry because of its epistemological perspective: that narratives create meaning and construct identity (Chase 2011; Josselson 2011), and also because it privileges Roma stories in a way that challenges the majority society’s ‘monopolistic view’ of history (Skultans 1998:15). The strength and limitations of this method lie in its relationality, as narratives are ‘co-constructed’ between myself and my interlocuter (Pinnegar & Daynes 2007). In addition, the dynamic nature of identity and meaning are accounted for in the constitutive agency of the protagonist as they interpret and reinterpret meaning when new events unfold

(Gubrium et al. 2012). Narratives thus bring to light structures of power as they are constructed within specific cultural, societal, and political contexts (Delgado 1989).

With the context and methodology established, I then move in Chapter Five to the narrative analysis of the stories of Marija and Josip, leaders of Community C. Because of their early lives of poverty and violence, this necessitated a focus on how trauma and resilience interact with conversion and spiritual growth. I noted that trauma has biological, psychological, physical (van der Kolk 2015), and spiritual consequences (Beste 2007). Since trauma is culturally interpreted (Kirmayer et al. 2007a; Kelber et al. 1995), concepts of healing are also linked to local understandings (Boehnlein 2007). This is the strength of Pentecostalism, as its experiential nature and focus on 'healing' can be nuanced in divergent contexts (Brown 2011). Marija and Josip demonstrated an internalization of faith and Christian identity illustrated at 5.2.5 and 5.2.6 (Pargament 2002) through experiencing love from God in a way that changed their meaning-making capabilities and allowed them to re-interpret their lives to see how God was actively involved (Luhrmann 2013) in caring for their physical and spiritual needs. This internalization of Christian identity was further deepened when they confronted social constructions of Roma identity and thus helped them to reimagine what was possible for them as leaders as they began and 'grew' the church.

Chapter Six carries on the theme of trauma through the analysis of women's narratives collected in Community C. I highlighted Šikić-Mićanović's (2005) research on Roma women in Croatia to demonstrate Kóczé's (2009:23) argument that Roma women are exposed to 'multi-layered inequalities'. These inequalities become evident as the narratives highlight 'suffering and enduring' through experiences of domestic violence, war, deprivation, exclusion and anti-Gypsyism. The analysis of narratives revealed that these women's interpretative frameworks and operational theology of retributive justice are at odds with taught Pentecostal theology (and their conversion narratives), and yet

may be a way the women feel they can retain some agency in their stories (Phoenix & Pattynama 2006). Further, uniquely and pre-figuring my discussion of the contribution of this study to the wider research field, I bring trauma research into conversation with theology, questioning the idea of the human freedom to choose (Beste 2007).

I note the lack of an adequate theodicy to address the women's deep existential questions of suffering in 6.4 and argue that their underlying questions seem to be 'Am I seen by God? Am I loved?' These existential questions are partially mitigated with 'crisis points' (Ganzevoort 1993) as seen over a period of years in Iva's life (discussed in 6.4.2) manifesting as interpretations of dreams, visions, and healings as evidence that God 'sees'. This is a Pentecostal theology, which first experiences God and then makes meaning of the experience (Engelbert 2019). Accordingly, the prayer group as an inclusive place to discuss how daily life intersects with Bible teaching has been critical for a core group of individuals to continue reinterpreting their lives by bringing the Biblical narratives into the present (Yong 2010) in reference to their own narratives, and reimagining their identities (Keshgegian 2000) in line with the Christian story (Engelke 2010).

The leaders in Community B, Marko and Zora, similar to Marija and Josip, also emerged from childhoods of social and parental deprivation and experienced a gradual conversion to Pentecostalism. Their experience of beginning the church with few resources facilitated their interpretative frameworks regarding how God guides their lives. In Chapter Seven, I highlight several metanarratives that emerge from the interviews:

1. The toll of poverty on daily lives, and theological interpretations of these material circumstances.

2. The divergent impact of Pentecostalism on gendered relations in the community (Brusco 2010).

3. Healing as a response to local ontologies (Robbins 2003) in terms of curses, black magic, and healers. Healing is an experience with a 'sensory impact' (Kay 2013) and is frequently a reason for conversion. Miracles, frequently prayed for and recounted in testimonies, are part and parcel of lived reality for protagonists.

8.3 Meaning-Making in Two Communities

The following section will discuss identity negotiations and meaning-making in each community, bringing in the concepts highlighted in the above summary. This comparative analysis of two communities as explored in Chapters Six and Seven holds in tension their many similarities, noted at the beginning of this chapter, and the ways they differ internally (See Appendix 1); in their relationships with wider society, and in relationship to me as the researcher.

8.3.1 Conceptualizing the 'Self' in Meaning-making

The narrative method unravelled various strands intertwining the complexities of the 'self' as a reflexive modality (Leve 2011:513). One way of comparing the two fieldwork sites is through contrasting the difference between 'big' and 'little' stories in narrative research (Bamberg 2011a; Helsig 2010). 'Big stories' are the interviews I conducted—narratives told at a point in time, the interlocuters interpreting their lives which is dialectically interacting with context and listener relationship (Helsig 2010:276); in this temporal space, the narrator must take a 'reflective position vis-à-vis the self as character in past or fictitious time-space' (Bamberg 2011b:7). It is this act of interpretation, created in a moment of time in relationship to the listener that portrays the narrator as an 'active agent' (Spector-Mersel 2010) in claiming a specific identity (Spector-Mersel 2011). The big story does not always entail narrative coherence (Helsig 2010; Bamberg 2011a) but can reveal the contradictory push and pull of multiple identities and competing interpretations. This can be seen in both communities: the non-resolution of the women's

narratives in Community C (6.2.4) as they struggled to find meaning in their suffering, and Lazar's first narrative in Community B (7.3.2.4) that initially ended neatly but was disoriented and conflicted when I began probing into his childhood.

'Small stories' are the spontaneous telling of stories happening on a daily basis, the '"real" stories of our *lived* [sic] lives' (Bamberg et al. 2004:356). They allow one to see how narrators 'position' themselves in a situation according to how they want to be seen (Bamberg 2011b:15). Using both approaches together counteracts the idea of identity as either static or ever-changing, suggesting 'rather as something that is multiple, contradictory, and distributed over time and place, but contextually and locally held together' (Bamberg 2011b:9). By adopting a new Christian identity, this adherence to the Christian story (Engelke 2010) has the potential to become a point of orientation for negotiating identity. Pentecostal language and epistemology allow new concepts for interpreting meaning, related to identity, hope, healing, and belonging. However, big and small stories reveal discrepancies between operational theology for daily life and spoken theology in the church (Engelke 2010; Lange 2003). There is a polyphony (Bakhtin 1984) of movement between stories of God, miracles, and day-to-day hardships; but in some cases, as with Marija and Josip seen in 5.3.6 and 5.3.7, their belief in God's activity in their lives becomes *the* interpretative framework by which all other stories, good and bad, are filtered.

It was my embeddedness in Community C that allowed me to see this dialectical process between big and small stories. The women's narratives gathered in that setting, are reflective of trying to make meaning of the suffering and violence in their lives; yet small stories emerging in the prayer group and ad hoc conversations illustrate the ways in which those interpretations are challenged, reinterpreted or succumbed to. For example, Iva's remarkable physical healing from her stroke and her mental relief with a new psychiatric drug (see 6.4.2) allows her to reinterpret her life from being 'unseen' by

God to being 'seen and loved'. This process strengthens her faith in that moment and thus has the potential to contribute to her resilience (Schaefer et al. 2008; Pargament 1997), if she is able to interpret these events through new 'meaning pathways' (Hasanović & Pajević 2015) of God's involvement in her life.[1] In contrast, Ana's 'small stories' within the prayer group (see 5.5.4) often include complaints about a neighbour practising black magic on her, revealing that her operating theological framework is at odds with a Pentecostal framework.

8.3.2 Socio-political Constructions of Identity

Analysis undertaken through narrative methods therefore revealed negotiations of 'identity' as a socio-political construction. The diverse narratives challenge the idea of a 'bonded' Roma identity in each of the communities (Abu-Lughod 1993), as do the interlocuters themselves who *explicitly* play with identity labels such as Romanian, Gypsy, Roma, and Bayash.[2] Thus, we can see that even using the 'imposed' or 'adopted' categories of Roma identification (Csepeli & Simon 2004:134), identities claimed through narrative are contextually and relationally bound—both in relationship to the

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[1] As another example, Mia's life story of her escape from her abusive husband in Serbia and marriage to a non-violent man in Croatia was tempered by her abandonment of her two boys. Through the years documented in this study (2012–2019), she first spontaneously 'storied' in the prayer group regarding her deep anguish and her inability to forgive herself for the abandonment. She began to pray for her boys and eventually one of her boys (then a young man) showed up unannounced at her house in Croatia, a first step to reconciliation. She now has a restored relationship with them and has been welcomed to be grandmother to their children. Her last small story in a prayer group involved her beginning to share her Christian faith with her daughter-in-law who recently lost a child and feels 'God burned her'. If I asked her to tell her life story again, this plot thread would likely compel new interpretations of her movement of receiving God's reconciliation and healing and consequently offering it to someone else. Thus, her construction of her 'self' across the years reveal the narrator's pursuant goals (Helsig 2010:277)— a movement from regret and pain towards the Christian hope of forgiveness and reconciliation mitigated by her perception of how God was answering her prayers.

[2] One interlocuter in Croatia illustrates this 'playing' in Croatia:
'Well, all right, Bajaši or Bunjaši, whatever their name is… Well it is stupid to me, but maybe for them it is not stupid. Because it sorts us. Do you understand? It categorizes... In one category like more of these Roma, you know. It means, we are Bajaš, the others are ... how they call it, Kelderaš. They are Čujari, Ludari... So, it is one circle, and we all are around that circle. But, but! Our language… Yes... He [missionary] categorized us well... We are more Romanian Gypsies. We are Romanian Gypsies because we speak Romanian … (Mia, interview #2, 2016).

listener and goals of the teller (Ting-Toomey 2005, 2009), and the immediate context of the telling (Spector-Mersel 2010; Riessman 1993). Given that culture and context both enable and inhibit available discourses (Gubrium & Holstein 2009), in addition to revealing internal processes in both big and little stories, my interlocuters' narratives *implicitly* react to societal and gendered identity images of the Roma in an effort to put forth their own desired self-image (Ting-Toomey 2005). The meanings and interpretations tied into the words 'Roma' and 'Gypsy' are therefore schemas of knowledge (not identical but correlated) carried by Roma and non-Roma, influencing day-to-day relations and social constructions (Brubaker 2004:75). Thus, my narrative research emphasizes, as Brubaker (2004) noted, these ethnic identity markers are not ontological realities, but epistemological ones.

These implicit reactions emerged as 'counter narratives', defined as the told and lived stories that demonstrate both implicit and explicit resistance 'to dominant cultural narratives' (Andrews 2004:1). For example, in Chapter Seven, Filip and Lazar from Community B both emphasized their diligence and hard work juxtaposed with being abandoned by their mothers and the negative cultural expectations of how such Roma children would turn out. In Community C, I illustrated how protagonists portrayed their identities to challenge metanarratives about the Roma being dirty, thieving, and lazy. However, even more implicitly, the women's retributive justice framework in Community C in which their husbands suffered and died in 'just' recompense for their sins, also acts as a counter-narrative against the victim subjugation of women in violent situations.

