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Leisure Sciences

An Interdisciplinary Journal

ISSN: 0149-0400 (Print) 1521-0588 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/ulsc20

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Selçuk Açıkgöz

To cite this article: Selçuk Açıkgöz (2026) Bodies in the Making? Racial Body Schemas and Roma Youth in Leisure Spaces, Leisure Sciences, 48:4, 655-674, DOI: 10.1080/01490400.2024.2337188

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2024.2337188

Published online: 09 Apr 2024.

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LEISURE SCIENCES
2026, VOL. 48, NO. 4, 655–674
https://doi.org/10.1080/01490400.2024.2337188

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Selçuk Açıkgöz

Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Ege University, İzmir, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

Roma youth experience intensive forms of racial discrimination in leisure spaces. However, we lack insight into how Roma youth experience and counter racism in leisure spaces through agency and retaliation. For this reason, this study examines the leisure experiences of Roma youth impacted by racial schemas revolving around white/Turkish bodies. To frame the analysis, Fanon's concepts of historico-racial and epidermal racial schemas were used. By adopting a qualitative methodology, I conducted semi-structured interviews and focus groups involving 22 young Roma individuals. The findings highlight the profound influence of racial schemas associated with white/Turkish bodies on Roma youth. However, Roma youth engaged in challenging these schemas to restore their agency and reclaim their leisure spaces. Furthermore, this study shows that Roma participants are likely to develop self-assertion when experienced explicit racism in leisure spaces; in contrast to racial discrimination that is only conducted through gazing or avoidance.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 29 March 2023
Accepted 9 February 2024

KEYWORDS
Body schemas; Fanon; gypsy; leisure; racism

Introduction

Roma communities continue to be exposed to various forms of racism and racial discrimination, resulting in violence or expulsion. These experiences of racism and discrimination are widespread and multidimensional for Roma communities. Historically, the Roma narrative has been tainted by stereotypes stemming from their nomadic lifestyle, portraying them as disease-spreading tribes (Acton & Ryder, 2012). Upon their arrival in the Western world in larger numbers, Roma communities faced various receptions, including enslavement, execution, expulsion from some countries, and travel restrictions from the twelfth century to the nineteenth century (McGarry, 2017). During World War II, the Nazis perpetrated genocide against the Roma, an event known as the Porajmos, resulting in the deaths of an estimated 250,000–500,000 Roma in concentration camps (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022). Recent report also highlights that anti-Roma racism is a serious issue in the United States as well (Matache et al., 2020). Thus, it is evident that Roma communities endure one of the most severe forms of racism (McGarry, 2017; The Traveller Movement, 2017). Roma people are often labeled as uncivil, subhuman, lazy, criminal, or cheats. Paradoxically,

CONTACT Selçuk Açıkgöz selcuk.acikgoz@ege.edu.tr Department of Sport Management, Faculty of Sport Sciences, Ege University, İzmir, Türkiye.
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they are also romanticized as fortune tellers and wandering musicians (e.g. Lambrev, 2020; Loveland & Popescu, 2016). This results in various racialization, which can be defined as "racial categorizations that delineated group boundaries based on (supposedly) inherent and phenotypical characteristics" (Miles, 1982, p. 157).

Racialization and racism, alongside with many aspects of social life, affect everyday interaction of minoritized communities in leisure activities. Previous research analyzing Roma/Gypsy/Traveler communities reports that racism or racial discrimination is one of the primary factors limiting access to leisure spaces for these communities (Bergin et al., 2023). Similarly, Creţan et al. (2022) demonstrate how the racialization of Roma children in playgrounds leads to the disidentification of their culture. Akkan et al. (2017) reveal that Roma children lack proper playgrounds due to being racialized as vandals and destructive individuals who would damage public properties. Long et al. (2015) highlight the efforts of Gypsy/Travelers in organizing their own football tournaments to circumvent racism on sports fields. Additionally, Greenfields and Ryder (2010) note the intention of Gypsy/Travelers to engage in leisure activities within their closed network. The notable behavior of Gypsy/Travelers in leisure spaces appears aimed at minimizing encounters with members of the dominant society. Drawing from another leisure setting, Oravcová and Slačálek (2020) argue that Roma youth could not solely exist as rappers due to constant questioning related to their ethnic identity. However, they maintain visibility in leisure places through rap music, addressing racial discrimination through their art (Oravcová & Slačálek, 2020). Although limited, previous research details various accounts of the everyday racialization and negotiation processes experienced by Roma people (e.g. Creţan et al., 2022).

In this study, the racial struggles of Roma people are examined by focusing on the bodily experience of Roma youth. In response to racialization and the development of racial body schemas within leisure spaces, I use Fanon's bodily schema framework as the theoretical framework for this study (Fanon, 1967). The study's primary objectives are: (i) to examine the forms of racial discrimination encountered by Roma youth in leisure spaces, and (ii) to trace the forms of bodily reactions and resistance strategies. The Republic of Türkiye (prior to 2021 Turkey, and furthermore Türkiye) has been selected as the research area to examine the experiences of Roma youth in leisure spaces, in a country with an estimated Roma population ranging from 500,000 to 5,000,000 (European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), 2016).

In the following section, a literature review that focuses on racism and racial discrimination directed at minoritized communities in leisure spaces is presented.

Literature review: racism and leisure

Gilmore (2007) defines racism as "the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (p. 247). Roma people face both explicit and subtle forms of racism, which can be characterized as racial discrimination. Relatedly, Mowatt and others (2023), based on the definition of Gilmore (2007), calls for revisiting our conceptualization of racism within leisure studies and points out the need to research more urgent and fundamental issues, such as police violence/killings in leisure contexts.

