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## Migrant, Roma and Post-Colonial Youth in Education across Europe. Being 'Visibly Different'

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# BEING 'VISIBLY DIFFERENT': EXPERIENCES OF SECOND-GENERATION MIGRANT AND ROMA YOUTHS AT SCHOOL

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF COMMUNITIES  
IN NINE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION



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#### ABOUT EDUMIGROM

Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe is a collaborative research project that aims to study how ethnic differences in education contribute to the diverging prospects of minority ethnic youth and their peers in urban settings. Through applying a cross-national comparative perspective, the project explores the overt and covert mechanisms in socio-economic, political, cultural, and gender relations that make ethnicity a substantive component of inequalities in social status and power. The project involves nine countries from old and new member states of the European Union: the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. EDUMIGROM began in March 2008 and will run through February 2011. The project is coordinated by the Center for Policy Studies at Central European University.

#### ABOUT THE PAPER

The third phase of the EDUMIGROM project comprised the community-based fieldwork, the procession of qualitative data and the structured analysis of the material that has been collected in the qualitative community studies that took place in selected multiethnic communities in the nine participating countries of the EDUMIGROM research project. This phase of the empirical research mapped, by using a wide range of qualitative methods, the personal and institutional factors influencing the living conditions, school life, community network and inter-ethnic relations, school performance, opportunities for further education, and the career choices of minority ethnic youths who attend the schools in the chosen communities and are exposed to the experience (or sometimes danger) of being "othered." As a result of this research phase, nine country Community Studies were produced in June 2010 (eight out of them are available on the project's website).

Upon the completion of the nine Community Studies, the coordinating team at CPS entered the phase of preparing the cross-country comparative analysis of the rich qualitative material. In June 2010, a detailed outline was drafted to point to the core issues to be addressed in the next – comparative – phase. The essays here in *Being 'Visibly Different': Experiences of Second-generation Migrant and Roma Youths at School* summarise the major themes and findings of the qualitative inquiries that targeted schools and their immediate environments in selected multiethnic communities in nine participating European countries.

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## **FOREWORD**

**Júlia Szalai**

This volume is a companion to the earlier published series of Community Studies from the EDUMIGROM research project (see: [www.edumigrom.eu](http://www.edumigrom.eu)). The essays here in *Being 'Visibly Different': Experiences of Second-generation Migrant and Roma Youths at School* summarise the major themes and findings of the qualitative inquiries that targeted schools and their immediate environments in selected multiethnic communities in nine participating European countries. This endeavour aims to open a new window of cross-country comparisons for analysing and re-assessing the rich materials that were unearthed in the encompassing fieldwork that the country teams pursued between April 2009 and May 2010 in the Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The discussions that follow take the nine Community Studies that were drafted in June 2010 as their departure point, but the analytical work here also capitalises on the bounty of data recorded in the datasheets for summing up the interviews with students, their parents, and teachers; furthermore, extensive use is made of the annotations that the fieldworkers produced while observing the classrooms and students and teachers' encounters in the corridors, canteen, or schoolyard, and also from the copious notes that were generated from focus group discussions with different agents involved in schooling.

In line with the construction of the fieldwork (that approached ethnic minority students' everyday lives and relations like "layers of onion skin", by moving from the closest actors toward those who have only some mediated role in shaping schooling), and also in accordance with the structure of the country-based Community Studies, each of the key topics of the current study is discussed from several angles. Thus, in an attempt to introduce the multiplicity of standpoints, values, and orientations, the experiences of students and parents are mirrored in the views of the teachers and different representatives of other institutions in the community; or ethnic minority adolescents' accounts on being "othered" are presented together with the often contrasting position of teachers on culturally informed differences in attitudes toward schooling; or the musings on interethnic relations expressed by individual students are brought into reflective associations with the observations on the same relations within and outside the school.

However, the logic of the primary focus on the cross-country comparisons requires that the aforementioned reflective associations form in clusters as they are illuminated by the nature of the issue under consideration: at times they are looked at through the lens of differences shaped by the departing long-term histories of majority-minority relations; other times, they are analysed according to comparable socio-economic characteristics across borders; and on other occasions they are brought into the framework of variations in the institutional structures of education; etc.

Of course, the choice of the prisms that guide the analysis is never a matter of arbitrary decisions. In this context, it is worth recalling the major conclusion of the "sibling" of this study, the comparative analysis of the classroom-based surveys among students: ethnic minority adolescents' experiences, achievable positions, and future opportunities in education are deeply affected by a range of structural and cultural factors that usually exert their influence in an interplay with one another. Students' school performance and aspirations for advancement are shaped in an immediate way by their families' socio-economic standing and by their parents' own history of social mobility prior to and after immigration. If these phenomena are looked at through the opportunities provided for students from ethnic minority and/or socially disadvantaged backgrounds – or if teachers' roles in shaping minority adolescents' futures are investigated – it is the given structure of schooling, its meritocratic hierarchies, competitiveness, or

striving for (good) education for all that come to the forefront as decisive aspects of the analysis and also of the comparative assessments. At the same time, it is mainly the interpersonal aspects of ethnic minority students' daily lives inside and outside school and the accessible strategies for identity development that are deeply and directly affected by the extent of cross-cultural exchange and the quality of interethnic relations in the given society at large (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

Our qualitative investigations in the field confirmed the importance of the same set of structural and cultural factors that were revealed by the questionnaire-based surveys in shaping the educational experiences and opportunities of ethnic minority youth. Nevertheless, it has become clear in over 500 interviews incorporating personal histories and revealing students' values, attitudes, and aspirations in an intergenerational perspective that the actual constellation of these factors, the ways how they interact, and their manifestations in certain typical experiences, discourses, and explanatory patterns are deeply impacted by the long *durée* of history of the given nation-states as well as by the longer-term patterns of migration and inter-ethnic cohabitation. Three distinct clusters of historical arrangements, with diverse implications for the social positions and embeddedness of people from ethnic minority backgrounds, were identified by the analysis which markedly differ in the driving forces shaping interethnic relations and also depart from one another in the prevalent patterns of interethnic encounters and their institutionalisation.

