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Representations of the Romanies in *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding*

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Abstract: The aim of this paper is to trace the correlations between socio-economic status and stereotypes in the construction of the identity of the Romani minority. To this end the paper will focus mainly on contemporary representations of the Romani people in American media, in particular the reality TV show *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* and other related shows, such as *Jersey Shore* and its British spin-off, *Geordie Shore*. In the analysis I will be interested mostly in how stereotypes are made to fit the general format of the show and, in the case of *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding*, repackaged as authentic ethnic culture. The aim of the comparison is to illustrate the fact that, though both *Jersey Shore* and *My Big Fat American Gypsy Wedding* claim to offer an insight into the everyday lives of a particular ethnic minority, both shows follow a similar frame that has little to do with their respective subjects' ethnic background and more to do with their social and economic background. The overlap between social and ethnic background can prove to be particularly problematic in the case of the Roma, since there is a distinct lack of counter-narratives and, historically, Romani cultural identity has always been tied to a particular social and economic class. Thus I will also attempt to integrate these representations into a broader historical perspective on the formation of Romani identity in order to better understand the problematic nature of contemporary representations of the Roma.