In agreement with the argument above, analyzing the more everyday occurrences of racial incidents could also help us understand the development of more severe forms of racism in leisure spaces. For instance, Lenneis and Agergaard (2018) demonstrate how the wearing of the burkini has been a means of constructing "otherness" for Muslim women who wish to use gender-segregated swimming pools in Denmark. In another study, Fletcher and Spracklen (2014) highlight how British Muslim cricket players are often marginalized as isolationists due to their choice to abstain from alcohol in leisure spaces in England. This study illustrates how white bodies predominantly dictate norms within culturally diverse leisure environments. In a different context, Lee et al. (2023) discuss the historical dominance of white ideology in nature and parks, resulting in people of color feeling culturally disinterested in visiting such spaces.

Previous studies have consistently shown that leisure environments are often contested spaces (Mowatt, 2018a; Sharaievska et al., 2014). Flood and McAvoy (2007) highlights that American Indians experience harassment and racial profiling from staff members (Flood & McAvoy, 2007). Stephenson and Hughes (2005) illustrate that black people often endure prejudiced gazes from shopkeepers, law enforcement, or passersby. The way parks are built and designed, which celebrates and maintains white ideology, also demonstrates that minoritized populations are not welcomed in these spaces (Lee et al., 2023). However, some studies demonstrate the resistance of minoritized populations against discrimination and how they challenge and negotiate their rights within these leisure spaces (Azzarito & Hill, 2013; Kloek et al., 2013; Soltani, 2021). This resistance, as Puwar (2004) elucidates, enables non-normative bodies to intrude upon, challenge, and eventually transform spaces that were supposedly designated as white, male, and heterosexual areas.

In the following section, I delve into Fanon's conceptualization of racial body schemas as the theoretical foundation and examine the interplay between the body, whiteness, and leisure spaces.

Fanon's body schemas and leisure

Our body movements serve as a means through which we engage with the world. As Merleau-Ponty (2002, p. 95) puts it, "I am conscious of the world through the medium of my body." Our bodies play a vital role in our learning process and shape our understanding and interactions with the world around us (Lewis, 2018). Merleau-Ponty (2002) elucidates this phenomenon through the concept of body schema, which is a sensory-motor function operating within our conscious awareness that indirectly guides our bodies' responses based on the environments in which we find ourselves. Fanon (1967) advances the notion of the body schema by emphasizing its historical dimensions in shaping our physical response. Fanon (1967) characterizes the body schema as the imposition of a particular style of movement and body reaction resulting from a racially charged environment.

Fanon (1967) classifies two distinct forms of body schemas: historico-racial schema and epidermal racial schema. Within the historical racial schema, the body is identified primarily by its blackness, and various connotations and meanings are assigned to being black, as depicted by Fanon (1967) in the following passage: "I cast an objective gaze

over myself, discovered my blackness, my ethnic features; deafened by cannibalism, backwardness, fetishism, racial stigmas, and slave traders" (p. 92). The historico-racial schema underscores the historicity aspect of racism that has been constructed over decades through narratives, anecdotes, stories, and "scientific knowledge" (Fanon, 1963). The concept of the black body is intricately linked to a history constructed by a white imaginary. Within the construct of the historico-racial schema, the black body finds itself thrust back into the historical past. The epidermal racial schema plays a role in naturalizing racial-historical representations, embedding them within the body (Gündoğdu, 2022). In the epidermal racial schema, skin color assumes profound significance, as the materiality of the skin begins to determine one's status and position through constant scrutiny of the black body. As a result, within this schema, the black body becomes perplexed and incapable of confronting the white body, leading to a revaluation of one's identity (Fanon, 1963). The epidermal racial schema pertains to the instantaneous recognition of the body, where it is immediately acknowledged and subjected to scrutiny (Fanon, 1967). This process fosters epidermalization, which can be understood as "a way of thinking about the ontological insecurity of the racial body as it experiences its being through others" (Fanon, 1967, p. 109). The epidermal racial schema has evolved, emerging from self-examination toward the internalization of white norms in various aspects of life, including language, and social interactions. Butler (1993) defines the process of internalization through performativity and argues that, within the concept of gender, constant repetition of normative features and social norms inscribes gender and racial categories on bodies. On the other hand, Butler (1993) also details that individuals are not fully constituted and potentially possess the agency to create performative contradictions that challenge gender and racial categories.

Leisure spaces hold a significant position in forming and constituting such categories and schemas. Furthermore, racism and racial discrimination can almost be seen as a form of leisure activity in themselves (Mowatt, 2018a). In addition, leisure spaces provide ideal environments for perpetrators to have more free time and space for physical confrontations and racial attacks. One reason these spaces become conducive to racial attacks is that they often symbolize and represent whiteness. Roberts (2009) discusses various leisure spaces, such as parks, where whiteness predominantly prevails. Fanon (1967) emphasizes the significance of spatiality in how individuals perceive their bodies when encountering white or dominant bodies. Within these spaces, bodies are subject to racial discrimination. The physical context also exerts an influence on nonwhite individuals, potentially resulting in various behaviors, such as self-exclusion, avoiding eye contact, adopting a compliant demeanor, or confronting racism and challenging "white norms" (Song, 2017).