In countries of post-colonial migration, both majorities and various ethnic minority groups have internalised the prevailing ethno-social hierarchies through a century-long history of interethnic cohabitation and have constructed their worlds in response to and in defence of it. In a way, gradual changes in the social structures and the educational systems, respectively, have been built on the evolving forms and patterns of representation and protection that all actors have related to by giving responses that have become the customary ways of interethnic contacts and thus gained the status of the "norm". In these societies (that are represented by France and the United Kingdom in our country selection), the recognition of ethnic distinctions can often give the impetus to extensive attempts at integration and full-fledged social and political participation on the part of minorities. At the same time, aspirations to break through the "ethnic ceiling" fail for the most part and are considered as deviant attempts at rebelling and thus harmful for the peaceful coexistence and cooperation of the involved groups and communities.

The case is different in countries where interethnic relations and the patterns of their institutionalisation are shaped by the rather novel experiences of massive economic migration. These societies – that are represented by Germany, Denmark, and Sweden in our sample – still seem to experiment with the "proper" ways of responding to the new social reality. Unlike in their post-colonial counterparts, majorities here often hope for regaining their country's ethnic homogeneity ("migrants will hopefully go back to their country of origin"), and if frustrated in their expectations, turn toward people from an "immigrant background", either with the will to "Europeanise" them, or with attempts at designating distinct physical, organisational, and social spaces for them through ethnic segregation, or by establishing new relations of patronising as if an immigrant background was a "handicap" or a "disease". In reacting to these forms of "othering", ethnic minority groups – especially Muslim communities – often develop arrangements of voluntary separation and strive at full-fledged recognition by emphasising their social, economic, cultural, and political inclusion on multicultural grounds.

In the third group of countries, in the post-socialist societies of Central Europe (that are represented by the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia), it is the Roma who have been singled out for decades – if not for centuries – to embody and also to continuously suffer the malaise of majority–minority relations and to be kept apart as “dangerous strangers”. Despite the fact that, for the most part, Roma settled more than a century ago, the rigid hierarchies of their once rural communities worked against their incorporation and concluded in the development of skills and occupations that functioned toward maintaining and reproducing their marginalised positions over generations.

The patterns changed, however, during the decades of forced industrialisation under state socialism. The traditional divisions of labour quickly became outdated, and Roma found themselves compelled to take up the peripheral jobs in the all-embracing system of compulsory employment. The process was accompanied by an intense move toward the urban areas, though large groups of Roma were confined in the rural areas and from where they commuted for work. These large-scale processes of industrialisation and (partial) urbanisation have not concluded, however, in Roma inclusion. To the contrary, the unfinished projects of occupational and social mobility and the accompanying developments toward gradual integration actually were suspended: after the collapse of state-socialist industry, the Roma were the first to go, qualified as “unwanted” and “superfluous” to the work force. Massive and lasting unemployment is just one – though crucial – aspect of the problem: in addition, Roma communities have become the victims of a number of concurrent processes from reshuffling the provision of welfare to restructuring the system of schooling and to rebuilding the urban spaces that all have concluded in their acute impoverishment and utter marginalisation. Under these new conditions, Roma-ness has been turned into an all-encompassing socio-political symbol of all social evils in the public discourse, and in everyday relations, Roma have been singled out as the “due” targets of forceful separation and exclusion.

While our empirical investigations brought up a range of important implications for these three departing interethnic regimes, both the research design and limitations on the resources and capacities at our disposal urged us to clearly circumscribe the scope of the phenomena and relations of interethnic cohabitation that are to be addressed in this study. In accordance with the primary focus of the EDUMIGROM project, the work was focused on exploring the experiences, views, and attitudes of certain designated ethnic minority groups in each of the participating countries. Country-by-country, the studied minority groups were known to rank-and-file people as those who embody ethnic “otherness”, simply by their “visible” traits. In other words, the selected groups, more than other people from “immigrant” backgrounds, are usually exposed to ethnic distinctions and the accompanying practices of “othering”. However, by putting them in the focus of the inquiries, our research constructed a particular magnifying lens: a glimpse through it might show majorities’ inclinations to set apart those who are not “us” more pronounced and more determined than they were, provided that all the nuances of interethnic relating were taken into consideration. Therefore, one has to be cautious in generalising the experienced tensions and conflicts: it may well be the case that ethnic distinctions are played out in a gradual way and that people from the majority are more open to integrating certain groups more than others. Such assumptions are all the more justified because the observed interethnic relations often incorporate a vast array of social disadvantages as well, and thus it is difficult to establish whether refusals and subordinations are driven by antagonisms along the line of social class (where ethnicity is just a cover for inequalities in social



standing and power), or are informed by ethnic or racial content per se.

Another limitation of our study follows from the one-sided exploration of relations that have two ends. Apart from a few focus groups where the researchers succeeded in inviting students and/or parents from the majority and the ethnic minority groups alike, for the most part, our study presents the views, perceptions, and reasoning about the state of interethnic relations through the lens of the minorities. While it was a primary aim of the research to bring up the experiences about discrimination, "othering", and also the frequent attempts at "minoritisation" of the latter communities, it is important to face the fact that the other side of these stories remains largely unexplored within the applied framework. Thus, limited information is presented in this study about how majority youths are socialised to perceive and practice interethnic relations, how they experience diversity around themselves, how they reflect on day-to-day cultural (often: religious) differences, and how they conceptualise of ethnic "others". Furthermore, we cannot learn whether students from majority backgrounds cause harm to their ethnic minority peers because of deep-rooted hatred and fear that are conditioned by their own life-histories and that are channelled by stereotyping and stigmatising the "Other", or whether they engage in discriminatory acts mainly through unconsciously or half-consciously developed routines that have been acquired as parts of the normative behavioural patterns and customary ways of adult communication in their surrounding. While the differences in the motivations do not count in qualifying all the involved acts as "discriminatory", knowing their origins and constructs remains important to the design of the appropriate policies and actions for combating "othering" and also for reconsidering the role of the school and its pedagogical practices in tackling the derogatory practices and manifestations of ethnic distinctions. In sum, the choices made at the outset of our research design have largely delimited the scope of questions that the comparative qualitative inquiries have put into focus. Using the lens of the selected ethnic minority groups, the discussions in the subsequent chapters will address the following major issues:

- How do the prevailing school systems impact on the position and future perspectives of ethnic minority adolescents? What is the role of the widespread selective procedures (ranging from early tracking to segregation and within-school separation) in shaping performance and advancement of ethnic minority students, and how do these processes forge their longer-term educational aspirations?

