

This interdisciplinary work combines theoretical and methodological approaches of anthropology and discourse studies to explore current controversy in the Czech and Slovak Republic about the nature of the collective identity of Roma, reasons for their social problems and appropriate solutions thereof. The first position in the controversy, associated in particular with Romani studies and Romani ethnopolitical movement, sees all Roma as a part of an „ethnic group,, or „nation,, and connects their plight to „racial,, discrimination and intolerance of their „differences,,. By contrast, the second position, held especially by some cultural anthropologists and non-governmental organizations, labels the first one as „primordialism,, and deconstructs the notion of a unitary and natural „Romani nation,,. It argues that there is no necessary link between „Romani anthropological type,, belonging to the modern Romani nation and belonging to some of the „traditional Romani cultures,,. Accordingly, it maintains that most inhabitants of urban ghettos are only socially classified as „Roma,, and that their identity is derived mainly from their belonging to the „culture of poverty,, or living in a situation of „social exclusion,,. So whereas the first side to the debate offers national emancipation, support for Romani national culture and community development as fitting solutions for poverty, unemployment, low educational level etc. of the Roma, the second side advocates de-ethnicized social policies and services aimed at socially excluded individuals and families.