White norms are organically shaped by the concept of whiteness as a foundational premise. This premise dictates that everything related to white people is considered standard and categorizing nonwhites as deviant and abnormal (DiAngelo, 2018). These norms are established as universal rules, appearing not as the imposition of whiteness but rather as a normality that must be embraced by all. This grants a significant level of privilege and conformity to white people (DiAngelo, 2018). White bodies are seldom challenged, whereas blackness is racialized as irrational and passive, subject to continuous scrutiny based on body features, skin color, and language. Such racialization not only serves to "other" black bodies but also perpetuate white privileges.

In this study, I adopt and extend the conceptualization of Fanon's (1967) racial body schemas in the discussion section to understand the racial experiences, bodily existence and negotiations of Roma youth in leisure spaces.

Methodology

This study examined the formation of body schemas among Roma youth in leisure spaces and was conducted in the city of Edirne, a mid-sized city in Türkiye. Edirne has a total population of 413,903 (TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute), 2020), with approximately 50,000 people of Roma background, which is around %12 of the total population (İzmen, 2015).

The study was guided by the ontological principle of anti-foundationalism, which upholds the multiplicity of knowledge and understanding while resisting the reduction of reality to a particular form of knowledge (Cruickshank, 2003). Epistemologically, the study adopted an interpretive perspective, aiming to comprehend social reality from the perspective of the social actors involved. To align with this perspective, qualitative research methods were used in this study.

Regarding my background, coming from another minoritized (Kurdish/Alevi) ethnicity facilitated my ability to understand and connect with the study participants. I also worked as a basketball trainer for Roma children in the neighborhoods where I collected data. However, I maintained a critical and reflective stance regarding the potential ways in which my positionality could influence data analysis.

Research participants

A total of 22 individuals participated in this study, comprising 2 focus groups, each consisting of 4 participants, and 14 semi-structured interviews conducted between March 2021 and April 2022, as depicted in Table 1 (Research participants). All participants were either currently attending high school or had discontinued their education, opting instead to engage in temporary jobs and contribute to domestic care work. Participant recruitment was accomplished through both convenience and snowball sampling techniques, which were facilitated by gatekeepers and personal connections. The field visits took place in Roma neighborhoods. The young participants, who hailed from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, struggled with economic challenges, and all self-identified as Roma.

Data collection

Semi-structured interviews and focus groups were chosen as the methods for data collection. Initially, the data collection plan exclusively involved semi-structured interviews. However, some participants contacted, particularly those from the same neighborhood, expressed reluctance to participate in the separate interviews. As a solution, I organized group sessions and adapted the semi-structured questions for the focus groups. Additionally, the use of two distinct data collection methods enriched the data obtained and provided more expressive, emotional views from the participant (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Table 1. Research participants: socio-demographic information.

No	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Works	Education
1.	Elif	14	Female	Domestic and care work	High school student
2.	Sibel	16	Female	Domestic and care work	Dropout
3.	Melek	17	Female	Domestic and care work	Dropout
4.	Leyla	17	Female	Domestic and care work	High school student
5.	Yasemin	16	Female	Domestic and care work	Dropout
6.	Nur	17	Female	Domestic and care work	Dropout
7.	Ali	18	Male	Barber	Vocational school
8.	Ahmet	15	Male	Musician/Apprentice	High school student
9.	Resul	18	Male	House painter/Apprentice	High school student
10.	Mert	17	Male	Auto mechanic/Apprentice	Dropout
11.	Onur	17	Male	–	High school student
12.	Hasan	17	Male	Waiter	Dropout
13.	Alp	17	Male	Mechanic	Dropout
14.	Recep	16	Male	Auto mechanic/Apprentice	Dropout
15.	Yasin	17	Male	Waiter	High school graduate
16.	Kemal	16	Male	Auto mechanic/Apprentice	Dropout
17.	Hüseyin	14	Male	Stallholder	High school student
18.	Selçuk	14	Male	Tire repairman/Apprentice	Dropout
19.	Okan	18	Male	Motorcycle courier	Dropout
20.	Mert	18	Male	Mechanic/Apprentice	Open high school
21.	Mehmet	17	Male	Stallholder	High school student
22.	İsa	17	Male	Stallholder	Dropout

The interview guide was developed with a focus on exploring racial encounters of Roma and examining the limitations of leisure opportunities in leisure spaces. The final set of research questions included the following: (i) What are the places you visit during your leisure time; (ii) What do you think being Roma means in cafes or parks; (iii) Have you experienced any form of discrimination when you are having fun or socializing with friends? The research questions were derived from existing literature on racism, the body, and leisure (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). All interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in Turkish. Following data analysis, selected quotations from the participants were translated into English. To ensure accuracy, a colleague provided support by comparing selected quotations in Turkish with their English translations.

Toward the end of the data collection period, it was considered that a point of data saturation had been reached, where the inclusion of one additional interview yielded little to no additional information.

Analysis procedures, quality, and credibility

Inductive thematic analysis was used to examine the interviews and focus groups (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The following procedures of thematic analysis were used for data analysis: (i) familiarization and coding; (ii) theme development, refinement, and naming; and (iii) writing up (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). The transcriptions were read for data immersion. The initial codes were generated and compared by the author. Subsequently, similar codes were combined to form the first-order themes (Braun et al., 2016). Codes that fit into multiple themes were collapsed into a higher-order theme. Some of the identified themes included stigmatization experienced by individuals who were perceived as thieves, expression of cultural identity in leisure spaces, feeling shy in certain places, and confrontation of racist behaviors. Following the

establishment of these higher-order themes, a comprehensive report was compiled outlining the identified codes and themes. After refining and solidifying the generated themes, the current set of subthemes and overarching themes were outlined, subsequently facilitating the progression toward the structure of the findings/discussion section. In this endeavor, I drew upon Fanon's racial schema conceptualization and a body of literature addressing racial discrimination in leisure contexts to organize the thematic analysis.