- How do social, gender, and ethno-cultural factors and their interplay inform performance, attendance, and the general position of ethnic minority adolescents in school? How do these factors intervene in forming educational strategies and how are they reflected in longer-term career options?

- How do ethnic minority students and their families relate to actual school experiences and to schooling in general? How do they interpret success, failure, and variations in advancement? What are their views on issues of justice, discrimination, and equality in the context of schooling?

- What are the typical strategies of identity formation of ethnic minority youth, and what roles do schools, families, peer relations, and the broader interethnic environment play in the process? How do experiences of "othering" inform the shaping of "minority ethnic" identity and how do they affect visions on and aspirations for adulthood?

- What are the responsible agents (institutions, persons) for promoting equal opportunities in educating ethnic minority youths, and for diminishing the gap between majority and minority students? Who are to be considered partners in achieving these goals? What are the sources of hindrance?

From a methodological point of view, the construction of the study takes into account that the above five clusters of questions were not investigated with the same weight from all angles. Hence, while heavily capitalising on the nine Community Studies, certain parts of the discussion will focus on information gained mainly through individual interviews with students and parents, while others will primarily rely on the processed information gained from observations on various sites and in various locations, yet others will report the structuring of views as reflected in the focus group discussions and the sections on the views, attitudes, and opinions expressed in the individual interviews, etc. Further, the subsequent elaborations will strongly build on the case studies and processed sheets that were conceived as earlier meta-analytical phase of the research.<sup>1</sup>

The analytical account is structured in a format somewhat different from previous EDUMIGROM studies. Its main body consists of three independent, though conceptually and methodologically tightly interlaced essays drafted by three independent working groups, each composed of three to four members representing different country teams. The three working groups were led by three experienced team leaders: Claire Schiff (France), Ian Law (United Kingdom), and Radim Marada (Czech Republic), respectively. Each self-contained essay starts with an introduction to set the stage and closes by drawing the main conclusions of the presented discussion.

The first essay addresses the educational experiences and longer-term aspirations of ethnic minority students by focusing on schools as the decisive locations of everyday life for 14-17-year-old adolescents. It looks at those larger-scale social, political, and cultural factors that shape the school systems and that drive the varying forms of selection, and arrives at a categorisation that illuminates the historical imprints in the actual constellations of early schooling, together with the implications that the various categories carry for the scope of ethnic minority students' advancement in education and beyond. The discussion also reveals how parents typically relate to education and points to those mutual determinations between the socio-economic positions of families and the schools' willingness to support children's progression whereby the reproductive functions of schooling are fulfilled in their daily reality. The chapter also shows that, amidst the manifold limitations of schools as the locations of the mundane relations that adolescents face, there is still a substantial degree of autonomy at their staff's disposal to ingrain certain chosen cultural and educational values and to set the rules of operation accordingly. If the school personnel – teachers in the first place – are qualified and determined enough, they can significantly improve the conditions and contents of their students' schooling, and thereby exert a substantial impact on the opportunities of ethnic minority adolescents for advancement toward the next stage in education and the longer-term future. However, such innovative attempts are rather scarce: as a rule, teachers are inclined to participate in the general processes of "othering". As a closer look at interethnic peer relations shows, they rarely intervene in what are sometimes aggressive power struggles among their students, and accept without reservation the customary teen routines of teasing, mocking, and bullying. With such tacit toleration of interethnic conflicts and physical and verbal degradation, teachers often become integral

1 Due to the sensitivity of the issues that were explored in the interviews, focus group discussions and field observations, for the most part, it seemed appropriate to use pseudonyms to denote communities, institutions, and persons. Hence, localities, schools and the interviewees are usually referred to by their fictional names. However, the respective names in this study are identical with those that were used in earlier EDUMIGROM-publications, including the recent volume "Ethnic and Social Differences in Education in a Comparative Perspective".

parts of the world of daily discrimination that ethnic minority youths experience inside and outside the walls of the school.

The second essay puts experiences of "othering" into its centre. Although "othering" can affect different groupings of people for different reasons, obviously, it is ethnic minority youth in the first place whose gradually evolving notions of being "different" from the large majority are scrutinised from different angles. Picking up the threads of the opening essay, the structural conditions of being "othered" are explored first. Segregated living in dilapidated urban segments and adjacent schools dominated by ethnic minority students set the stage for hard contours. Being born into such conditions deeply ingrains personal development and the perception of "difference" in comparison to the dominant groups of children and families in the given society. As a consequence, experiences of "otherness" grow in an incremental way to inextricable traits of the personality that help ethnic minority youth to accept it as a "natural" given that their opportunities are distinctly "different" from their "non-othered" majority peers.