8.3.3 'Self' and Constructed Identity in the Pentecostal Space

Through using narrative inquiry, this research has analysed internal concepts of self, mitigated by social and cultural discourses in relationship to new Pentecostal narratives. As discussed earlier, there has been a focus in research on Roma identity and

Pentecostalism, an 'ethno-genesis' parallel to the Romani political movement (Strand 2014; Thurfjell 2013) and a revitalization of Roma identity (Atanasov 2008; Wachsmuth 2017a; Thurfjell 2013). As Podolinská (2017:156) notes in Slovakia, Roma Christians grapple negotiating identity equality—based on Christian anthropology—within their own self-concept (perhaps lacking self-esteem) and the negative socio-cultural identity label.[3] She argues that pastors are key to helping congregants removing negative content associated to the label Roma or Gypsy, and connecting congregants to new networks (church) while helping them rebuild identity meaning through the morality and values of the Bible (177).

My research in Communities B and C shows the importance of an experiential component to this identity revitalization—in fact experience is part and parcel of a Pentecostal hermeneutic (Engelbert 2019). In the context of poverty, social marginalization, sickness, and complex trauma, some Roma responded to the sense of God's immanence in their lives through healing and miracles, preaching of the gospel, visions, and love and acceptance from others. This can be linked to global theological distinctives of Pentecostalism involving the 'full gospel' which is Jesus Christ as Saviour, healer, baptizer with the Holy Spirit, and coming King. This 'full gospel' results in born-again conversion from sin, holy living (sanctification), healing, and the gifts and empowerment of the Holy Spirit (Anderson 2013a:147). In the following section, I will highlight how certain local socio-cultural themes interacted with Pentecostal narratives and emerged in my analysis: identity and ethnicity; gender; suffering and trauma; and spiritual and physical healing.

[3] This is not necessarily specific to the Roma context—Hollenweger (1973:237) draws several connections between Pentecostalism and the Black Power movement in America, one being that both demand the implementation for what is institutionally taught but not practised in reality (for example, the church's openness to priesthood of all believers and the equal rights of White and Black citizens in America).

8.3.3.1 New Identity in a Multi-ethnic Space

Chapter Two detailed how Pentecostalism in other contexts challenged ethnic and gender barriers due in part to the theological perspective regarding the egalitarian nature of the Holy Spirit's power and a Christian anthropology of humans being created in the image of God (Acton 2014; Alexander 2013). In the context of social marginalization experienced by Roma in Communities B and C, the emphasis on a new Christian identity is critical, just as it was in the racially divided context of Azusa Street (Hollenweger 1986). Multi-ethnic churches, or an 'alternative community' as I note in 6.4.3, expand society's 'horizons' (Gadamer 1989) by challenging an ethnically segregated 'status quo' (See also Roman's (2017) study of Finnish Kaale). Both of the churches, in communities B and C although having a Roma majority, include other ethnicities, and people frequently use identity markers such as 'brother and sister' in the church space. In Christian theology, such forms of address stem from the social implications of salvation—being adopted into God's family moves kinship beyond ethnic and gender boundaries. As noted earlier in the thesis, this tone is set by the leadership (Podolinská 2017; Slavkova 2003).

The larger Pentecostal space outside the local church, however, reveals the ongoing difficulties of negotiating Christian identity, as this is where Pentecostal theology collides with deeply ingrained stereotypes. This can be seen by the relatively few times that Community C congregants and nearby Pentecostal church congregants have joint activities, as detailed in 6.4.3. Although now pastors (Serbian and Roma) regularly share pulpits and evangelistic projects in Community B, Marko and Zora's early ministry experience, related in 7.2.5, illustrated the difficulties they experienced when they no longer felt accepted after their pastor died.

The faith leaders of both Communities have acquired far more experiences in a wider Pentecostal space as compared to their congregants, allowing a constant encounter with

other 'horizons' which expand phenomenological possibilities (Gadamer 1989), thus being able to see beyond what has been culturally, socially, and politically constituted (McLean 2012). For example, in Chapter Five, I pointed out how Marija's horizons first expanded when she saw Roma Christians leading music in a Serbian-majority women's event—thus allowing her to fully embrace the meaning and potential of what being a 'child of God through faith' meant regarding her own capabilities for ministry. When asked at a 2019 Roma Christian conference what being Roma 'meant' for her in society, she related that she was proud to be Roma, and would not want to have been born any other ethnicity.

Similarly, to Tarango's analysis (2011), the autonomy of Pentecostalism gives Roma pastors the means by which to counteract stereotypes in their society, which they do by attending wider Pentecostal meetings in their respective countries as well as in international conferences. They also welcome international guests, both Roma and non-Roma to their churches, and host short-term visiting mission groups. In addition, Josip and Marija actively worked with other Christian NGOs during the refugee crisis in 2015 in Croatia to respond to the humanitarian crisis. Importantly, some Roma pastors, while condemning prejudice towards their people, believe that the majority culture must first see the change in Roma individuals and communities, and then the relationship will start to change (Wachsmuth 2013b). This indicates the strength of the barriers erected by constructed identities and stereotypes and the significant role Roma leaders believe they have in confronting these. This could also indicate a level of internal acceptance or blame toward their community.

8.3.3.2 Gendered Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism has had diverse consequences for women (Brusco 2010), illustrated by women's significant role in the development of Pentecostalism (Alexander 2013; Anderson 2013b), but also in the ways in which this history has been overlooked when

ministries move away from egalitarian beginnings, and women are sometimes pushed out of leadership roles (Alexander 2013:227). Through the analysis of narratives, I have questioned how Pentecostalism contributes to 'agency, flourishing, and freedom' within Roma socio-cultural contexts (Attanasi 2013:244)—contexts that expose the 'harshness' of women's lives (Gay y Blasco 1999:112). Women's 'small' stories of experiencing God's love and care through visions, healings, and prayer contribute to a healed sense of self, evident in both Marija's (Chapter Five) and Mia's (Chapter Six) increased agency, which enabled them to take on leadership roles, forgive, and process their suffering in Community C. Most of the women in Community C have non-Christian husbands, which has led some women to drop out of the church. In most cases, however, women resiliently hold onto their faith (Attanasi 2013:254) although because their husbands have not converted, they may not experience the 'reformation' of home life (for example, reduction in alcohol use and domestic violence) that contributed to Pentecostal women's increased well-being in other contexts (Brusco 1995; Gay y Blasco 1999). Instead, these women may instead find 'belonging' and uplift within the church (Martin 2001) despite their difficult home lives. This is evidenced in the narrative of Ana told in Chapter Six, an elderly woman who is neglected by her family and living alone, but who has found a sense of belonging in the church and insists on being at every meeting despite her many health issues.

In Community B, Ljuba spoke of how she experiences restored dignity through her interpretation of God's help in her life in Chapter Seven. She overcomes gendered expectations and finds that Pentecostalism's moral requirements liberate her from her anger (Mariz & Machado 1997:52), yet does not experience a transformation of family values because of her husband's unfaithfulness, although many other women in the community do experience positive changes in their domestic life (Martin 2001). In this context, where Roma women often suffer from 'multi-layered inequalities' (Kóczé 2009)

and violence, I suggest that liberation and flourishing for women in Pentecostal spaces (Abu-Lughod 2002; Attanasi 2013) involves a restoration of worth, dignity, and honour for women's identities through personal interaction with God and love and support received from a church community. There is also the possibility for a changed relationship with their husband even while maintaining gendered norms. Pentecostalism thus has the potential for increasing women's agency, whether it be through prayer or exercising choices informed by their beliefs (Attanasi 2013:253).

This negotiation becomes more complicated when Roma women have leadership in Pentecostal spaces (as occurs in Communities B and C).[4] Women may create their own spaces for agency, opportunities that have been part of Pentecostal history since its beginnings (Alexander 2013), for example a Roma pastor's wife in Romania publishing a Christian magazine for women (Field notes July 2015). Occasionally there seems to be a discrepancy between spoken values restricting leadership for women and actual practice, such as in the case of the Roma women in Albania and Serbia (discussed in 7.4.2) who led ministries whilst their husbands helped them. Roman (2017) articulates this apparent contradiction as a state of 'in-betweenness' as women negotiate the tight spaces of gendered expectations. However, in this thesis, I use this understanding of 'in-betweenness' to depict Roma women's navigation of cultural expectations (and their own values driving their sense of being a good Roma woman) as well as revealing their sense of calling into ministry.

The two fieldwork sites accordingly illustrate divergent ways in which Roma women balance cultural and gender norms and Pentecostal leadership. Both Marija and Zora experienced a dramatic improvement in their family lives after their husbands converted. Marko is the primary leader of the church in Community B, with Zora serving the church

[4] I noted in 7.4.2 that in some contexts, such as the French Life and Light movement or some of the Roma Pentecostal movements in Romania, women have very little formal leadership space.

in ways in parallel to Roma cultural norms. In this context, hosting, cleaning and cooking, praying for people, and teaching children. My reduced involvement with her when compared to the relationship with Marija (Community C) did not allow me to see ways in which she negotiated her agency within these boundaries; however, she had not facilitated specific programmes for women in the church, something Marija had done on numerous occasions. I have related Josip's egalitarian leadership approach, where Marija, within limits, pursues her own ideas and visions for the church. Marija does not feel it is proper for her to preach as a Roma woman, particularly in front of her husband, so her leadership domain is largely with children and young people, yet she retains growing autonomy in her visions for the church and her leadership. This was demonstrated at a recent conference (2019) in which Marija facilitated a discussion involving 10–15 Roma male pastors (when Josip was not present), after being invited by one widely respected Roma pastor from Serbia. That this counter-cultural leadership was accepted by the Roma pastors was startling even to me.

Josip's egalitarianism, in contrast to many other Roma pastors (Slavkova 2003) was possibly facilitated by the unique process of our team development in Community C in which, from the beginning, Josip shared the pulpit with both me and Tijana. Subsequently, however, Josip has clarified theological reasons for women to be in leadership, although these still occasionally clash with cultural values as he and Marija seek to navigate between gender roles within their marriage, which adhere to ideas of respect and submission by a woman to her husband (see Gay y Blasco 1999), and their shared leadership in the church.

8.3.3.3 Meaning-making of Suffering and Trauma

As extensively explored in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, traumatic incidents, hardships and suffering were narrated in both communities. This difficult context mediates the level of integration between an individual's life, their Pentecostal identity, and theology.

Storytelling is a 'constitutive agency' (Gubrium et al. 2012), and as Bruner (2004) noted, ways of telling can be 'recipes' for organizing experience; therefore, these 'recipes' can become entrenched into well-worn patterns of interpretation, including how one recounts past suffering. I have detailed multiple ways in which people responded to past incidents of trauma and suffering. They can be summed up in five groupings: black humour, dismissal, silence, reinterpretation, and physical/psychological distress. Some of these are related to resilience, such as humour (Connor & Davidson 2003), whereas dismissal ('I suffered a lot, what's to tell?') and silence may indicate a lack of vocabulary to express traumatic experience (Laub 1998) or lack of adequate trust in the interviewer (myself). Physical and psychological distress is the most blatant response to trauma (van der Kolk 2015), and many times in Communities B and C, this is mitigated through anxiety medications that emotionally numb the interlocutor. Other interviewees, most prominently church leaders, reinterpreted their suffering in a way that has meaning for their present, such as understanding others' suffering (for example, Marija in Chapter Six). I noted in Chapter Five the lack of overt anger from congregants expressed toward experiences of injustice; however, this may be an 'institutionalized script' by which to cope and function in daily living (Lamont 2016:276) or the lack of verbal terminology or conceptualisation to frame such experiences in social justice and human rights language (Delgado 1989).[5]

[5] For example, Guiao (1995:141-46) studied Filipino women's response to trauma and resilience in the context of long-term political instability in the Philippines. She noted that the stress tolerance was remarkable, in light of long-term economic and political stability. She found several themes that functioned as coping mechanisms, mitigating negative adaptations to trauma and stress. First, strong kinship systems helped minimize depression and stress. Second, denying, accepting or ignoring the political situation because they were powerless to do anything about it. In this context, acceptance promoted adaption to stress, although it does not decrease the problem that causes the stress. Third, the study showed that 'stress tolerance or resistance may increase as the individual becomes coping-proficient, so that she or he is more resilient and hardier in dealing with the constant hardships and therefore in achieving comfort and balance' (145). Fourth, most of them were Christians and they all use prayer as a coping strategy.