To enhance the validity and assure accuracy, I used several techniques as recommended by Sparkes and Smith (2014). These techniques included: (i) prolonged engagement; (ii) negative case analysis; and (iii) critical friends. Regarding prolonged engagement, I spent extended time in the field to fully understand different mechanisms and ensure I reached data saturation. I provided a brief negative case analysis to highlight themes that have different or contradictory meanings in the data. Finally, I consulted colleagues as critical friends to control the data, codes, and themes to ensure that the analyses are representative of the raw data (Sparkes & Smith, 2014).

Approval for the research was granted by the Ethical Committee for the Social and Human Sciences at Trakya University (Decision No: 2021.03.15). Informed consent was obtained from all participants, including parental permission when necessary. Initially, most participants were contacted through gatekeepers in industrial zones or neighborhoods, or through their parents. For participants under 18 years of age, participant and parental consent were obtained, either in written or oral form. To protect the anonymity of all participants, pseudonyms were consistently used throughout the study.

Findings and discussion

Based on the thematic analysis, four main topics were identified: (i) formation of epidermal racial schema: obedience, (ii) racialization and violence within leisure spaces: perceiving Roma bodies as "thieves," (iii) racial encounters: the gaze and skin color as signifiers, (iv) resistance to racial schemas: acts of retaliation and confrontation.

Formation of epidermal racial schema: obedience

Young people in Türkiye spend a significant amount of time in cafes, as these establishments bear considerable symbolic value for them (Çakı & Kızıltepe, 2017). However, cafes also serve as a place where Roma youth form their "body schema" and cultivate a posture rooted in feelings of inferiority. This occurs due to the recognition and analysis of one's own body through encounters with the white body:

> Ali: The Gadjo [Non-Roma men] environment is different, and their conversations differ from ours. When we gather in cafes, even our discussions change. We become exceedingly cautious about our behavior and discourse. It is essential to us that, as ousters in that setting, we project an image of normalcy and dignity rather than being perceived otherwise. (Ali, 18 years old, male)
>
> Interviewer: Why is this important to you?
>
> Ali: It is important to us to avoid discrimination.
>
> (Ali, 18 years old, male)

The young participant experiences the impact of racialization within the Roma community, which immediately influences the representation required for social acceptance. These idealized beliefs of whiteness and adherence to white norms often lead black and Roma people to develop feelings of inadequacy (Fleming et al., 2012). Moreover, existing literature highlights that the epidermal racial schema perpetuates a sense of constant self-scrutiny among people of color (Gündoğdu, 2022). Fanon (1967) recontextualizes subjectivity not as a project of the racialized individual but as a construct influenced by those who represent the dominant community. The participant, similarly, constructs their body schema in their social environment through the perspective of non-Roma (Turkish) people. Kloek et al. (2013) delve into the repercussions of constant discrimination in leisure spaces, which often leads minoritized populations to internalize blame, as they perceive themselves as having conformed to white norms to cope with such discrimination.

In the leisure space, individuals who either implicitly or explicitly conform to the norms associated with whiteness run the risk of relegating some Roma people to positions that are perceived as inferior. This echoes the argument put forth by Mowatt (2018a), which suggests that narratives portraying barbarity are continually (re)produced to dehumanize the black community. For some individuals, this process of racialization contributes to the formation of an epidermal racial schema, which in turn can lead to the internalization of feelings of inferiority:

> Ahmet: Why do I mention this to you? Consider the example in a cafe. When we go there, sometimes people determine our Roma background based on our behavior. There are certain friends we choose not to accompany us because they make [our ethnicity] it obvious to others. It's not that we have an issue with being Roma; on the contrary, we take pride in it. However, because people often cast judgment and malevolent stares in our direction, we try to avoid drawing attention to ourselves in that manner. That's why our conversations change. We always go to cafes because we want to adapt to the [people] outside. (Ahmet, 15 years old, male)

The quotation above exemplifies a persistent sense of hyper-vigilance among Roma individuals in public spaces, which influences who they feel comfortable accompanying them. This heightened vigilance is driven by the awareness that, as Fanon (1967) articulates, the racialized individual is acutely conscious that "one false move, it was over for him and for all those who came after him" (p. 97). Consequently, this implicit awareness contributes to the formation of an epidermal racial schema, where every action taken by the body is meticulously calculated (Feagin, 1991). Although the participants expressed acceptance of their Roma identity, their concerns demonstrated the ongoing struggle to shed the burden of their skin's livery (Colman, 2022). The phrase "making it obvious" underscores the fear of being caught for being themselves. Turgut (2021) also discusses how some Kurdish high school students in Türkiye, conceal identity by not revealing their hometown or assimilating into Turkish norms. Furthermore, the discussion by Lee and Scott (2016) regarding people of color feeling unwelcomed in recreational spaces, whether due to the attitudes of visitors or the behavior of professional staff, provides insight into why minoritized youth might be cautious of possible racial discrimination.