Although being "othered" largely carries negative implications, ethnic minority youth, their families, and immediate communities develop a broad array of self-protective responses to the prevailing state of affairs, and often succeed in turning around the meaning of being "differentiated" by strong internal bonds and displays of solidarity and support. At the same time, the strength of such relations is highly dependent on the forces and processes that characterise the given society-at-large. If "othering" takes the form of collective social exclusion and builds both symbolic and actual walls of the ghetto, hardly allowing for an escape from a life of near captivity, then minority communities also tend to be endangered by internal break-ups and the loosening of supportive ties. Reflecting on the sundry structural conditions that forge the ways and patterns of "othering" and that determine the abrasiveness and implied harmfulness of such social practices, this essay introduces how historical divergences among the European societies represented in the EDUMIGROM project are played out in informal and institutionalised patterns of maintaining and reproducing ethnic distinctions. It shows that "othering" might remain within the realm of social distinctions, with mild implications for the personal development and later opportunities of the affected minority groups, provided that society thoroughly observes citizens' rights and allows for the efficient working of the institutions of participatory democracy. At the same time, the discussion also reveals that the institutions for the self-protection and representation of minority interests are often too weak and may become puppets in the hands of the ruling majority that tends to govern them in smoothing the all-round processes of exclusion. Under such conditions, the widely used practices of "othering" serve to limit the scope of choice and mobility, and thus become efficient legitimising factors in maintaining and reproducing socio-ethnic inequalities that are grounded, in turn, in widely accepted notions of differential citizenship.

The third essay looks at the implications of the aforementioned factors and experiences on the formation of ethnic identities and the strategies for mobilising these identities to aspire to different positions in society-at-large. The discussion takes due consideration of the fact that, given the psycho-social conditions of the transient nature of the adolescent construction of personality, the observed trends in identity formation are usually early indications of the developmental traits of the individual that still might take "unexpected" turns or follow paths that are hardly traceable when students are just about to conclude primary education. Despite the wise warnings, the analysis reveals clear clusters

of patterns that become crystallised, yet again, around the structural conditions of stronger or weaker embeddedness in society and along the lines of intergenerational transmission of historically moulded perceptions of "otherness", respectively. The chapter scrutinises the varied strategies of adolescent identity formation against the givens of the prevailing structures of interethnic cohabitation and looks deeply into the role of the immediate agents in the community (schools, neighbourhoods, local civil organisations, etc.) in preparing young people for the roles that they are expected to fulfil in adulthood. The roles in question are, however, far from being uniform. Depending on the generational history of the family, and especially parents' migration experiences and their desires to improve the family's social status through ingraining aspirations for advancement into their children, the patterns of adolescent identity vary from the tacit acceptance of low status to high-flying aspirations for full-fledged integration. Such familial patterns become deeply influenced by the standing of the ethnic minority community as such. If the collective experience of the community implies exclusion that is reinforced by residential segregation and harsh separation in schooling, then the new generation of ethnic minority adolescents is inclined to internalise the collective fate of "outcasts" and refrain from developing the aspirations and behaviours for a breakthrough. Contrarily, if being "othered" does not involve the blocking of social mobility and the closure of opportunities for advancing toward acknowledged paths, occupations, and forms of living in society, then "ethnic otherness" remains just one of the individual traits, and the conditions give rise to identities aspiring for integration on equal grounds. Thus, the importance of historicity becomes demonstrated from yet another angle. It turns out that even the apparently most private aspects of young people's lives are seriously conditioned by large-scale processes and structures in the given society that act as most powerful factors in setting the framework for the choices and opportunities of meeting individual drives and aspirations.

Taken together, the three essays render important implications for the potentials and limitations of schooling in countervailing the seemingly heavy impact of social relations at large in creating, maintaining, and reproducing ethnic distinctions as the legitimised foundations of designating departing prospects for youth in contemporary Europe. Some of the implications will be pointed out in the closing section of this volume that intends to set the stage for a range of policy recommendations that are to be developed in the final phase of the EDUMIGROM project.

## **LIFE AT SCHOOL**

**Claire Schiff, Vera Messing, Bolette Moldenhawer and David Kostlán**

## Introduction

This first chapter examines the ways in which ethnic distinctions and distributions shape the personal relations that make up the everyday school experiences of majority and minority students. As mentioned in the Foreword, both sociological and ethnographical methods were applied by the EDUMIGROM team to conduct the qualitative phase of the research such as personal in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with the most important actors of the educational process (students, their parents, and teachers) as well as participant observations within and outside the schools.

Taking into account the wide array of national and local contexts in which the community studies were carried out, this essay seeks to review and then compare to what extent the antagonistic or harmonious nature of relations between minority students and other school agents are influenced by factors that are independent of – or, on the contrary, dependent upon – particular school settings and actions of various actors. The intrinsic and extrinsic factors that shape life at school shall be observed by adopting a variety of perspectives and by posing a series of questions.

First, we shall describe how the schools, as more or less independent institutional organisations, manage and treat the presence of a substantial number of students belonging to the most stigmatised minority groups. To what extent are various degrees and forms of school segregation the outcome of forces over which the schools have no power, or are schools in and of themselves major agents of segregation?

Following this first point on the manner in which schools approach the education of minority students, we shall reverse the question by asking how minority students view schooling. What kind of role does the school play in their lives and in their future plans, and to what extent is this role determined by the type of treatment they receive in school, as well as by independent factors such as family background and job opportunities?

The third part will analyse the way in which teachers relate to their minority students. After briefly describing the various teaching styles, class atmospheres, and major pedagogical problems, we shall explore how teachers' opinions on their minority students are shaped, first, by factors that may be country-specific reflections on a particular national tradition or ideology; second, by one's own ethnic origin, particular personal sensibilities, and training; and third, by specific school arrangements. Taking into consideration that schools are places for both peer socialisation and academic learning, the fourth and last part of this first essay will examine how students interact with one another and relate to their peers. Here again the discussion will seek to determine the extent to which teenage intra- and interethnic peer relations are shaped by factors that are independent from the schools' actions, such as residential patterns, neighbourhood identities, and the families' and the given community's influence on youth leisure activities.

## The sites of the qualitative research: the schools

In this section the purpose is to provide a cross-country comparative overview of schools included in the community study by looking at how schools are organised, their ethnic and social compositions, their approaches towards ethnic diversity, and finally the implications of the above constellations in everyday life at school. In all the participating countries, the selection of schools was driven by two equally important factors: ethnic composition and recruitment as well as integration policy. As a consequence of this research design, the selection of the sample for the community studies resulted in a wide range of schools with regard to factors such as their types, ethnic and social composition, approach towards diversity, and their position in the local educational market.