In Community B, some of the men derived meaning by stating that difficult experiences led them to God (for example in 7.4.5, Lazar's 'school of learning' or Dragan's 'That's how I found God, through my troubles'). The example of Miodrag (7.4.5), who became paralyzed from a degenerative disease and is wheelchair bound, and his wife, who also had multiple sicknesses, showed two different interpretations of their suffering, thus illustrating how differences in interpretation are connected to attitudes toward life. Miodrag was not healed, but believed God stopped the disease degeneration, healed his perspective, and gave him a 'new heart' and 'new thoughts'. He was thus able to deeply internalize and integrate his relationship to God (Schaefer et al. 2008), which allowed him to structure his narrative using God as the central protagonist. His wife, on the other hand (who had to take care of Miodrag) expressed ongoing disappointment, sadness, and depression; she expressed her belief in God as key for 'survival', but there was no sense of the joy or contentment that Miodrag exhibited.

In Community C, as has been noted above, many of the women are trapped in a retributive justice framework which does not allow them to creatively re-interpret their suffering as has Marija. These interpretations or non-interpretations of trauma and suffering are directly related to how Pentecostalism is localized in these communities, particularly in terms of how healing is conceptualized. Thus, Marija was able to find emotional healing through feeling God's love and believed God could use the suffering in her life for others' good.

8.3.3.4 'Rupture' as Trauma; 'Rupture' as Healing

This thesis refers to how although Pentecostalism is a global phenomenon, it localizes in specific contexts—and one of these localizations relates to how healing is enculturated and conceptualized differently in discrete contexts (Curtis 2011; Brown 2011). Chapter Two highlighted the concept of 'rupture' in terms of Pentecostalism's influence on social processes. In this sense, there are several 'ruptures' in identity and social space that can

potentially cause a break from the past: trauma, conversion, and healing. If trauma is an epistemological rupture (Rambo 2011) affecting the temporal, the body, and individual and community narratives, the process of conversion must holistically reconstitute the self (Hess 2008:66); otherwise, it may well stay at a more surface level of intellectual assent that does not reflect actual operating theology of an individual. As Beste (2007) suggested, findings from trauma research compel Christian leaders to take seriously the idea that experiences of significant harm can hamper an individual's ongoing free choice toward God as their internal self may have been repressed (Jones 2019). In addition, the biological consequences are also significant, a 'fundamental reorganization of way mind and brain manage perceptions' (Van der Kolk 2015) which can also have significant negative physical health repercussions. The damage associated with past trauma impacting behaviours and spiritual freedoms challenges the validity of blaming an individual's struggle to implement one's espoused theology on a 'lack of morals' or cultural stereotypes pertaining to being Roma as explored in detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

Although this thesis has referred to the possibilities in language for a 're-interpretation' of life story in 6.5 (Stromberg 1990, 1993; Harding 1987) in relationship to transformation, the above discussion on the spiritual, biological, and emotional impacts of trauma illustrates that the bodily effects of trauma must be accounted for, as discussed in Chapter Five (Van der Kolk 2015). The practice of experiencing God in the body and emotions, which Luhrmann (2004) calls metakinesis, manifests in the Pentecostal space through healings and descriptions of physical experiences of God, which emerge in interviews (such as descriptions of feeling goose bumps, a spreading warmth, light touches). However, as others have pointed out (Thurfjell 2013; Hrustič 2014), these experiential moments do not necessarily lead to a lasting 'rupture'. Rather, such experiences must be linked to interpretative frameworks that enable individuals to tell

'new stories' if they are to interpret these feelings as a tangible experience of God's love, and therefore to imagine and construct narratives toward a different future (Csordas 1994).

Pentecostal healing localizes to meet specific suffering, seen in Tarango's (2011) description of how Pentecostal healing addressed the Native Americans' stigma, bitterness, and rage through experiences of Divine love, as well as Yun's (2009) description of Koreans' emotional healing of their bitterness and resentment as one of the consequences of the revival. In Communities B and C, healing is a renewed sense of self from historical trauma, by means of, as Marija described in 5.3.6, a feeling of 'love which I never had before'. As Jones notes regarding Christianity: 'Our whole tradition is about people's own imprisoned stories being interrupted by a love that makes no sense intervening in their lives and having the capacity in that intervention to create a new path' (2019, xvi). For the women in Community C as detailed in 6.4.2, speaking of God intimately as their 'doctor, healer, and provider' as they have been taught, but also teaching each other through testimony, prayer, and admonition juxtaposes their past suffering, which is largely unnoticed by society. They maintain this suffering in silence, with the hope that God sees and acts in their everyday, material world. Based on the narratives and my field observations accumulated through longstanding relationships, I suggest that healing for these women would be to be seen and loved and feel taken care of in a way few in their lives have done for them. In Chapter Five and Six I have demonstrated divergent levels of success in such healing for various reasons.

These experiential, healing moments can be connected to new interpretative frameworks through relationships within the church (Beste 2007), which acts as an incarnational community (Rambo 2011; Cone 1999). Trauma scholars emphasize the need for 'safe spaces' for healing (Hess 2008:67) and it can be seen that in such gatherings as prayer groups or Bible studies, people are able to safely narrate their problems

alongside their Christian story, for example, through spontaneously breaking into a difficult personal story or through prayer. This is a necessary dialectical space that allows an ongoing reinterpretation of individual claimed identities between the tensions of Pentecostal theology, everyday life experiences, shared suffering, and forgiveness. In fact, trauma scholars emphasize meaning-making as an important part of the healing process, much as in the way Marija in Chapter Five conceptualizes her past suffering as being part of her efficacy as a church leader. Thus, in the multi-dimensional process of conversion (Gooren 2010), a 'rupture' leading to lasting transformation addresses trauma's impact on language, body, and psychological and emotional processes (van der Kolk 2015; Kirmayer et al. 2007a; Walters et al. 2011) thereby shifting meaning-making structures. In light of this conclusion, I turn now to my central findings.

8. 4 Central Findings

In view of the previous discussion on meaning making through identity negotiations in Communities B and C, the following will briefly summarize how I have addressed the research questions in the thesis, starting with the sub-questions that ultimately answer the central question.

What can participative ethnographic research and the use of narrative inquiry as a methodology contribute to the understanding of a marginalised community?

The epistemological foundations of narrative research allowed me to understand how individuals construct meaning and interpret their lives; to investigate how Pentecostal conversion, church teaching, and theology dynamically engage with individuals' available cultural, social, and religious discourses. Thus, it also reveals the operating theology and interpretative frameworks as opposed to spoken theology and conversion

stories (See 6.2.4). In addition, narrative inquiry challenges a societies' monopolistic view of history by privileging individual stories and their own meaning-making from the stories, illustrating how they are responding to tropes and stereotypes. (See 3.2.2 for the Roma experience during the wars in former Yugoslavia.) Finally, narrative inquiry reveals the importance of researcher and interlocuter relationship in the kind of data elicited and the immediate context of the telling (See 4.3.2.3 and discussion at 7.2).

How do Roma negotiate their identity in a disadvantaged socio-economic context?

My analysis brought out various socio-cultural factors—violence, gender roles, exclusion and anti-Gypsyism, and poverty—which individuals explicitly and implicitly reacted to through their identity negotiations in their narratives (6.3.2.1). Black humour, dismissal, silence, reinterpretation, and physical/psychological distress were responses to suffering and hardship (6.3.2.1). This was a non-uniform and non-predictable negotiation, depending on the narrator's mood in the immediate context and their relationship to me, but participants often evidenced a desire to communicate a positive identity affirmation (Ting-Toomey 2015:421), such as portraying themselves as a hard worker, clean, and a survivor or fighter (Table 6.2 in 6.3.2.2). On the other hand, in some cases, this positive identity negotiation clashed with individual's interpretative frameworks of suffering, resulting in a cognitive dissonance, as evidenced in the women in Community C struggling with the meaning within their framework of retributive justice (6.2.4).

What issues, including gender, are significant for the Roma interlocuters in forming their Pentecostal Christian identity?

The above issues emerging from the disadvantaged socio-economic context were critically connected to how Roma interlocuters formed their Christian identity. First, women experience greater dignity by feeling loved by God and a sense of belonging to the church in Community C (5.2.3; 6.4.2). In Community B, women report daily help

from God to help them navigate the acute daily challenges, which gives them greater agency (7.4.1.2; 7.4.2.2). Women reported freedom from such things as anger through the moral imperatives of patience and self-control (7.4.2.3). Second, a sense of new kinship reflected in the multi-ethnic nature of the two churches and the methods of address (brother and sister) challenge the marginalization that exists explicitly (separate Roma neighbourhoods) and implicitly in society (6.4.3). Third, miracles, experiences with God, and direct answers to prayer (7.4.4) were vitally important, and they led to many conversions and were interpreted as God's involvement in the everyday challenges of life. Fourth, the biological, emotional, and spiritual consequences of complex trauma and stress (5.3) impact individuals in multiple ways and may influence a person's ability to holistically integrate a Christian identity. Finally, divergent responses to suffering show a lack of contextual theology of suffering, which hinders post-traumatic growth and transformation (6.4.2; 7.4.5)

How has Pentecostalism been transmitted, internalized, and practised in a specific context and how does this inform a Roma understanding of social change?

Both sets of leaders in Communities B and C have experienced Pentecostal 'rupture' in terms of their self-conception, their lifestyle, their relationship to the wider non-Roma culture, their socio-economic position, their future direction (becoming leaders), and their interpretative frameworks, oriented by Pentecostal theology. This multi-faceted nature of leaders' experience with 'rupture' is connected to how they perceive social change—transformation of 'self' by the power of God and subsequent lifestyle changes as led by the power of the Holy Spirit (5.3.4). In their perception, the 'good life' would be a society where Roma and non-Roma co-exist peacefully side by side and Roma could enjoy equal dignity by having good jobs and education.

The leaders continue to form their churches based on their own experiences with God, mitigated by their interpretation of the Bible and praxis of Pentecostal theology within

their cultural framework. This is resulting in various levels of ‘success’ for congregants, based on the following factors:

1. The communities’ cosmology (a natural world infused with the supernatural) is cohesive with Pentecostal expectation of the miraculous (Robbins 2003).
2. Experiences happening in daily lives that are interpreted as Divine action, particularly when the experiences echo Biblical narratives (See 5.4).
3. Physical or emotional healing taking place through miracles, dreams, visions, and experiences of God’s presence can act as ‘crisis points’ (Ganzevoort 1993), which can shift interpretative frameworks and meaning-making structures (Brown 2011). (See 5.3.7; 6.6). This healing is ‘localized’ in that it directly relates to the ‘epistemological rupture’ caused by trauma and suffering.
4. The critical role of an incarnational community, particularly if it is multi-ethnic (See 6.6.4).

How do Roma Christians in Croatia and Serbia negotiate their identity in their daily lives and across their life course?

In view of the above sub-questions, Roma Christians in Communities B and C skilfully negotiate their identity in response to the particular challenges and in context of relationship—who they are speaking to at the time and what they want to communicate. They integrate new Pentecostal narratives in divergent ways depending on multiple factors including gender, healing, unresolved trauma, interpretation of suffering, and involvement in small groups that can facilitate interpretation of God’s intervention into daily lives. An initial conversion may not however lead to changed interpretative frameworks, which is necessary for ‘rupture’. However, over the course of time, experiential ‘crisis points’ in the form of healing, or experience with God, can be

connected to the Biblical narrative and integrated into one's personal narrative—this can lead to interpretative frameworks that are indivisibly entwined with Pentecostal theology, and internalization of Christian identity, as in the case of the churches' leaders.