Despite being cautious, Roma youth often find themselves subjected to racism. In public spaces, the behaviors of young white people are usually regarded as normal, while Roma youth are reprimanded for being loud or disruptive (Loveland & Popescu, 2016). These racialized perceptions contribute to the perpetuation of segregated public spaces, facilitating the homogenization of leisure spaces (Hylton, 2012). Participants in the study are aware of the differential treatment of Roma youth in leisure spaces, where certain rules and standards seem to be selectively applied to them:

> Interviewer: Did they ever ask you to leave the cafe?
>
> Elif: Yes, they did. They were like, "Could you leave?" They said things like that.
>
> Interviewer: Why do you think they wanted you and your friends to leave the cafe?
>
> Elif: They were trying to belittle us.
>
> Interviewer: Did you inquire about the reason?
>
> Elif: No, we didn't.
>
> Interviewer: What do you think was bothering them?
>
> Elif: Our noise.
>
> Interviewer: Were you really being noisy?
>
> Elif: [Nods her head hesitantly.]
>
> Interviewer: If there were noisy Gadji [Non-Roma women] girls at the cafe, do you think the owner would say anything to them?
>
> Elif: No, they didn't say anything to them. (Elif, 14 years old, female)

In the above citation, Elif is keenly aware of the double standards at play. Puwar (2004) discusses that every action, sound, or gesture made by females or people of color is amplified in the presence of white people. Given that Roma young females are subjected to this double exposure, they become hypervisible in their space, with their very existence often magnified (Puwar, 2004). The racial discrimination faced by some Roma people has become so normalized that some participants view the cafe owner's discriminatory behavior as expected. Feagin (1991) also notes that acceptance is one of the most common responses among racialized people. While attempting to strip Roma girls of their dignity, such incidents aim to dictate what Roma bodies can or cannot do in particular spaces (Ahmed, 2006). This can be seen as a result of the epidermal racial schema, where female participants come to terms with being asked to leave the cafe, even if they feel confused. Such acceptance may also be related to the desire to avoid further confrontations or problems. Previous research has shown that Latino immigrants sometimes accept racial discrimination to avoid deportation (Sharaievska et al., 2010).

Racialization and violence within leisure spaces: perceiving Roma bodies as "thieves"

One method employed by Roma youth to prevent racialization and racial discrimination is through their choice of clothing. They believe that their outfits, in particular,

distinguish Roma from Gadjis (non-Roma women), and as a result, they try to "blend in" within the leisure environment. In the following excerpt, Nur shares her experience of feeling closely scrutinized and trailed as if she stole something in a shop:

> Nur: The employees don't see them [non-Roma], but they come behind us.
>
> Interviewer: Does this frequently happen?
>
> Nur: Yes. It happens when we visit shops.
>
> Interviewer: Due to this, have you ever considered not going to shops?
>
> Nur: No, but I don't wear slippers when I go to shops and cafes, that way, they won't immediately recognize that I am Roma. I change my shoes, try to dress nicely, and then I go. (Nur, 17 years old, female)

Through daily experiences and pervasive "Roma thief" perception embedded in their identities, the historico-racial schema becomes activated within Roma participants, leading them to become acutely aware of the racialization they face. Consequently, they become more cautious about their dressing choices in leisure spaces to avoid falling victim to racial profiling. In this context, the Roma identity is purposefully obscured and substituted with a non-Roma identity to gain acceptance or access within specific environments. Similar trends have been observed in previous leisure studies in which black people engage in various forms of self-policing, making conscious efforts to avoid behaviors that might be perceived as suspicious (Austin, 1994; Fleming et al., 2012). These attempts to avoid racialization also demonstrate a form of agency and, in part, resist the internalization of inferiority. Furthermore, Roma individuals often take pride in their cultural attire, as Nur aptly states, "It's what should be worn when relaxing or having fun." Previous research has demonstrated that Roma girls are often identified based on their sense of dress choice (Grill, 2012).

Racialization does not arise only in implicit ways, through gazes or harassment. There were instances where perpetrators directly engaged in racial violence. Previous research also shows that anti-Roma racism is exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic (e.g. Creţan & Light, 2020; Matache & Bhabha, 2020). This is confirmed by one of the participants' experiences when he was falsely accused of theft:

> Resul: During the COVID-19 lockdowns, when everything was off, we decided to take a few walks around our neighborhood. It was perhaps not the right thing to do, but we wanted to get fresh air and smoke. On that particular evening, a theft supposedly occurred in the area. A police car pulled up beside us, and an officer stepped out. Without any warning, he began physically assaulting me. Then he proceeded to assault my best friend. I intervened, attempting to stop the police officer, and in the process, we were forcefully taken to the police station. That's when he told me that he thought I was the thief they were searching for. When I asked him how he could think that I was the thief, he replied, "Can't you see for yourself, you're a Gypsy?" And that man was the police station captain. (Resul, 18 years old, male)

Both the historico-racial schema and the epidermal racial schema are clearly evident in the experience of the racialized subject. In this incident, Resul is immediately singled out based on his skin color and labeled as a "Gypsy." At the same time, he is unjustly branded as a thief simply because he is a Roma, with racial historicity falsely

associating Gypsies with theft. It is important to note that this police violence is not an attempt to control an actual crime scene or a response to an isolated incident. Rather, it is rooted in the historical recognition of being Roma, which has made it possible for Resul to be physically attacked, because such attacks on the Roma community often go unpunished (McGarry, 2017). This attack coupled with the derogatory slur, also highlights the Turkishness/whiteness of the perpetrators. Through their violent actions, they assert their status and the privileges that come with exercising their whiteness to the fullest extent (Ergin, 2021). Such instances of police violence are deeply entrenched in systematic racism, in which Fanon defines these "normalized" attacks as the legacy of systematic oppression (Carastathis, 2010).