Regarding the focal questions of our study, it is of key importance to see the ways in which educational systems are constructed and manifest themselves in a structure built up from various types of schools. Focusing on the target group of the EDUMIGROM research project, the following school types were included: primary schools (in the samples of Central European countries); comprehensive schools integrating elementary, lower, and upper secondary stages (in the samples of Denmark, Sweden, and one school in Germany); or secondary schools (in the samples of the United Kingdom, France, and Germany) (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

Thus, the timing of when students are made to decide where to study next – moreover, channelling students into various tracks of secondary education on the basis of their prior school performance and/or interest, motivation, and aspiration – differs country by country. For instance, by looking at our sample, tracking happens at an extremely early stage in Germany, and it also occurs at a rather young age in the United Kingdom or France. As it turns out, this characteristic of the sample has important implications on the issue under investigation: the life at school in diverse communities. Students who study in secondary schools generally experience more freedom and independence that materialises in less control during the breaks, more individual autonomy as well as demand for individual responsibility than those of their peers of the same age who are just about to conclude primary school. Typically, the former are free to move during the breaks and enjoy themselves in their own way, with as little control as possible: "From the student haunt it is also possible to walk out on the balcony, which overlooks the schoolyard.... During one break a 'pillow fight' is observed. Only one teacher was seen during observations outside the classroom" (school observation, Denmark).

However, students in primary schools (8th and 9th graders in our sample) are most typically controlled throughout their time at school, and both their activities and behaviour are thoroughly supervised by their teachers in and outside of the classroom. In several instances, students are confined to stay in a designated and rigorously controlled area during breaks: "The students [...] are sent out from their rooms, and the door of their room is locked by the teacher" (classroom observation, Romania). Or another example: "There is a lot of noise during the breaks although there is much control from the side of teachers during the breaks" (classroom observation, Czech Republic).

Teachers typically fulfil a double role in primary schools: on the one hand, teaching, and on the other, guarding students as well as supporting them in their way of socialisation. However, in comparison to primary school teachers, the task of secondary school teachers is more focused on teaching as their



primary (often sole) role. Consequently, being a primary school student or, in other words, having more time and space for being a child, implies that students' career aspirations could still be utterly undecided in contrast to their age peers, who have already been tracked into vocational schools, and hence, whose future career opportunities have been limited to a large extent. That is to say that comprehensive schools serve more as a transition: although students are kept together in the same institution during the period of compulsory education, still, at a certain grade they are allowed or even compelled to choose specialisations and vocations in order to try out various roles without being limited to a certain institutional track.

Our samples varied not only in terms of school types, but also regarding the neighbourhoods where they were located. The vast majority of the schools in the sample are situated on the edge or inside an urban housing district characterised by high proportions of ethnic minority families. The communities in which the schools are embedded are characterised by lesser or greater degrees of ethnic-social segregation. The site of study is in some cases overpopulated ethnic minority communities, or with a high degree of interethnic cohabitation. It is mainly the residential and demographic situation in the selected communities that has forged the schools' socio-economic and ethnic compositions. However, the scale of residential separation varies across the participating countries: in some schools (most typically in Sweden and the United Kingdom, but also in Denmark), the schools were situated in a neighbourhood dominantly or exclusively inhabited by migrant groups. Some of the schools (most typically in the Central European countries but also in the United Kingdom and Denmark) were located on the edge of a segregated minority community. Further, there were schools in the sample (again, most typically in the Central European countries) that were situated in an ethnically mixed part of the town. Only a few schools (in the Central European countries, and one in France) were located in the centre of the settlement, in an ethnic majority dominated district.

The neighbourhood of the school has a major impact on everyday life at school: it was shown already by the survey that the neighbourhood where they come from was a major factor, together with their gender, in shaping students' self-identification, and it had an equally significant role in moulding groupings and circles of friendship as well as causing conflict among students. This was especially the case in countries with a post-colonial history, but neighbourhood belonging also carried similar significance at some of the sites in Central Europe. The French research team noted that: "Our initial observations have tended to confirm that for young people local neighbourhood identities and solidarities tend to take precedence over ethnic or racial identities" (Felouzis et al. 2009). Although a common finding across European countries is that school segregation is strongly linked to forms of residential segregation, it also may be the results of other factors and processes. Ways of selection, discussed below, operate in and among schools on the basis of how they are positioned in ethnically mixed localities. In France, for example, it is rather exceptional to leave the given school district, while in other countries families have a high degree of choice in searching for the school that they consider the most appropriate for their children. As a matter of fact, in Central Europe the schools' ethnic composition is shaped by intense flight by majority students away from the units where ethnic minority peers are in large numbers. As a consequence, the schools in the EDUMIGROM community sample also differed significantly in terms of their ethnic and social composition: there were schools in which the dominant majority of students came



from ethnic minority families and there were others that had an ethnically and socially diverse student population. As expected, the above constellations concluded in a wide range of differences in terms of everyday life in school, the framework of socialisation, and future opportunities.

### **The sample: composition and positioning of students from ethnic minority backgrounds**

In the sample of our qualitative inquiries among young people from ethnic minority origin students are from similar socio-economic backgrounds. Though educational inequalities are shaped along similar factors in all the studied countries, implying that largely similar associations prevail between the potential educational carrier of students and their families' socio-economic position, the empirical scope of status is diverging. The neighbourhoods are also characterised by a relatively diverse pallet of occupational positions, e.g., farmers, petty traders, manufacturers, industrial workers, unemployed, day labourers, service employees, and small entrepreneurs. These labour positions do not simply denote differences in community traditions but most importantly indicate niches for survival strategies.

The selected Central European communities can be divided into two or three categories on the basis of social status that is composed of three components: the quality of living condition, labour market status, and parents' level of education. Concerning the investigated ethnic minority group in these countries – Roma – it can be established that it is only the first group of families of the highest status who benefit from more or less regular employment and reasonable living and housing conditions. The other two categories (including the vast majority of the sample) live in underprivileged conditions in crowded and dilapidated homes, have no regular jobs, and most of the adults have poor education. Within the samples drawn from these Central European Roma communities, a significant number of students live in extreme deprivation and suffer from social exclusion.