8.4.1 Original Contribution to the Research Field

Just as prior research has illustrated how individual and communal meaning-making collide with global elements of Pentecostalism, localizing Pentecostalism in creative and meaningful ways (Robbins 2003; Eriksen et al. 2019), so it is in within these two communities. I note that certain socio-cultural factors—such as unresolved trauma, gender, the hardships of poverty and social marginalization—are part of the reason Pentecostalism is so appealing to disenfranchised peoples. Pentecostalism's non-hierarchical ecclesiology challenges ethnic and gender barriers and experiential theology emphasizes immediate help, healing, and intimacy with the Divine.

My primary contribution to knowledge is that these same socio-cultural factors, along with a lack of a contextual theology of suffering, can affect the extent to which Pentecostal theology becomes internalized (Pargament 2002), embodied and practised as a lived reality. The post-traumatic growth of the church leaders detailed in my research reveals how a Pentecostal epistemology—the holistic healing and renewed identities within a Pentecostal spirituality—can contribute alongside other frameworks (such as human rights and development) to both understanding and responding to the realities of social exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. The leaders' transformation points to the capacity for the Roma leaders to assist others to creatively engage these factors on a theological, socio-cultural, and practical basis.

8.4.2 Limitations of the Study

Although my research provides a valid contribution to knowledge regarding these contexts and may provide important insights or questions for other contexts, it is not

necessarily generalizable. As has been stated, Roma are not a monolithic people, nor do they necessarily negotiate their identity in the same ways in different societies and communities. In addition, Pentecostalism may localize differently in divergent contexts, and narrative inquiry has illustrated the highly contextual nature of the interview context and importance of relationships. The following detail this study's limitations:

1. The few number of male voices in Community C certainly limits the ethnographic texture.
2. My status as a female researcher would never enable me to interview men by themselves, and thus their narratives in Community C and B were performed in the context of family, which would certainly contribute to the identity they wanted to claim in the story (Gay y Blasco 1999; Berta 2019).
3. My outsider status in terms of language and culture certainly affected the kinds of data I was able to elicit and what I was observing and interpreting.
4. The interlocuters were almost all Christians, thus no comparison was made between how non-Christian Roma negotiate their identity in their everyday life.
5. Although it has been discussed at length in Chapters Four and Seven regarding the ways in which my differing relationship with the two communities affected the gathered data, certainly having less field time in Community B provided a sparser data reservoir in terms of integrating narrative interviews with thick description.

8.4.3 Suggestions for Further Research

This thesis has noted that amongst Roma communities there is a lack of a contextual theology of suffering, as was developed by Black or Latin American theologians (Cone 1999; Gutiérrez 1988; Pinn et al. 2014), as well as Womanist (African-American women) theologians (Townes 1993; Kirk-Duggan 2006; 2014) which can assist in a 're-reflection' on both historical group experience and individual trauma. Such a theology can contribute to Pentecostalism as a 'liberating' movement in terms of spiritual and emotional

personhood (Cucchiari 1990). Theology is recently 'expanding its horizons' (Beste 2007; Jones 2019; Rambo 2011) in the light of recent trauma research, and therefore connections between these insights and how trauma is expressed in Roma communities could be invaluable.

Second, there are limitations of Western models to study trauma in different contexts (Summerfield 1995). More research is needed to understand the cultural models in which Roma understand and process their trauma, and how healing can be facilitated appropriate to these cultural models. In particular, more research is needed to build on established work (Kóczé 2009; Oprea 2005; Aiello 2016; Gelbart 2012; Jovanovic et al. 2015) regarding the agency of Roma women, to explore how their resilience and challenges intersect with religious identity.

Third, there is an interesting contrast between the Roma congregants and the leadership. All four Roma leaders of the two church communities exhibit significant post-traumatic growth, healing, and leadership despite having life stories that are as equally traumatic to those of their congregation. However, how they have worked with their narratives reveals that their past stories became something new; not only did their attitudes and behaviours shift, but they became visionary leaders. The question remains: Why have the leaders experienced such significant 'rupture' from their past trauma, when others in their community continue to struggle emotionally and psychologically? Perhaps further study intersecting leadership studies, trauma and resilience theory, and Christian identity formation could shed further light on this aspect of the study.

Fourth, narrative inquiry has revealed the difference between operational theology and spoken theology by analysing how people are making meaning in their lives. This is one way in which my own theological horizons expanded (Gadamer 1989) as I engaged with anthropology (Robbins 2019). Narrative inquiry's methodology could thus be applied in numerous diverse contexts, particularly as Pentecostalism continues to grow across the

globe, potentially offering additional insight into both conversion studies, and for church practitioners as they engage with discipleship.

8.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, I find Robbins (2019) claim that theology can help render ‘judgements’ in humility, whilst anthropologists can reveal complexity of the social processes to be judged, appropriate to this study. Theology critiques the injustices enacted against the Roma through a Pentecostal epistemological lens, in its doctrinal claim that human worth and dignity are based on being created in the image of God (Grenz 2000); and advocates for human flourishing, which entails humans living in peace with God, others, and the earth. Anthropology reveals the complexity of the social situation Roma often find themselves in, for example ingrained societal stereotypes, set in the complicated socio-political and economic context of the Balkans. This study has used anthropology, narrative epistemology, and theology to bridge theory with everyday meaning in order to show the dynamic and evolving ways in which Roma interpret Pentecostal theology and praxis into their everyday lives.

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Iva, Interview in Croatia, July 28, 2016

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Mate, Interview in Croatia, May 30, 2018

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Marija and Josip, Conversations from 2011-2016

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Elena, Serbia, September 2017

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Ljuba, Serbia, March 2017

Marija, Serbia March 2017.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Comparison between Communities B and C

	Language spoken	**Dialect**	**Religious background**	**Population**	**Family connections to other community**	**Relationship to researcher**
B	Old Romanian	Ardeleni	Largely Catholic[1]	5000	Yes, past and present	Occasional visits over seven years
C	Old Romanian	Munteni	Largely Orthodox	1000	Yes, past and present	Multiple times a week contact for seven years

[1] According to one interlocuter, bringing babies for baptism to the Catholic church was a question of proximity. Although they would have preferred to be Orthodox, there was no nearby Orthodox church to the community.

Appendix 2: Ethics

Given my research context, it was clear that the Roma in my research communities in Croatia and Serbia can fit into a 'multi-faceted' definition of vulnerability in regard to their socio-economic status, educational levels, and the marginalization they experience in relation to the majority culture (See 4.4.3). In view of this, I was required by my institution to submit my research proposal along with the basic framework of how I would conduct interviews, to the ethics board to be approved before I could commence interviews. See below the initial Statement of Ethics signed October 27, 2014.

1. Initial Statement of Ethics

Candidates for registration should complete and sign this form and send it with their Research Proposal when they submit their Proposal to the Research Ethics Committee (REC).

When the REC has signed off this statement, it should be added to the candidate's Registration Portfolio for the OCMS Assessment Board.
Researcher's Name: Melody Joy Wachsmuth
Main Supervisor: Margaret Greenfields
Second Supervisor: Fiona Bowie

Research topic: Understanding identity and social change through narrative: A study of the impact of Pentecostalism on Romani identity in Serbia and Croatia

Description of Research (100 words): From a narrative perspective, I am questioning how Romani identities change when Pentecostalism is adopted and reconfigured both individually and communally. How and why do these new narratives lead to social change and new relationships and ways of belonging with Croatians and Serbians? This study will examine both individual narratives, exploring what motivates individuals to "re-orient" themselves to a different story, and will also examine the larger communal narratives of the Roma community and the surrounding Croatian and Serbian communities.

Research Population (maximum 200 words):
The research population will include a Bayash (Roma) community in Croatia, a select number of Croatians around this community, an Arli Romani community in Leskovac, Serbia, and a select number of Serbians around this community. In each Roma community, I will be interviewing 10–12 Roma participants, and 5–10 Croatian or Serbian participants. The target group will include both genders and adults between the ages of 25–65, leaders and non-leaders and including both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal adherents.

Research Methods/Approach (maximum 200 words):

Is your research purely text-based, e.g., biblical studies, theological studies? NO (please delete as appropriate) *Note: if your research is purely text-based, please jump to the end of the document on Declaration to sign and date this document.*

Research Guidelines

The following guidelines, though an extraction, are seen as overall principles that directly apply to this research shall be followed. These have been extracted from the ESRC Guidelines for Research Ethics and considered applicable to this research

- The specific identity of any participant in this research will be protected, unless informed consent has been granted by a participant.
- Research will involve people from a vulnerable group as defined by the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics
- Research will NOT involve anyone lacking capacity as defined by the ESRC Framework for Research Ethics
- Approval will be requested from the Main Supervisor of this research and from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies on research to which responses maybe needed through the internet
- Approval will be requested from the Main Supervisor of this research and from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies on any matters that maybe considered sensitive or in which the identity of informants is required or in any matters in which clarification is needed

Statement of Agreement

The researcher shall abide by The Six Key Principles as extracted from the ESRC document, pages 3 and 4):

1. Research will be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.
2. Research staff and participants will normally be informed fully about purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved. Some variation is allowed in very specific research contexts for which detailed guidance is provided in Section 2 (*of the ERSC Framework for Research Ethics*):
3. The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents will be respected.
4. Research participants will take part voluntarily free from any coercion.
5. Harm to research participants will be avoided in all instances.
6. The independence of research will be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality will be explicit.

To implement these principles:

- The responsibility for conduct of the research in line with relevant principles rests with the principal investigator and the research / employing organisation.
- The responsibility for ensuring that research is subject to appropriate ethics review, approval and monitoring lies with the research organisation seeking

or holding an award with the ESRC and which employs the researchers performing it, or some of the researchers when it is acting as the co-ordinator for collaborative research involving more than one organisation.

- Research organisations should have clear, transparent, appropriate and effective procedures in place for ethics review, approval and governance whenever it is necessary.
- Risks should be minimised.
- Research should be designed in a way that the dignity and autonomy of research participants are protected and respected at all times.
- Ethics review should always be proportionate to the potential risk, whether this involves primary or secondary data.
- Whilst the secondary use of some datasets may be relatively uncontroversial, and require only light touch ethics review, novel use of existing data and especially data linkage, as well as some uses of administrative and secure data will raise issues of ethics.
- Research involving primary data collection will always raise issues of ethics that must be addressed.
- As the research involves more than minimal risk (as defined by the document entitled 'Research Ethics at OCMS'), the student will submit to REC proposed questionnaires or interview questions for approval before data collection.

Declaration

This researcher shall conduct and follow the ethical guidelines as established by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) of the United Kingdom. The specific reference used for this statement is located at the ESRC website: http://www.esrc.ac.uk/_images/Framework_for_Research_Ethics_tcm8-4586.pdf

Student's Signature: Melody Joy Wachsmuth

Date: October 27, 2014

2. Ethical Guidelines Informing my Study

In February 2015, the ethics board approved my initial proposal and research plan. However, given the longevity and sensitivity of material, I also developed my own ethical guidelines as the research progressed.

Informed by: American Anthropological Association's (AAA) (2012) ethical principles; Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth (ASA) (2011) ethical guidelines, and various other anthropological sources such as Okely 2012; Tavory 2019; Beck & Maida 2013 (See Ethics section in 4.5.3).