Lambrev (2020) shows that some Roma people tend to withdraw from leisure spaces to avoid humiliation and dehumanization. Feagin (1991) also discusses how the potentially life-threatening nature of responding to police violence constrains the racialized young people. The ongoing criminalization of this community substantiates the assumption that some Roma people are reluctant to fully engage with society. Such discourse serves as an alibi, deflecting responsibility away from society and public authorities regarding systematic racism.

Racial encounters: the gaze and skin color as signifiers

Navigating leisure spaces that implicitly belong to whites, or in this context, "Turks," presents a challenge in and of itself. Ahmed (2006) underscores that "spaces are not exterior to bodies; instead, spaces are like a second skin that unfolds in the folds of the body" (p. 20). Fanon (1967) similarly describes encounters as places where a historico-racial schema is formed in which such places are direct, historically predisposed, and constructed with preconceived biases. One participant recounts the unease caused by the gazes of others and his efforts to deflect these emotions:

> Mert: Sometimes I sense it from their glances. It's as if they were bothered by our presence.
>
> Interviewer: Have you experienced or felt anything specific?
>
> Mert: It has happened a couple of times. When I was with the girls, sitting with our friends, there were people who looked at us, those lingering gazes. It felt like they were silently questioning, "Why did they come in here?" I used to get lost in those thoughts, but then I would immediately divert my attention to my mobile phone whenever those thoughts occurred.
>
> Interviewer: How do you cope when you feel uncomfortable?
>
> Mert: I check WhatsApp, and call someone to distract myself. I just find a means to distract myself if I can't handle it. I can't endure discussions about the Roma community. (Mert, 17 years old, male)

The presence of nonwhite bodies is magnified through the act of gazing and racialization, where the Roma body becomes more conspicuous and seems to fill up the entire space. The body of the person being objectified is "anchored" to the space or becomes inseparable from the space itself. This situation closely aligns with Fanon's point (1967): "Look, I'll agree to anything, on condition I go unnoticed" (p. 96).

In response, participant attempts to shield himself from the space as a means of self-protection. However, this reaction also contributes to the normalization of racial discrimination (Ellefsen et al., 2022). The appropriation of Roma youth in certain spaces, where they may be welcomed or unwelcomed, elicits a range of body responses, such as shyness or shaking.

This effect is largely a consequence of the recognition of the "other" where skin color takes prominence in defining these distinctions. As Lewis (2018) aptly states, "Skin appears as race" (p. 126). Thus, in many instances, skin color becomes a barrier to communication and raises tension between different groups. The following excerpt from a focus group discussion illustrates the awareness of Roma youth and their attempts to make sense of the absurdity they face:

> Alp: They exclude you because of your skin color. What do you normally do about it?
>
> Yasin: There's nothing I can do. Yes, they look at me that way because my skin color reveals that I'm Roma.
>
> Interviewer: What happens when you go to a cafe?
>
> Yasin: They just leave their tables.
>
> Alp: Now, Rabbul Alamin[1] gave me a white skin color and to my friend a darker one. I'm not a Gypsy, but he is? I am also a Gypsy, but they don't discriminate against me, they do it to him. Why? Because of his skin color. Once, we were all together in a place, people from outside came, and they would say things like, "Shit, Gypsies have invaded here" and leave. It's as if we're terrorists, traitors. (Focus Group 1, August 2021)

The participants astutely recognize that the judgments they faced were based on superficial information, primarily skin color. Each individual's experience of racial discrimination has a unique impact. For Yasin, this discrimination prompts him to reevaluate his epidermal racial schema, potentially changing his self-perception. However, Alp, although not directly targeted based on his appearance, is affected by the negative historical association of being Roma. Consequently, he cannot escape the constraints of the historico-racial schema (Fanon, 1967). In this study, cafes emerge as the most prominent setting where everyday racism was recurrently experienced. This underscores the leisure dimension of racism itself, as the white gaze, mockery, or racist slurs turn into a form of leisure activity for some white people within the space (Mowatt, 2018b).

In the next section, we will delve into how Roma individuals respond to racial discrimination and explore the efforts they make to disrupt racial schemas.

Resistance to racial schemas: acts of retaliation and confrontation

Resistance to racial schemas takes various forms among Roma youth in leisure spaces, and retaliation is one such response that often serves as a counter-violence strategy. In the following excerpt, a participant recounts retaliatory action in response to a racist slur:

> Mert: We were sitting by the riverside, and my older brother went to get himself a beer. We were listening to music, and there was a man across with two women. We were enjoying the view of the river and listening to music. Then he said, "Look at these Gypsies,

> sitting there playing loud music." I asked, "Did you just call us that?" and he replied, "Yes!" I was getting up when my big brother said, "Never mind." Then he added, "fucking Gypsies." I got angry and as he uttered those words, there was a small stool next to me. I grabbed it, ran over, and threw the stool at him. The stool hit him on the head, and I proceeded to hit him. He was drunk. Then I thought to myself, "It's beneath me to fight a drunken man" and stopped. (Mert, 17 years old, male)

The participant, who had previously decided to overlook signs of discomfort or gazes in cafes, this time, responds to a racial slur. This echoes Butler's argument (1993), illustrating how the identity of racialized subjects is not stable but fluid, continuously reshaped through signs, gestures, and language. With his reaction, the participant also challenges the epidermal racial schema, and the experience of humiliation. This response is rooted in the negative connotations associated with the term "Gypsy," which goes beyond merely defining a community; it encompasses a history of enslavement, forced migration, humiliation, and genocide (Feagin, 1991). This act of resistance is not only aimed at teaching a lesson to the dominant body but, more importantly, at healing oneself from ongoing humiliation that resonates throughout one's life. Fanon (1963) conceptualizes violence as a means to overcome dehumanization and the effects of racism, as he briefly describes its role in the following passage: "At the level of individual, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his inferiority complex and […] restores his self-respect" (p. 94). The effects of demonstrating resistance to racial schemas are evident in the participant's overall comments, which suggest that he does not view the norms of white/Turkish individuals as superior.