The research covered several schools that receive students from areas that are social and ethnic slums (a few schools in the Hungarian sample, most of the schools in the Slovakian and the Romanian samples, and all of schools in the Czech sample). The involved families live in spatial segregation, sometimes in desolate housing conditions unsuitable for a dignified human life, least of all children. In certain areas, especially in the Roma "colonies" and slums of Central Europe, housing conditions are vastly overcrowded (6–10 people live in a one- or two-room "apartment") and lack several or all of the basic utilities (sewage, gas, water, heating) essential for human residence in an urban environment. It is easy to imagine how far apart are the worlds and realities of home and school, which materialises in constantly conflicting values and expectations from the two spheres of life of minority adolescents living in such environment. One extreme example is from Romania, where one of the schools from the sample receives students from the ill-famed Roma "colony" situated at the city dump, where 1,800 Roma – among them 800 children – live in desperate circumstances. Only half of these children go to school, some of whom attend the school in our sample. These people live in *favela*-like hovels and "make" their living by salvaging useable parts from the rubbish and selling them to "retailers". Their situation does not vastly differ from the destitute poverty of the "developing" world. More typically, Roma families and migrant interviewees live in spatially (and mentally) separated parts of the city, which are composed of dilapidated urban social rentals or blocks of prefabricated houses. Many of the Roma families live in the inner city or suburban housing estates, which are neglected and where often several families are

squeezed into a single apartment. It is unusual for the families of the ethnic minority interviewees to be integrated in a middle-class, majority environment.

Family and housing conditions obviously have a major impact on the everyday lives of students in the school. Problems that stem from unsuitable living conditions are widespread and intense. These include: truancy, irregular school attendance (most typically the first or last classes are skipped because of an often troublesome start to the day, and/or because of the need to contribute to parents' work during the afternoon), socially risky phenomena such as drugs and alcohol; a lack of preparedness concerning the school work and equipment; lack of food or suitable clothing, behavioural problems, etc. As teachers put it:

They do not have any habits, connected to school. The parent hammers away all day, comes home, there are seven children. Parents do not have energy to take care of them. I work here one month and I see that none of the children study at home. They close the book here and open it also next day in school[...] at home nothing" (focus group with teachers, Czech Republic).

The problem is that [...] the children don't see an example to be followed. They don't see that their parents go to work every morning and are paid regularly for that work" (teacher, Hungary).

Many of the schools consider issues that stem from both destitute housing conditions and family background as out of their authority and identify the parents as the only agents responsible for upbringing. Several schools are unwilling and also unable to deal with these problems, and concentrate their activity exclusively on tuition. As put by a teacher in Romania: "Everything comes from the family, from their home environment; the interest of parents is very low. The school is not able to change the inequalities among families existing outside the school."

However, some of the schools, especially primary schools with a high degree of sensitivity towards difficult living conditions, recognise that if they do not attempt to handle such problems they are going to be unsuccessful in fulfilling their major task, that of teaching.

The socio-economic composition of students in the Danish, Swedish, and German community study samples is somewhat more favourable, but they still comprise the lowest strata of the respective society: a significant proportion of students in the selected schools in these countries are regarded as socially disadvantaged. The majority of the parents is unemployed or earns minimum wage; however, others are self-employed. There is a high proportion of students from families where neither of the parents continued education beyond the primary level. There are families that manage to apply strategies to achieve territorial/social mobility and move out from the socially disadvantaged district. Additionally, since education is considered as the most important medium for social mobility, the more enhanced one's socio-economic position, the stronger is the motivation to move away from the suburbs that are segregated and densely populated, which is the case in some countries such as Denmark or Sweden, and, as seen above, also among several Roma communities in Central Europe. In Germany, the socio-economic status of half of the selected immigrant families with a Turkish or Lebanese background is

heavily influenced by either unemployment (8 out of 28 families) or by an employment situation that does not provide the necessary minimum income for a decent living (4 out of 28 families). At least 13 families live on welfare assistance.

The selected minorities from a post-colonial background in France and in the United Kingdom are generally more settled in terms of residence and labour market position. In France, the sample includes mostly minorities originally from the Maghreb or with a North African background, and in the United Kingdom, it includes minorities of Caribbean and Pakistani backgrounds. The Pakistanis in the United Kingdom are recruited from different social strata that reflect the unequal distribution of power in British society. The majority of the students live in socially deprived areas and the sample of parents ranges from the unemployed to blue-collar workers, e.g., taxi drivers, to professionals. Pakistani *castes* bear a major significance in terms of social standing within their community. Considering the professions and employment status of the students' families in the French sample the social spectrum seems narrower than in the case of the United Kingdom: the great majority of interviewees come from the lower social strata of society. At least two-thirds of the fathers occupy blue-collar jobs, like manual labourers or employees at the lower ranks, while the same proportion of mothers are housewives and/or have unqualified, part-time jobs, e.g., in the cleaning or housekeeping sectors. Only a few parents are qualified professionals, such as nurses, engineers, or policemen. Furthermore, it is worth noting that many of those parents who have worked as qualified professionals in their home country did not succeed in finding jobs at a similar level in France. An important finding is that the range of educational levels is much wider among immigrant parents than among non-immigrant parents in the French sample, and also much wider than their outlined labour market and socio-economic positions. The apparent homogeneity of the sample's socio-economic status tends, therefore, to mask a wide variety of situations as long as we simply define profiles by the position occupied in France. A few parents, for instance, those who have less education, may have experienced significant upward social mobility through emigration, while some others, particularly among the highly educated, may have, on the contrary, experienced significant downward social mobility. Thus a consideration exclusively limited to the positioning of parents in immigrant countries is obviously too narrow, since educational, social, and family status in emigrant countries are also factors of importance that have to be taken into account when explaining educational success or failure among their children

### **Variations in the selection and recruitment of students and in the extent of ethnic diversity**

For the most part, the selected schools are either ethnically heterogeneous or are dominated by ethnic minority youth. The picture is somewhat different, however, in Central Europe. Here, Roma students appear in a scattered pattern: depending on the varying school policies and arrangements, the overall proportion of Roma students ranges from 10 to 90 per cent. The latter configuration, that is institutionalised racial segregation, provides the ideological foundation for "special schools" in the Czech Republic (however, it is worth noting that, despite recent governmental efforts for desegregation, there also is one school in the Hungarian sample that is guided by the same principle). More typically, the proportion of Roma in the selected schools ranges from 20 to 40 per cent, but as it will be demonstrated later in this section, these ratios do not imply that Roma children study together with their majority peers.