A. Do no harm; Be Open and Honest

1. What would harm look like in this context?

a. As I have noted that this is a vulnerable population (Nyamathi 1998; Silva 1995), therefore, harm would be pressuring someone to share sensitive information without their free and informed consent.

b. Exploiting the sensitive information—robbing an individual of dignity by using the information against them in a way that misrepresents them (Block et al. 2012).

c. Given the relatively few Roma Pentecostal communities in Croatia, there is a potential for someone to identify the real location and the identity of the leaders. Given the obscurity of the other participants, the identification of them is highly unlikely. What are the risks of identification for the leaders? Somebody would know their life stories and their process of beginning a church with all of its setbacks, challenges, and progress.

2. How did I account for these possibilities? The process of obtaining consent (ASA 2011)

    a. I approached each participant of the community in Croatia to ask for their interview outside the church context, in an attempt to secure *meaningful* consent, in order to mitigate any feeling of pressure to acquiesce to church leadership (Block et al. 2012:78). In terms of the participants in Serbia, the pastor negotiated those interviews, with full understanding of what the research was going to be used for. As part of my request for interviews in both communities, I promised anonymity to each participant. In the context of relationality, I myself as a researcher have been vulnerable in the context of one-to-one conversations and in church events, thus helping to negotiate the power distance (Liamputtong 2007; Dickson-Swift et al. 2007:332-334).

    b. I discussed both the risks and advantages of the research with the leaders in Croatia two times (2019, 2020). They were made aware of the extent of my analysis and documentation of the growth of the church, their personal stories, their leadership development, and my findings. They concluded that they should not have to be ashamed of their life stories, particularly if it helps others understand some of the challenges Roma have to face in Croatia. They also hoped that the research would help those who are just starting out and do not know anything—that it would provide a real picture of the challenges. Also, that it provides another explanation of some of the difficulties of discipling Roma in the Christian faith, rather than just being something within the 'culture' or over-spiritualizing it as 'a curse'. In terms of discussing the risks and advantages with each person that I had already obtained consent from, they said I needed to separate my role of researcher and church leader—anything said in confidence in the space of a counselling session should not be included in my research. However, if they consented to the interview and their life story, there was no need to obtain it again.

    c. I continued to be honest and open regarding my research in the church. Even as time wore on and people expressed little interest in it, they

would still occasionally ask me about my doctorate, demonstrating awareness of my ongoing role as a researcher. However, they primarily saw me as a church leader. Their primary concern, while doing the interviews, was that their names would be changed, and the recording would only be for me.

B: Weighing Competing Ethical Obligations Due to Collaborators and Affected Parties

1. Due to the asymmetries of power in these societies, I am well aware that this research could challenge some dominant points of view concerning the Roma, for example, their role during the Homeland War and their struggles with the educational system. Ruzicka (2016) framed this in terms of highlighting the state's role in marginalization of the Roma, which one of the natural consequences of an activist or engaged anthropology (Beck & Maida 2013). In this, although my research may engender some criticism or reaction, my first obligation is to my informants.

2. I am also aware of another danger, that I could be accused of profiting off the Roma. My argument to this is that my longevity in the community, extended well past the point of research (Clandinin & Connelly 2000). Since I was embedded in Community C for seven years, I have an 'enhanced sense of trust and relational responsibility to the participants, feeling personally responsible that my research does not contribute to further pain or exploitation' (Floyd & Arthur 2012).

C: Disseminating Research, Protecting Records

1. Part of my goal was to make this research useful to other churches and individuals working in Roma communities. Therefore, I intend to have an abridged and simplified version translated and distributed to interested parties in the Southeastern Europe area. The abridged version will be in consultation with the leaders of both Communities B and C.

2. My records are protected and coded to protect identities—if they are to be used for anything in the future, I would consult with the involved parties.

Appendix 3: Sample of Primary Data

I include here a full transcript as I provide a sample of detailed analysis on this transcript in Appendix 4.

People in the room: I = Iva; M = Melody; T= Tijana(church leader)

I: And I told you that. Only God can help me. I am drinking those pills and everything, that I can sleep and be calm and everything, but … I am feeling very difficult on my heart from everything, when I am lying, everything comes into my head. Also, about him and about God. I have two daughters and a son. I cannot live life according to how God has given it, that there is this … not everything is in wealth. Give me today a beautiful life, peace. We know that everyone must work. There is no one who does not need to work. But still there are these kinds of problems. And that is very difficult.

M: Can you say how old you are?

I: I am 55.

M:
You begin your story wherever you want.

I: Okay, I will start … when I was 15 years old …then …

T: I will translate

I: Then a little by little, yes?

T: Yes

I: I was fifteen years when I married. At my mom and dad's house, we had a poor life, but beautiful. We were six. Three brothers and three sisters. It was beautiful to us. I went to school for three years, and then, when I was 15 years old, I married. And … I began life, I understood how it goes that you must work, you must listen. I went to work on the fields. We were working with scrap metal and iron. We did not have a place to stay. We were at my mother in law's house, mother in law did not have a good spirit to our living there. She was against us. However, I then made one small house here in [place obscured], one room (big sigh). Meanwhile, then I had my son, [name obscured]. I was 16 years old. At 17 I gave birth to daughter [name obscured]. And between first daughter and second daughter, between first daughter, there was one other girl, another pregnancy. She was born in the hospital and immediately died. She was 8 months old. My husband loved to drink. He loved whores. When he came home, nothing was good for him. Many times he beat me, I knew to leave the children alone and I hid in the corn. In that, I bore everything because of my children. Then I bore my second daughter.

And later I needed to leave the three at home so that I could go and work so that I would earn money and they would have something to eat. It was very difficult with my husband. He didn't realise anything, did not understand anything. He loved whatever he saw. He loved music, loved women, loved to beat me. Many times I was sick, I went to the hospital because of that. But I was always hiding him, I didn't say anything. My mom wanted to divorce me from him, but I didn't want that because of my children. In time, when my

children grew up, daughters, son, then he stopped beating me, I started to be seriously ill. The war started. Then my son got married. I did a little something wrong. Now I did not say. My son was in the war, he had both legs shot. My [name obscured], yes. Here, her here was this UNPROFOR (blue helmets) at the castle. He was 16 years old. He was 16 years old when he got hurt. Then I had a nervous breakdown. I was in [city name in Serbia] on the A* street. That hospital is for that kind of people. However, when I came to the house, my daughters were already working everything in the house, I didn't need to do anything. And so life continued. My son got married. My daughters got married, both of them. We returned from Serbia to our home in Croatia, and then we didn't have a home or anything, they took our home, where we lived.

M: During the war?

I: Yes, from my brother's son, he took the house and told us that we had sold it to him. We didn't have a place to stay. I went to a community and asked one man, where he had once house here in that place. This place and house were in our name before when our children were just born. This man allowed us to live in this home. So, we stayed. Then we started to work at the main garbage place in [city name]. We could earn quite a bit of money here. And we worked, It was a lot of things …the garbage stank. Yes. But I submitted to this, because I just had to, we didn't have a place to stay. Two years we were working there, me and my husband. And then we started to build this home. I have 11 grandchildren, and now I have one great-grandchild. My husband is the same as before, but now he is not having whores and is not beating me. I am tormented by all that, everything I endured. I could endure everything. I even surprised at myself at how I can go through all that and continue. That is short and fast version I told you.

M: Can I ask you a question?

I: You can

M: It sounds like the first 15 years were good memories.

I: It was, because well, I loved my children and I watched them how they pleased …

T: No no, your first 15 years with your mom and dad.

I: (immediately tone changes) Ahhhh! That was great for me. My childhood was wonderful. We were poor, but it was very good.

M: Your parents loved each other?

I: They loved each other, but my father was an alcoholic. He loved to drink. But he went to work. People, everyone loved him. Everyone when they saw him, immediately would joke with him, ask him to come to their place and sort the metal.

M: So, he also worked in the scrap metal?

I: Yes

M: Where was that?

I That was in [place names].

M: You were born in [place name]?

I: Yes, so that so that he had a lot of people, my father. And here is our attitude…he loved to drink, but we had all the satisfaction [in life].

M: Did he beat your mother?

I. He did, he did, He beat her. He beat my mom. Equally, until my brothers were not grown. Then later my brothers did not allow, defended [her].

M: Why did you only go to school for three years?

I: Before it was not like now. I didn't have books and that. I was just going to school with one pen and notebook.

M: What language did you speak at home?

I: Romanian

M: Romanian?

I. Yes

M: Was it hard when you went to school then?

I: No, it was not.

M: You then learned Croatian as well?

I: Yes, yes. We knew when were children, immediately, Croatian.

M: How did you meet your husband … how did that happen?

I: And there was going out, music, going out. I had my older sister, [name omitted], she went out, and she had a boyfriend, and I went with her. And so I met this husband of mine. And … two years we dated. So then we decided to take each other. But before me he had another woman. He lived six months with her and then they divorced.

M: How old was he when they got married.

I: They were not married.

T: When you had 15 years when you took each other, how old was he?

I: He was one year older than me. We only got married when he went into the army.

M: When did he leave for the army?

I: 1980. It was so, around when Tito died, it was 1980s yes? Yes, And then … then he went to the army and I had already daughter and son, two children.

M: And then she had to support them on her own or he had a salary?

I: Then I got married with him and we got the legal right to get social help, like, now … one. 117 dinar then it was, that social help. Like now 170 kuna.

M: And you were working in the fields?

I: I went with my father to [place name]. Children were put in the horse and carriage, and then I would bring back everything from Osijek, for eating, for things…

T: That was from the junkyard?

I: No, from people's houses, from people.

M: You were begging or?

I: My father knew those people. He worked with them, then they gave to him what they didn't want.

M: He would clear their garbage, and they would give him food. And how long was your husband in the army?

I: He was one year in the army … 12 months.

M: Can you tell a little about during the way, when they decided to leave for Serbia?

I: It was very hard for me. It was …. I am a Serbian, and …

M: You were born in Croatia? But your parents were born ….

I: The same, here. And my husband is not from here. One is from [place name] village. But his sister married here, and he was often coming here. This is how we met.

M: But your parents are from Croatia?

I: Well, my father is Serbian and my mother as well.

T: And they were born here?

I: Yes, and …when I was in the war here (interruption) My husband needed to be on the 'bent' (river fortification that you can walk on and there is a trench on both sides)

T: What does that mean?

I: Like a soldier, must be through the guard, this bent. War, here. Like this was the main line of protection. Yes.

T: This was the protection between Serbia and Croatia?

I: Yes, and I was with the children in the home. Son, he was somewhere around 9 years. Daughter was 7. And youngest daughter was five years. Here was five years. And I really needed to work hard to feed them, Because my husband was getting there everything to

eat, like a soldier. They had things to eat there. And I had home got only one litre of milk and one bread. And during this time, I needed to do a lot of things in order that I would survive with the children. There were empty houses. There were no people, they left, and I would leave the girls at home, and son would go with me. We would go and look only what there was for food and I would carry it home, that the children would have food to eat.

M: Only food?

I: Only food. Then we decided to go away from here.

M: How long after the beginning of the war?

I: Ahh, war was, began, it was two years. We were passed so … third year we went to Serbia. Yes. And then I rented an apartment.

M: In which city?

I: I was in [town] and in [town] and in [town], that one Hungarian town and here my children already began to work, to work on the fields. And we continued to live well there.

M: Was your husband with you in the war?

I: No, he was with me, with the children.

T: How is that?

I: He gave that up, yes, and we went to [Serbia]

N: Did they let him go?

I: They did not let him go. He said that he was going to visit me and the children and he stayed and didn't want to return. We were there five, six years.

T: Was he fighting for Serbia or Croatia?