It is important to note that these counter-actions by the participants do not emerge from a single racist slur or verbal violence but from a series of racist incidents experienced in the past. Feagin (1991) also emphasizes that confrontations or acts of resistance are not overreactions but cumulative results of ongoing racist incidents. While acknowledging that responding to violence with violence and noncommunication can perpetuate a cycle of harm, the participant's action can be seen as a reaction against attempts to subordinate and exclude racialized bodies from leisure spaces and as an act of assertion of their right to public space (Hylton, 2012).

On the other hand, young Roma women have often described experiencing looks and nearing chants of "Gypsy" as the most common forms of attempted humiliation and exclusion from leisure spaces. The following participant demonstrates self-recognition without accepting racialization as a means of preserving dignity:

> Sibel: One may feel resentment following racist incidents or slurs, but I am who I am. I don't involve myself with anyone's opinions, as I have confidence in myself.
>
> Interviewer: Do you respond to their racist comments sometimes?
>
> Sibel: I would respond in a way that makes it clear it's not their concern, I live my life the way I choose, and how I dress is none of their business. (Sibel, 16 years old, female)

Racially charged words such as "Gypsy" are frequently used to depict Roma people as inferior. However, the response of young Roma women does not show a malleable perception of their identity. While the way some Roma people dress may serve as a signifier of their race, it generally does not concern young Roma women. In most cases, they continue to proudly display their cultural identity. Building on Fanon's idea,

Grill (2012) also discusses how young Roma boys and girls in the UK remain at ease with representing their Roma selves despite attempts to undermine their identity through Gypsy chants or gazes. The participants emphasize that racist encounters are significant incidents for them. However, these experiences do not lead to the denial or distortion of their Roma identity in most cases. Instead, the self-assertion of young Roma women tends to be confrontational. This allows for an immediate (partial) restoration of agency for Roma participants in leisure spaces such as parks:

> Interviewer: What happens at parks between you and Gadjis?
>
> Melek: They start talking or warn their children, saying things like "Come here. They are Roma, do not go there." I've had many fights with women there. For example, I have my girls with me, and they don't want me to respond. They say, "Never mind," but I do mind, so I will say things, "Why did you say something like this about me? Are you better than us? If you act like that toward us, then we can treat you the same way as well."
>
> Interviewer: What kind of fights you had?
>
> Melek: Just verbal, I don't hit or physically confront them. I am scared of my mother. (Melek, 17 years old, female)

The participants confront racializing behaviors aimed at positioning them as inferior. Butler argues (1993) that it is this performativity of the participant that potentially disrupts racialized perception toward Roma. Melek poses a logical question and thus, contrasts the racialized narrative portraying Roma as irrational and inarticulate. The comments also display that Melek restores and exercises her agency by confronting racial prejudice and humiliation.

Relatedly, responding to such discrimination is crucial because withdrawal or acceptance can accumulate and potentially lead to psychological problems for racialized people (Carter & Forsyth, 2010; Fanon, 1963; Feagin, 1991). Feagin (1991) further demonstrates that being unable to respond increases the anger and frustration experienced by racialized individuals. This situation can be attributed to the historical context, as previous research discussed that parks and natural spaces, influenced by Jim Crow laws in the US or implicitly associated with white ideology, were designed to prioritize the comfort of white people and strengthen and celebrate whiteness (Lee et al., 2023; Roberts, 2009).

Similar to the findings of Ziemer (2011), Roma youth, particularly women, are active agents who develop tactics and challenge the common narrative about their cultural identity. Additionally, their presence in these spaces, resistance to racial slurs, and representation of their cultural identity can ultimately transform white and Turkish leisure spaces in favor of Roma young women. This transformation can lead to a better understanding that marginalized young people have equal rights to benefit from leisure spaces (Puwar, 2004). These invasions of spaces do not entirely dismantle racial body schemas. However, they help lessen the impact of these schemas, enabling Roma youth to view racial incidents from a more critical perspective.

Due to their membership in low-economic-class families, the female participants have limited access to common leisure spaces. They often create alternative leisure spaces within their homes and neighborhoods. When asked about how and where they spend their time, they mention activities such as "dancing to Roma music at home," "attending weddings in the neighborhood," and "hanging out and playing dodgeball

with friends in front of their houses." In one example, a participant describes her typical day at home:

> Leyla: We wake up late at home, around 12 or 1 pm. I take care of the morning chores, and then we put on Roma music, and I dance for at least one hour every day.
>
> Interviewer: Do you dance alone?
>
> Leyla: Yes, sometimes I dance alone, or my sisters come, or my cousins over, and they ask me to put on a song, and we dance together. (Leyla, 17 years old, female)

Dancing at home represents another form of agency, where individuals can embrace their cultural selves. Using the home as a leisure space serves as a means of protecting the body from racial schemas while allowing for a comfortable expression of one's identity. Previous research also highlights the importance of feeling accepted and being one's authentic self at home. Azzarito and Hill (2013) discuss how homes have become an especially important place for girls with limited opportunities for sports and leisure activities. Similar to previous research, the home allows women and girls to redefine their bodies in safe spaces and exercise their agency designating the home as an alternative leisure space (Azzarito & Hill, 2013). Similarly, the review analysis conducted by Sharaievska et al. (2014) consistently showed that home-oriented leisure activities were chosen by individuals to avoid racial discrimination. However, in this study, young Roma women primarily choose to stay home due to their economic status. Nonetheless, they practice and uphold the values of their culture within the confines of their homes, which may not be readily accepted in leisure spaces.