Concentration of ethnic minority youth is much stronger in our school samples in the Western European communities: here, it is 30 to 90 per cent of the students who belong to ethnic minority groups, with compositions typically bending towards the upper end of the scale. These high proportions follow from two independent factors: first, in many of the schools chosen for the sample, such as in upper secondary schools, the streaming of students into tracks has already been completed (Germany, the United Kingdom, and France); second, residential segregation is powerful in the urban areas that have been selected for the study.

The discussion below will attempt to give an overview of both of the indicated processes and will introduce some of the implications for everyday life at school. The presentation will apply a framework that utilises two significant dimensions with regard to the construction of various constellations of ethnic and social differentiation within school and students' immediate classroom environment. The first is the school's attitude towards diversity, while the second is ethnic composition of the institution. As it will be shown, these two components seem to make up a sophisticated framework for exploring the effects of given school arrangements on both a personal and a community level, and also for pointing out the power of school in challenging the prevailing social and ethnic differences.

The research revealed three major clusters of attitudes towards ethnic diversity: (1.) diversity-conscious schools; (2.) schools that are diversity-blind; and (3.) schools which deliberately separate ethnic minority students from their majority peers. Although the range of schools according to their ethnic composition is broad in our sample, for the purposes of the analysis that follows, we will cluster them with some simplification into two groupings, and make distinctions between schools with an ethnically mixed student body, on the one hand, and schools dominated by ethnic minority youth, on the other.

### **Ethnically mixed schools applying internal separation**

Some schools, especially in the Central European countries, try to counterbalance the process of "white flight" and its consequences by introducing or strengthening internal separation. Such separation may have diverse motives and justifications, but the outcome is still the same: ethnic minority and socially disadvantaged children are placed into classes and programmes that run parallel to those that are attended by students from better-off families of the majority. A frequent justification is that internal separation is a necessary evil in order to prevent the school from an even worse outcome: becoming a segregated school for Roma. "The most important aim was to artificially maintain the 'pre-merger state' and act as if nothing had happened. That is to say that Roma children were separated from the ethnic majority, and the parents of the latter were convinced that 'everything was the same as usual'", reports a school principal about the motives behind the decisions made after her school was merged with a "Roma-only" school (teacher interview, Hungary).

Another frequent justification for internal separation is given by applying meritocratic principles in organising various streams by specialisation. Even if there is an agreement across political divides on supporting integrated education, most primary schools in Central Europe group students into different classes according to their first language or school performance. In schools with parallel classes, the social and ethnic composition of the class determines its requirements and prestige: the more Roma students there are, the less demanding is the class. With two exceptions (one in Hungary and one in Romania)

children from ethnic minority backgrounds rarely make it to the more prestigious classes. The “flipside” of the above-described practice is the following: “We created a sort of ‘classy’ class [...] All the time, many teachers, including myself, noticed that we had not created a good atmosphere. So we gathered the best students into the one class and teachers do not want to teach in the B, C, and D classes, because it’s rubbish” (school principal, Hungary).

The same process is at work in the other direction: minority students from a disadvantaged social background are concentrated in low-prestige classes. The concentration of students with low motivation suggests that both ethnic minority students and their non-Roma classmates have similarly poor results and low school performance in these arrangements. As a consequence, the chance to pull these young people towards more intensive study is diminished. As time goes by, it becomes increasingly challenging to motivate them, and practices of segregation lead to damaging outcomes: low school performance, worrisome indicators of educational advancement, high truancy and drop-out rates, and a stigmatised, and thereby interiorised, sense of “otherness”. Furthermore, occurrences of open conflicts, such as bullying, hostility, and fights among students of parallel classes are also frequent consequences of the skewed ethnic and social composition of such classes. That is to say, conflicts are more frequent in segregated communities than in ones characterised by a balanced socio-ethnic composition.

Additionally, teachers frequently lose control in such classes and often consider teaching as a punishment: they are unable to maintain discipline or to motivate students to fulfil the minimum requirements. Even though teachers’ attitudes (rudeness or ignorance) may also be at the centre of criticism in the public discourse about education, according to our experience, none of the interviewees blamed the teachers for poor results. Parents rather pointed out the tendency of teachers to pay more attention to successful students than to those with bad results, and also remarked that they very often made the distinction between good and bad Roma students depending on their families’ inclination to cooperate with the school. In cases where parents cooperate, the school is more prepared to support weaker students, to forget their problems, and to promote regular continuation of their study. Success and failure are thus deliberately preconditioned by parents’ attitudes and behaviour.

In some schools segregated Roma classes are isolated in distant or separate parts of the school building. Such a decision is usually triggered by the intention to halt “white flight”. A telling example is one of the schools in the Czech sample where the merger of a school, characterised by a middle-class majority student body, with a “Roma” school resulted in the massive departure of 140 non-Roma students, despite the fact that the merge was solely administrative, as students of the two pre-merger schools remained separated in distinct classes in separate buildings. There are schools in the Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian samples that practice physical separation of ethnic minority students. “Those classes are located in a different wing of the school and they almost never meet students from the special classes. They only observe them from the window as they very often do some gardening outside. ‘Standard’ students shout at them and they shout back” (Kusá 2009).