I: He was Croatian, but he needed to go with Serbia. We were here and he stayed with me, and with children. [T's explanation: This side was conquered by Serbia, so he needed to fight for Serbia]. And he had many problems often because of this. We were working there in Serbia and it was nice. But the children did not want to stay there.

M: Why?

I: They wanted to return to Croatia. To return.

N: When did you return?

I: Ahh, my T (has trouble remembering dates), How do I tell you, which year it was? When I began, our Croatia …

M: How old were the children when you returned?

I: Well, they were … daughter was 19, 20. Son was 22, 23, and youngest was only 16, 17 years and already my son was married, and daughter was already married. When I returned, then youngest immediately got married.

M: But you said at the beginning of the war son was 8 years old, when he was shot, he was 16 … when that happened? In Serbia or Croatia?

I: That was here, that UNPROFOR [blue helmets]. The war was not … war was here and they were here, where there was water …

T: At the lake? At the old [river name]?

I: In [place name], this castle. At the castle they were.

T: And you were then already in Serbia?

I: No, we were not. We were here. We were here.

T: And when was he born?

I: My son? 1976.

T: Ahhh. So, he was not 9 when the war started. He was born in 1976 so he was 14. So, he was shot before you went to Serbia.

I: Yes.

T: Why?

I: He was like a child, riding a bicycle. (talking to a child in the background). It was Eastern, Catholic Easter. And … he loved to go there where UNPROFOR was … and there were children from my husband's brother. From my husband's brothers' children. That is now, now here you have [person's name] [showing pictures] and in the front is [person's name]. They were there. And … my, my son with a bicycle. [Person's name] went to go look for cigarettes from that UNPROFOR. And they began to go, around 2 pm in the afternoon, to go around the town [to see if everything was okay]. And [person's name] stopped at the gate and was looking for cigarettes from someone. And my son was on the street, now, that gate, well, the street, here my son on his bicycles sat and waited. Waited that [person's name] would come to him and would pump up his bicycle. And like this UNPROFOR, when he went out [of the gate], by accident his gun fell down and it began to shoot.

M: So it was an accident?

I: Yes, but it was not so, they said it was like that. And he got shot on both legs underneath the knees. So, they took my son from the bicycle and brought him to the main gate. And I heard about hat, I came there he was already not able to stand on his legs. In [town in Croatia], here they this their own main, with doctors, you know, like a hospital, same like UNPROFOR. And then they took my son and took him there to an operation. He was three hours in the operation. In both legs he had a rods. In the meantime, I got a nervous breakdown. And when I came there, some doctors gave me some tablets. And then I calmed down a little bit. After that I went to the hospital and laid there.

M: In Serbia? How long?

I: Yes, I was there one month. But my son was also in Serbia in the hospital, only 10 days. And then we wanted that he come here … from [town] every day they came here and cleaned his wound around… He had those rods.

M: this was before going to Serbia?

I: Yes, yes yes yes. He needed to have those rods in his legs for six months. He could not go to the bathroom for the first two months. My husband needed to bring him to the bathroom. After two months passed, he slowly started to walk. And then after six months the rods came out. Then we decided to go to Serbia.

M: When you left the hospital?

I: No, you were in the hospital until he was in the hospital.?

S. I was there one time and then I came home. And I was again, when I went to [Serbia] to live, again I went to the hospital.

M: In Serbia it was one month?

I: Yes.

(Some argument between me and T about the confusion. Was it one-month total? Or one month in Serbia she was in the hospital?

T: In Serbia you were one month in the hospital when you went there?

I: I was at one time 15 days while my son was there. I took medicine for nerves. I came home. I needed to [take care of] my children.

M: Did that help?

I: It helped. It helped me a lot … this what it was, they gave me some tablets. From this I was very … I could not cry a lot, and everything is squeezing my heart, you know. [so] Everything I can bear [continue].

M: Are you still taking tablets?

I: Now yes. Yes. and this is, from Croatia, for nerves I am taking [the pills]

T: And still you cannot cry?

I: I am crying, but I cannot immediately. Rather, first it [squeezes], and then it overwhelms/overflows me, it overwhelms/overflows me, And then I cry a little … but … it tightens/presses/squeezes more, in my heart squeezes.

M: What is the name of those tablets?

I: What I am taking?

M: Yes, (murmuring: I want to do know what those things are). (Iva gets up and looks for her medicine) and what was the atmosphere here in [place] during the war?

I: This I am drinking, twice a day. Ladiomil.

M: Every day?

I: Twice. Those are for calming my nerves.

T: She asked what the atmosphere here was during the war?

I: Well, people were afraid, and most of these our Roma. These are for sleeping.

M: Sanval. Why especially Roma?

I: Because we were not allowed/able to go anywhere. We were here throughout. From the beginning they were teasing/provoking us a little.

M: How were they provoking?

I: Well, because, for example, now our Croatians heard that our Gypsies were with the Serbians. And in fact, we were neither for one nor the other side, we just lived there. And so, a lot of our people left. All around the world. And we, see, stayed here and lived.

T: How was the situation, the atmosphere, when you stayed here to live? Were people continuing to live, or was there an attack, or a police curfew?

I: There was not, there was not. They did not… There was again, one could live. Once one woman passed next to my youngest daughter. My [name] went in the village to buy bread. And she pushed my [name] with the whole bicycle. Like: "Gipsy, Gypsy!" and pushed my child. And she fell and she took the bicycle and came home. And when she came home, she cried and said, "Mama," she said, "Some big woman, tall ... " she said, "yelled at me and pushed me," she said, "And I fell and I, "she said, "stayed quietly and came home." For us, there was this time when it was terrible [we were afraid] for us to go anywhere, and they blamed us, like "[you are] Gypsies." There were many things happening.

M: Why do you think your husband stopped beating you?

I: He saw that it was necessary for me to be well for children. I needed to cook, clean, and work with him. And with that, years passed. And he was ashamed now already. Yes.

M: What is your experience with God throughout your life.

I: I always mention God since childhood. Through all this torment that I just told you, always I mentioned God. And always I ask myself, where did I go wrong, what did I do wrong, but I know that God helped me through everything I passed. It is true that I am not keeping everything that I need to do. But that's why I always love and respect him. And I pray for my children to Him.

M: Are you sometimes mad at him because of your life suffering?

I: I did, I did, I did. I prayed to God that he would receive me that I would die. I cried. I cried. I wanted that I would die, yes, yes yes, that I would no longer see what is happening. I wanted a few times to take my own life. And often it would come into my head to do it.

M: What stopped you?

I: I don't know how to tell you. When this moment comes, it is like someone pushes me from that. I took a rope and wanted to hang myself in our barn. Last time, two years ago…I thought it would be better. I took two decilitres of pelinkovac (strong rakija). I took rope and put it in my bag (talking to someone in background). I fought with my husband. He does whatever he wants, I cannot command him. I thought that I am no longer needed by anyone. With that, I would make it easy for myself if I kill myself. I went here to the gas station and I found some bush there. I went to the bush and put the rope on the tree, and then I took those two decilitres of pelinkovac, that I drank it fast. And I climbed on the tree, the tree was not big. And when I put it around my neck, and when I jumped, it broke and I fell down. I laid there six or seven hours in the grass. The nettles were big, grass … I fainted there and slept, there was big heat, sun. And around 5 or 6 in the evening, I woke up. At the house, everyone was alarmed and looking for me. And when I woke up, my hair was like this [messy] around me. But I was already going to the church. I went to the church and was baptized. And after I went barefoot home. But I was dazed in my head. Then I came home, and said to everyone, this is what happened. I was not destined to hang (silence). I always pray to God that at least when I fall asleep that I would die like that. Because I have a hard life (silence).

M: Have you sometimes had any dreams or visions that you think were from God?

I: I did (sigh). In the church once I asked myself, "Does God love me?" Can he prove to me that he loves me? That I would feel something from God. When I came home, and laid down to sleep, then I saw that, I was up on a bridge and separated. There below people were in a fire, and above I was on a bridge. And then I saw children. I called to the children, and … like I felt that God helped me, showing me that I am separated from some people. That I said to Marija [church leader] (sigh). And one day I was dreaming, that there was a lots of us women are going through some small door, and naked, we women are naked. And everyone is going there [in the small door], and only smoke is coming out, like we are going in a fire [when someone enters, some smoke is coming out, like we are all going into a fire]. And I thought to myself that God is showing me that He doesn't love me the way how I am.

M: Can you explain that more?

I: I think that because this proves that I am going, those women where they are going in that fire, to burn. I am in that line with them.

M: And you were naked.

I: Yes.

T: You went there with them.

I: Yes, yes. I did not come to that fire, but I was in that line with them. Yes. And then, I think, I know that I have, I am sinning in everything in that, and now if God wants to or

will forgive me or will not, that I do not know. I am not, I don't love to fight or to argue. And first, to my husband I forgave a lot. I knew everything about him, everything. He would bring other women to me. I was quiet and submitted [to that]. Because of the children. And … that I wanted to say that I was not stealing. I was not taking anything away from anyone (sigh). But I have a sinful soul. First when I needed to go around to the houses, when my children were hungry. I needed to go look for and find something to eat. Yes, and it is like when you are going to steal.

M: But why do you think that she is in that line to go in the fire. Why does God look at you like that?

I: Well, when now I was accepting God, I would never, never, cancel with God. But I did not keep the order like I needed to. I needed to be often going to the church. And sometimes I needed to my daughter in [place]. Sometimes I needed to go with my husband to work, that I could earn and have money. I cannot be ever free that I could go without worries in the church. That I could come and say, "Good, now I came to the church and at least I will be regularly here to listen to the prayer to God." I am going one Sunday one month I am always missing. Or two Sundays or three Sundays.

T: You really think it is because of this?

I: Well because of what, how T, when?

T: I don't know, I am asking you.

I: Well, yes, well, because, I would always love to be there, with everyone, but I cannot. Always I am somewhere, have something. Sometimes at home, when I am at home, and maybe I need to take a book more. And I am anxious, I have problems with children. I have fights with my husband, and then I don't feel at all like reading the books. Then something, when I had this stroke when I was … I cannot remember, I cannot remember. Then, again I am repeating what I am reading and again I don't know anything. However much you tell me, that I hear, later again I don't know anything. And I am blaming only myself that I am not available/worthy for God. I was preparing to say to the church that I am giving up.

M: You know what I love about Jesus? You have this verse that says … you know when you go through the long grass and you can break it? It says in Isaiah that a bruised reed Jesus does not break off? And what does that mean? That means Jesus understands that you have suffered a lot in your life. You are like a bruised reed, but he won't break you off. That is not who Jesus is. He knows everything you have been through, and he has great compassion on you. It is not by going to church or reading a book that you are saved. It is only by his grace and mercy. If you believe that.

I: Yes, I believe.

M: Then that is it. It is good to go to church, but it is not a sin not to go to church (long silence). How do you think the church can help women can be encouraged?

I: I don't know. I don't know (quietly). At the beginning I loved to come to church and I was very happy, like I will keep this order and that I will come, that I will have prayer, that I will respect God like how it is needed, and now I see that I am not capable for that. In fact, this is how they say in our church, only when they need him, "God help me, God!"

I am always in problems and I am constantly asking him to help me and crying. And God is helping me, God is helping me and making it easier for me, but here I have non-stop problems.

M: You have big burdens?

I: (whispers) Yes.

M: Yes.

I: The biggest ones with my son. He loves other whores, to give money to these whores, comes home, comes home and argues with his wife. Beats her. Wife calls the police, carries him to the station, locks him for the day [in the prison]. Now if a little more happens, he needs to be in the jail, if his wife one more time calls the police then he must go to jail. Yesterday I was very afraid that she would call police. But God helped that, if she doesn't call today. But if she calls the least would be one year to be in jail. And I understand that my son is not good. But I love him.