Conclusion

This study employed Fanon's historico and epidermal racial schemas to examine the leisure experiences of Roma youth and how Roma bodies are influenced by schemas constructed by white/Turkish bodies.

The study focused on active responses of racialized youth highlighting counter-violence and retaliation as central themes, setting it apart from previous research that has explored a broader range of reactions and emotions in response to discrimination (Ellefsen et al., 2022; Feagin, 1991). The findings revealed that retaliation, which does not necessarily involve physical violence, can help Roma youth overcome historico-racial and epidermal racial schemas while preserving their dignity. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that counter-violence and response to racial attacks and slurs served as a catalyst for restoring agency, compared to the subtler forms of racism such as gazes and invisible discrimination where implicit racism was not obvious and directly noticeable.

While Roma historico-racial and epidermal racial schemas remain pervasive, this study showed that the burden of these schemas affects Roma youth deeply, leading them to conceal their identity to avoid racial discrimination. Participants' comments revealed a tendency to blame themselves for incidents in leisure spaces. Epidermal racial schema plays a role in skin color-induced confrontations, where silence or obedience facilitates the formation of racial schemas in Roma bodies. As a result, experienced racial discrimination compels Roma youth to be more vigilant in leisure space,

ultimately diminishing the enjoyment of their leisure time. The study also illustrated how the historicity of being Roma affects their lives negatively but also brings resiliency and self-dignity. Despite the challenges they face, they do not accept the role of the victim and instead develop their methods of resistance. Particularly, young Roma women grapple with intersectional constraints related to ethnicity, economic status, and gender participation in leisure spaces. However, they display a strong agency to challenge racism and represent their cultural selves in leisure spaces or in alternative spaces they create.

In summary, this study reveals different responses from the participants, highlighting that their bodies are not constantly trapped within historico-racial or epidermal racial schemas. Instead, the incidents they encounter, whether through submission, confrontation, or counter-violence represent "moments" in which they engage in bodily negotiations concerning their position, the discrimination they face, the social groups they belong to, and their racialized history. The study provides a detailed account of how Roma youth, at times, engage in almost existential contemplation of their bodies to make sense of their racialized positioning within leisure spaces. It becomes evident, particularly in the context of racial violence that their racial schemas are fluid and subject to change.

Although Fanon defines these schemas within Black liberation struggles and oppression, this research extends Fanon's ideas by revealing that schemas are not fixed, rather that racialized young people can encompass both resisting and racializing schemas simultaneously. This constant negotiation arises because of the absence of legal and societal responses to anti-Roma racism, leading to singular responses and an ongoing bodily negotiation and struggle within leisure spaces. I also offer a balanced gender perspective, including the emergence of racial body schemas and representing the voices in how young Roma women perform their cultural identity in leisure spaces.

Practical implications of future research and limitations

As one of the important findings of this study, I argue that Roma youth are more likely to regain their self-assertion when they are visible in public leisure spaces and confront racial discrimination, rather than engage in self-exclusion to avoid racial incidents. Thus, it is crucial for Roma youth to remain visible and challenge discrimination in leisure spaces. However, this does not mean that Roma youth should subject themselves to constant racial discrimination. Local public youth and sports centers can initiate awareness campaigns aimed at addressing anti-Roma racism within leisure spaces. These spaces should also facilitate gatherings with non-Roma youth, enabling constructive discussions about anti-Roma racism and the significance of representing Roma identity. This approach would not only encourage Roma youth to engage in leisure spaces but also assist in strengthening their cultural identity. Furthermore, adopting a more comprehensive approach, as suggested by Lee et al. (2023), it becomes essential to incorporate procedural justice, which involves the participation of racialized communities in decision-making processes and development policy frameworks related to natural environments, public parks, and other public leisure spaces. This approach would contribute to Roma youth's ability to integrate elements of their cultural identities within these leisure spaces.

Regarding the study's limitations, there is an imbalance between the number of male and female participants. Despite efforts to engage female participants, the reluctance of young Roma females to take part in the study posed challenges. Additionally, gatekeepers from the neighborhood were not supportive of recruiting female participants. This phenomenon aligns with previous research, suggesting that older Roma men and women tend to be protective and cautious about allowing adolescent Roma females to be seen in the neighborhood with strangers or boys (Grill, 2012). Consequently, future research should make more efforts to directly engage with young Roma females and their parents to ensure equal participation of males and females that respects the agency of the young Roma females. Furthermore, adopting a more intersectional approach, which considers gender, class, and race perspectives, is essential to comprehensively examine the complex struggles faced by young Roma women in gaining various leisure capabilities.

Note

1. Lord of the worlds.

Acknowledgments

Thank you very much to the reviewers who enhanced this paper with their remarks and suggestions. I would also like to express my gratitude to Reinhard Haudenhuyse for his feedback.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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