M: Of course, he is your son.

T: And what do you think God thinks about you, his daughter, if you so love your son?

I: (Whispers brokenly) I don't know, Tijana, Believe me I do not know. I am shocked from every side. And for my daughters, they are my life. For love for them I submitted to everything. Now is that little one, I raised her. My husband is not something. He is disgusting. Misunderstood. Four, five years I am taking that medicine and under the influence of that medicine I went to work in the forest, wherever I needed to go.

T: Why do you think you would get if you left God?

I: I would never, my T (crying), I would never leave God. I would not give up, only … I would kill myself or that I did not keep that, no, like I needed. I need to read, I need to keep to the church, I need to respect, and that I cannot. With these problems that I have …

T: But you know what, I, for example, when I feel bad sometimes. I mean, you might not see us being that we feel sometimes bad, but we have bad days and when we pressed and when I'm wrong and all, like, the first thing you do is to call, I do not know, or Melody or someone and say now it's really bad, I feel at the bottom of the bottom. I do not want to give up, but I need your help, in itself can help. I cannot, for example, I once came home from work and, of this, as the first thing that went through my head [is that] I went to kill myself. Get it? Because I'm just tired of all and I was a person *iznapadala* and everything has come into order and this is my first popped into my head. And then, really like, at one point, God has given me that I can see when we talk to kill myself, who wants to kill me. Because, I have often the same and think the same when you have. And a couple of times I tried to kill myself when I was younger, I do not know why. But like, I often come or to kill or to be early with something or that I cut myself, you know, you do not feel the pain that's inside. And this ... (silence). Yes ... I really, like, you know what, when, when I leave, for example, that such a being or, like, I do not think now a week of God, then I feel just get fed up. And really I figured, but sometimes I am ashamed to call someone and say, "Well, now I'm in this state," you know. I'm ashamed to call because people expect you might not know it, you're a Christian, are you baptized,

this is it to a certain way, this is acting. And of course, you then is what you hang will not come to church. But, if you can call it, you know, somebody. What, be ashamed, but for example, I do not know, call Melody sometimes tell her everything that's happening to me, and she prayed for me and I really do feel better. No, it does not solve my problems, did you understand me? Or simply just to come out, before someone how I feel, that it can and pray that God just slowly start solving. But I get to that point to say like, I can no longer now, I cannot. I have no power, in the way that I move, I let go, do not get me, Lord, more, like, common touch, you know. Is not worthy, do not feel decent.

I: So, it is with me. How I would want people to see me that I would go to church, that I am praying to God, but I am not present to keep everything as it should be. I cannot give up on God, I love him. I love my children, I love everybody. Do you understand what I am saying? I don't hate anyone. But here in this anger, through everything that I am passing, I simply cannot see. I am thinking how I would kill myself, or find some pills to take that poison, that I can die. And I would not want to poison myself in the house, rather that I go somewhere alone, and I take my bag with some medicine, some… That I can disappear, and I don't know anything more.

Stop for prayer where Iva sobs the entire time.

Appendix 4: Sample of Narrative Analysis

The following analysis is from Iva's narrative from Chapter Six and is intended to be an example for the reader regarding how I have conducted my narrative analysis, using Spector-Mersel's (2011) Mechanisms of Selection. In Community C, I analysed nine interviews in this manner, eight of which appeared in Chapter Five and Six. In Community B, I analysed 14 in this manner, and 13 appeared in Chapter Seven.

1. **Primary Narrative:**

Storyline:

1. Line 8: Title: 'Childhood: A beautiful life'; Themes: childhood, poverty, 3 years school
2. Line 11: Title 'I began life'; Themes: marriage at 15, work in fields, scrap metal, finding a place to live, problems with mother in law, children
3. Line 20: Title: 'I bore everything for my children'; Themes: Husband drank, had other women, beat her, she hid in the corn, leaving the children to go work, often sick
4. Line 32: Title: 'The war'; Themes: Her son had both legs shot, she had a nervous breakdown, moving from Croatia to Serbia.
5. Line 41: Title: 'Starting over'; Themes: Coming back after war, children getting married, no house, beginning to work in the garbage, building a new house.
6. Line 51: Title: 'Now'; Themes: Husband is same but no other women and no beating, she is sick all the time
7. Her reflection on her primary narrative: 'I am tormented by all that, everything I endured. I could endure everything. I even surprised myself at how I can go through all that and continue. That is the short and fast version I told you.'

2: Follow up Questions:
Chronological Lifeline:

Born: 1960, 1961
First 15 years are happy

1975/6: married (unofficial)

1976: D. born

1977/8: R. born

another pregnancy and child died

1981/1982: C. born

1980 (approximately): married officially when husband goes into the army

1981: serves 12 months and then gets out of the army

1991: war begins

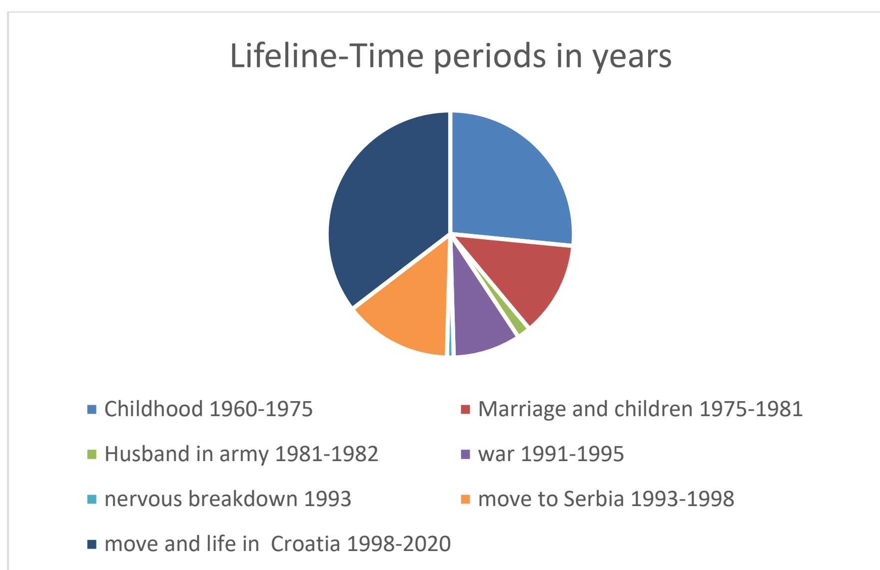
1993: son gets shot
Iva has a nervous breakdown as a result of stress from son getting shot and the war, goes into hospital for 15 days

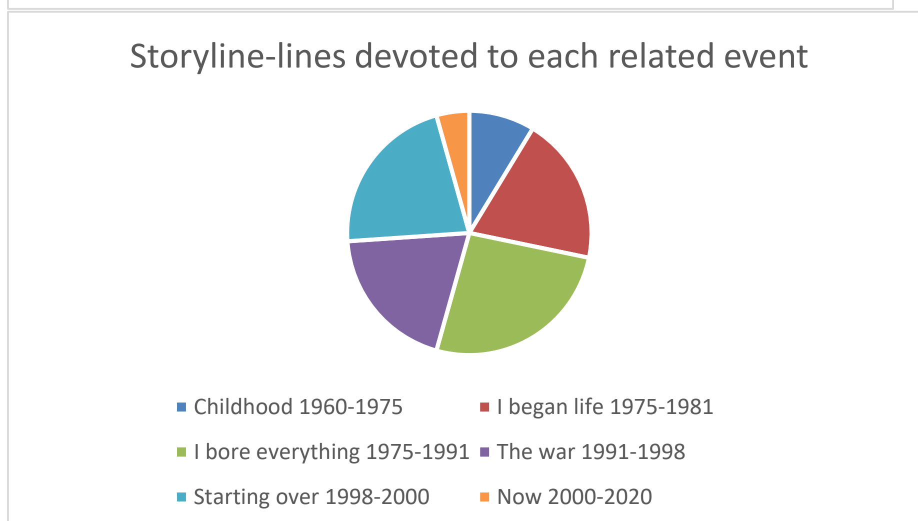
Six months of rehabilitation.

1993/4: moves to Serbia (six months after son is shot) to several different towns
Iva goes into the hospital again for one month?

Things are relatively good in Serbia … enough money from work to live okay.

1998/9: return to Croatia
C. gets married





Three Intersecting Contexts:

Macro: Poverty, Social Marginalization, Gender discourse, Discrimination (as detailed in Chapters One and Three).

Micro: Middle-aged woman, experienced much sickness, stress, and domestic violence in life. Great grandmother. Baptized into Christian faith for two years prior to interview.

Immediate Context: Interview took place in her home. Husband was not present, Tijana was there to help interpret. Only women present. Firstly, she related her story in a detached manner, but after a couple of questions, it was if she began to connect emotionally with her story. She became very burdened and saddened during her narrative, and eventually I stopped it and turned off the tape, because of ethical concerns regarding her vulnerable state.

Identifying Mechanisms of Selection in the Narrative:

Inclusion: What is included in the primary narrative?

(Very brief mention of good first 15 years), marriage, husband's alcoholism, violence, and other women, birth of children, work, son's shooting in war, nervous breakdown after son was shot during the war, going to Serbia, return to Croatia, collecting scrap metal by working in the garbage to earn money, grandchildren

Meaning Attribution for the primary narrative: "I am tormented by all that, everything I endured. I could endure everything. I even surprised myself at how I can go through all that and continue."

Questions to assist in analysis: Do the life periods or events have anything in common? Are there certain themes emerging? How are the different events/facts relate together? Do they demonstrate certain qualities of the narrator? What does this say about identity claims?

Potential themes of survival (working hard, surviving her husband, surviving the war, surviving sickness/nervous breakdown, surviving her son being shot). Twice they didn't have a home. Theme of working hard to help her kids to survive. Form highlights the content of surviving and enduring; i.e. the language of "enduring/submitting" appears four times in her short story. The narrative was woven together with this common theme of 'surviving' and 'enduring'.

Flattening (events and time periods which are only briefly mentioned): Her first 15 years, although it seemed to be the most beautiful time of her life. It was interesting when she misheard the question and started creating a narrative that would explain my question. Her first story told about her early miserable life with her husband, but when I asked about those '15 years' meaning her childhood, she thought I meant later, so she started creating a more positive narrative how the later time was good because of the presence of her children. So, this is an interesting question … is somehow the very question of 'life story' somehow registering with them to talk about only the bad stuff, the suffering? The narrative in each woman is built around the suffering.
The contexts of other things are flattened … and her own personal experiences are highlighted. For example, during the war, she focuses on her family's experience and it wasn't until I questioned further that it became apparent that it was very difficult for the Roma because they were neither one side nor the other.

She indirectly refers to issues of stereotyping … she mentions several incidents, in relation to the war when she is questioned, but most of her problems are because of relationships. For example:
How she met her husband
Her stealing food in the war
The two years of survival while they were in Croatia during the war
The problems her husband had during the war (being Croatian and forced to fight with the Serbians)

Silencing: In fact, her father was an alcoholic that beat her mother … somehow this doesn't coincide with her depiction of a most beautiful childhood. This fact only emerged after I specifically asked her. Also, how people loved him although he was an alcoholic. The fact that her son is actually doing the same thing as her husband and father …'going with other women' and beating his wife. 'My childhood was nice. We were poor, but it was very good…' Your parents loved each other? "They loved each other but my father was an alcoholic … Here is our attitude … he loved to drink, but we had all the satisfaction [in life]. Did he beat your mother? 'He did, he did, he beat her. He beat my mom'. If it weren't for my questions, those other aspects of her childhood would not have come out. And how would her mom have described it? How would her children describe their childhood with her being beaten and hiding in the corn?

Omitting: Her thoughts on God, relationship with God, and her baptism in the church did not play a role at all in her primary narrative. But this makes sense because of her end point of her tormented life and her inability to come up with a rationale of *why* the suffering. In other words, God allows/causes the suffering, but she is wrestling with the idea of it being her fault (i.e. her dreams).
Who her daughters are … their marriages. Her relationship with her children. What happened in the decade of the 80s? Between her husband going to war, children being born, and the beginning of the war? The last 15 years?

Sharpening: (referring to words, phrases, life periods that are repeated more than once) the word 'endure or submit', how horrible her husband was to her (repeats twice that he 'loved whores', beat her, etc, mentions him in total three times) the drugs she is on for her nerves, her health, her constant sickness.

Meaning attribution: contrasting themes: She has never forgotten God, 'mentioning him' since childhood. Yet she wonders why God has allowed her to go through all this suffering. 'And always, I ask myself, where did I go wrong, what did I do wrong, but I know that God helped me through everything I passed.' Conclusion? She cannot see any obvious reason or fault she has, so it must be because she is not following his 'rule' well enough, which she says is going to church regularly, reading, and those seem to be the main things. Also, she has tried to take her life and she stole food during the war in people's houses. She admits being angry and confused with God regarding her life and praying many times that God would end her life…

From the fact she has not been successful at taking her own life, she is "not destined to hang" but still asks God to take her life.

It's not the poverty that is hard, although that takes a role in hardship (collecting scrap metal from the garbage dump, etc) but it's the relationships, primarily with her husband.

Summation and analysis of the content and form of Iva's story:

Form and Content
Her initial telling was one of the most cohesive, chronological accounts so far of any of the women. It was still primarily relationally driven with a focus on her relationship with her husband and children which directs the narrative of the story, but there were plenty of events as well, including the war, which seems to come up in most of the stories. Survival, endurance, and suffering were overall themes in the story, both in the initial account and in the clarification questions.
The time period which the narrative focused on was 1975–2000, detailing her survival of her marriage, war, nervous breakdown, and return to Croatia. The first 15 years and last 20 years of her life story only received a passing reference. The focus on the content of the narrative of surviving the hardship and the repeated form of the story engaging with 'enduring, submitting' suggests an end point or claimed identity as 'survivor'. The real end point emerges at the very end of her narrative when her deep internal conflict emerges: She wants to be good and have God, she doesn't feel like she is worthy, but she feels like she has done everything she could, but she is angry about her life, and in the end, she just wants to kill herself and disappear.

The flattening and omitting/silencing sections are significant, because they show her neglect of the **whole** story of her so-called 'happy childhood'. Her silence also obscures other factors that could attribute to her present suffering, her son's continuance of the cycle of male violence in her history and her inability to see her role in that. She attributes her guilt to such ambiguous things as not following God's 'order', not going to church enough, and not reading, rather than seeing she could have a different role in protecting her daughter-in-law and allowing her son to bear his own consequences. She is trapped in this cycle of violence and poverty, and the only way she sees to get out of it is to die. Her only agency seems to be 'enduring' and 'dying.'

Metanarratives
As the central form and content of Iva's story was hardship and survival, certain cultural, economic and social metanarratives emerge in her story contributing to her suffering. First, **poverty** added a layer of hardship, making survival a constant stress. This was illustrated by reference to her only having three years of education because of the need to work, and the necessity of looking for low-skilled jobs (scrap metal, field work, garbage sorting) that would put food on the table for that day. Also, the focus on the need to steal food during the war illustrates this 'hand to mouth' existence. Second, one can see certain hardships through the lens of **gender**; specifically, the burden of enduring for the sake of the children, cycles of domestic violence (father, husband, and the indication Iva is not protecting her son's wife from violence—even though her trauma and misery stems from her husband—but protecting her son. "And I understand my son is not good. But I love him."). Iva also indicates in her narrative to the psychological response to trauma of an abused woman (nervous breakdown, suicide attempt, hiding in the corn). Third, the hardship of being **Roma** which arose implicitly through her story of the war (treatment after her son was shot, self-defence of 'only stealing food', how the Roma were squeezed between two sides). This theme emerges prominently when compared to how the Roma have been perceived in relation to their wartime roles have been written about in regard to the war (see Chapter Three).

Immediate Context
It was interesting when Iva misheard the question about the first 15 years and started creating a narrative that would explain my question. Her first story told about her miserable life with her husband etc, but when I asked about those '15 years' meaning her childhood, she thought I meant later, so she started creating a more positive narrative how

that time frame was in fact good because of the presence of her children. This illustrates the role of the researcher in 'co-constructing' the story. [From field notes]: So, this is an interesting question … is the very question of 'life story' somehow registering with them to talk about only the bad stuff, the suffering? The narrative in each woman is built around the suffering.

Claimed and Conflicted Identity

Iva's initial assessment of her life: '**I am tormented by all that, everything I endured. I could endure everything. I even surprised myself at how I can go through all that and continue'.** Iva's claimed identity, seen through the form and content of her primary narrative seemed to be 'I somehow endured'.

Her thoughts on God, relationship with God, and her baptism in the church did not come into her primary narrative, an omission which makes sense after questions revealed her deep inner turmoil regarding the *why* of her suffering. In her words, God allows/causes the suffering, but somehow it must be her fault. When God was brought into it, her questions got more conflicted and difficult:

'Where did I go wrong, what did I do wrong?'

'I wanted that I would die, yes yes yes, that I would no longer see what is happening.'

'And then I think, I know that I have, I am sinning in everything in that, and now if God wants to or will forgive me or will not, that I do not know.'

'To my husband I forgave a lot … I was quiet and endured [her husband bringing home other women] because of the children. And I was not stealing, I was not taking anything from anyone. But I have a sinful soul. First when I needed to go around to the houses, when my children were hungry. I needed to go look for and find something to eat. Yes, and it is like when you are going to steal.'

'I would never cancel with God, but I did not keep the "order" like I needed to.'

'Maybe I need to take a book more. And I am anxious, I have problems with children. I have fights with my husband … and then I don't feel like reading the books.'

'And I am blaming only myself that I am not available/worthy for God. I was preparing to say to the church that I am giving up.'

'At the beginning, I loved to come to church and I was very happy, like I will keep this order and that I will come, that I will have prayer, that I will respect God like how it is needed, and now I see that I am not capable for that. In fact, this is how they say in our church, only when they need him, "God help me God!" I am always in problems and I am constantly asking him to help me and crying. And God is helping me, God is helping me and making it easier for me, but here I have non-stop problems.'

The fact that Iva's life continues with as many problems as before leads her to conclude that she is personally responsible—both for the fact that she feels like God doesn't love her, and for her tormented life. But even as she concludes this several times, she keeps fighting against this conclusion… 'what have I done?' and 'I constantly have problems'. We see this conflict on several accounts: she loves God and won't give on him, but she

is angry and confused about her life. She feels like she has not really done anything to warrant all this suffering, but on the other hand, she feels like she has not kept God's 'order' and come to church like she should have.

Iva's two dreams (narrated in 6.2.3.2) display this internal conflict. From both dreams, 'fire' is used as a punishment and seems symbolic of how she sees her life. There is a high way and a low way … the people in the low way go to the fire. There is a severe discrepancy in her two dreams. In the first, in response to her question as to whether God really loves her, she determines that God loves her because she is separated from the people going toward the fire. And the second dream proves God does not love her because she is in the line toward the fire. This conflict … her desiring to follow God, her failure, her acknowledgement that God has helped her in her suffering, her anger at her suffering all culminates in her strongest wish that she could just 'disappear and not know anything more.'

End point: I have somehow endured my life of torment, but I don't understand why my life has so much suffering and I would like to disappear.

Appendix 5 – Theological Approaches to Theodicy and Suffering

The questions of suffering and the existence of evil[1] have a long history of being addressed through philosophical, literary, and theological means (Hille 2010). The concept of theodicy, coined by Gottfried Leibniz (1710)[2] became a term commonly used to describe the attempt to philosophize why an all good, all knowing, and all-powerful God allows evil (Luhrmann 2012:267).[3] A biblical understanding of evil and suffering intertwines the state of the world and the human relationship with God.[4] In the Genesis account, humans communed freely with God, living in an unblemished paradise. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God's command and rebelled, their 'fall' affected both their internal moral state as well as putting the entire cosmos under a curse. Moral evil is therefore intertwined with physical and metaphysical evil. In the context of the Mosaic Law, blessing or curse is connected to faithful following of God's law with a covenantal relationship (Hille 2010:146-47). However, other parts of the Bible reveal the complexity of life. For example, Job and the Psalms ask questions of why the faithful suffer and the unrighteous prosper.[5]

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[1] Dau (2010:109) outlines different perspectives on, and definitions of, evil: the absence of good, the result of a bitter struggle between good and evil, as part of the sovereignty of God, and God limited by his love and righteousness for humanity to remove evil, as it would negate human choice.

[2]His published work was entitled: *Essai de theodicée sur la bontéde Dieu, la liberté de l'homme et l'origine du mal*

[3]Hille (2010:147) however, points out the inadequacies of philosophical syllogisms based on their inadequate starting point, which must begin with the problem of moral evil rather than physical or metaphysical evil, as this leads only to the 'inner logic of an aporia or atheism'. For example, 'God is good, but the world is bad. Therefore, God cannot be omnipotent.' Or: 'God is omnipotent, yet the world is bad. Therefore, God cannot be good' (Hille 2010:147).

[4] Luhrmann (2012:267) broadly traces three historical views appearing in Christian theology: Augustine's view (354 AD–430) was that evil is the absence of God's goodness, allowed by humanity when they did not choose God; Irenaeus (130 AD–202) also believed humanity was responsible for evil, but that suffering contributes to human growth towards God's likeness until the world was all good again; Leibniz (1646–1716) however taught that God's attributes mean that he created the best possible world, and God decreeing good and permitting evil is a consequence of creating the best world (see also: Murray & Greenberg 2016).

[5] For example, the Asaph asks in Psalm 73:3,4 'For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong.'

This dogmatic concept of righteous living coinciding with blessing persisted into Jesus' time, when the question arose both from the religious leaders and the populace, although Jesus often subverted the assumptions behind the question.[6] One of these subverted assumptions pertained to the question of who was good. Jesus and later the apostle Paul would argue that all have sinned and are in need of repentance, despite good deeds (Romans 3:23; Luke 13:5). In fact, Jesus' own suffering, as the only completely righteous man in the scriptures, according to the Christian view, radically reoriented the Old Testament concept of theodicy (Hille 2010:150). The incarnation of Christ is paramount in regard to theological reflection on suffering—Christ, through his suffering, death, and resurrection, both identifies and participates with human suffering, whilst pointing to the final triumph of the resurrection (Dau 2010:114).

> In the cross, power is the power of identification participation, endurance, and transformation… That is God's way of overcoming the destructive powers of our world. It is the intention of the doctrine of the incarnation, specifically, and Trinitarian doctrine, in more comprehensive form, to claim that the suffering of Jesus is truly the suffering of God in our midst and that the resurrection is God's power of transformation in our midst (Inbody 1997:180).

The incarnation, then, or God entering into human experience, is not motivated by human goodness but by God's graciousness. This gift from God is intertwined with his sovereignty over history, which is linked in turn to the eschatological restoration of relationship and the cosmos alluded to in Revelation 21:

> Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. (vv.1–4)

[6] For example, John relates an incident where his disciples asked whether it was the sin of a blind man himself that rendered him blind, or the sin of his parents. Jesus reoriented the question completely by replying, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life' (John 9:1-3).