Although such separation might have prevented the school from becoming an infamous “Roma-only” school, their students suffer disproportionately: the comparative analysis of the survey data (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010) and the respective community studies of Slovakia, Romania, and

Hungary (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010b, Vincze 2010, Neményi et al. 2010) have demonstrated that internal segmentation and/or segregation deprive students not only of quality education and meaningful interethnic personal relations, but also of their dignity and self-esteem. Furthermore, decisions on keeping Roma students apart seem to cause the most interethnic conflicts in the long run. The words of a student who was threatened with being sent to an ethnically segregated class are telling of the psychological load attached to segregation: "It's a humiliation to get into this class."

In countries of economic migration, many of the selected schools receive children from recently arrived migrant families. Although several of these schools manage to separate newcomers (Denmark, Sweden), such divisions are supposed to be only temporary and efforts are quickly made to enhance their language skills and to provide accommodation for their new circumstances. Most typically, these schools run one or several transitory classes specifically designed for newcomers to give them time to learn the language and adjust to the culture of the receiving country as well as to acquire the basic skills necessary for later integration into regular classes. An important trait of this system is that students attending such transitory classes receive extensive pedagogical support and individual counselling in order to speed up their adjustment to the new circumstances. After some time (one to two years) students are integrated into regular classes; consequently, such separation does not lead to outcomes comparable to the case of the ethnic segregation of Roma students in Central Europe.

### **Segregated schools**

Schools in this cluster include those that are attended by an ethnic minority population due to deliberate segregation intentions of the involved institutions. There are few such schools, mainly in the countries of Central Europe. Although legal regulations as well as policy measures intend to limit ethnic segregation in education as a form of discrimination, it has continued to thrive. The phenomenon is most prevalent in the Czech Republic where the concentration of Roma children in certain school types, such as Basic Practical Schools, is extremely high.<sup>2</sup> The practice of stigmatising Roma children as mentally disabled and then placing them in special schools is similar in Slovakia: 60 per cent of Roma children study in such institutions (Amnesty International 2010). Ethnically segregated schools also exist to a smaller, though still significant, extent in Romania and Hungary. With few exceptions, making the transition from special schools to regular schools hardly ever occurs. This is even more painful, since, due to lower expectations and reduced curriculum, these schools serve as a dead end to the educational carrier of their students. The paradox is that all parties involved in the educational process are interested in maintaining this harsh form of segregation: local elected officials can satisfy the demands for segregation from their local middle-class electorate; teachers of regular schools are happy that they do not have to bother with problematic children; and teachers in schools providing special education are satisfied to be employed and make use of their special qualifications. Roma parents appear to often choose to enrol their children in special schools that they consider as "safe", and furthermore, where their children are faced with lower expectations and a less demanding curriculum but also with a relaxed environment. Still these schools

<sup>2</sup> To give an example, it was challenging enough for the research team to find the required number of Roma children in regular primary schools. Finally, the team included some Basic Practical Schools in its sample.



do not meaningfully contribute to breaking the vicious circle of low-quality education and long-term deprivation. Similar to their parents, the majority of the students attending segregated schools foresee a future of being marginalised on the labour market and confined to social exclusion.

### **Ethnically mixed schools with a colour-blind approach**

Schools primarily in Central Europe and France fall into the category of ethnically mixed schools with a colour-blind approach. Given the principle of non-differentiation of citizens on the basis of their ethnic origin, which is the heart of the French republican model of integration, schools avoid making a distinction between worthy and unworthy students according to such criteria, nor do they consider the need for introducing differential services for minority students (Schiff et al. 2008). However, a form of quasi-tracking takes place early in the educational process and channels students with various social and ethnic backgrounds into diverging paths of further schooling. Students of lower social status and from migrant families tend to enter lower-prestige vocational schools, while students from a middle-class French or, to a lesser extent, from a Maghrebian background continue their studies in higher-prestige schools.

The principals of ethnically mixed schools believe that the recognition of ethnic differences leads to their reinforcement. Hence, ethnically mixed classes are the norm and all students are expected to adapt to the same values and rules: no ethnic group is discriminated against, either in a positive or negative way, and no classes or curricula involve cultural, traditional, or language differences. Students easily accept such an approach in most of the cases and do not make distinctions based on ethnicity. In the French case, students were reticent to speak about their ethnic background and identity. In the same manner, Roma students in mixed colour-blind schools preferred to use other than ethnic categories in order to talk about their families and self-identity. Still, ethnicity does not vanish from their everyday life. Even in such schools, students tend to group together with youths of the same ethnicity; they are aware of the negative consequences of their belonging and have experienced discrimination and prejudice outside of school. It follows that even in the case of students in ethnically mixed schools, future aspirations are strongly shaped by the students' ethnic origins.

### **'Minority' schools with a colour-blind approach**

These schools suffer most frequently from consequences of residential segregation and "white flight". Many of the schools in Central Europe, one school in the Danish sample, two schools in France and all of the schools in the German sample fall into this cluster. Despite parents' often unrestricted right for choosing the school for their child, regardless of the catchment area where they belong, border-crossing mainly serves upward-aspiring, middle-ranked social groups among the ethnic majority who attempt to achieve better positions for their children. In fact, the recognition of the right to free choice – under the circumstances of socio-economic inequalities – leads to the departure of the better-off students from these areas and ghettoises ethnic minority communities. As a matter of fact, the choice of the school becomes an imprint of one's socio-economic and ethnic background as well as expresses one's future aspirations. This illustrates how socio-economic position and cultural conceptions are both reinforcing

one another while excluding disadvantaged people from the chance of competing for positions with their peers from more affluent backgrounds.

Selection in and among schools is massively affected by processes of "white flight". The phenomenon exists in all the countries; however, its weight differs by the nature of the catchment areas in question, the quality of interethnic relations, and the extent of prejudice and interethnic tensions. Middle-class parents from the ethnic majority seem to be extremely sensitive to the presence of Roma students in schools in Central Europe. As a consequence of both the institutional reorganisation of schools and changes in the proportion of ethnic minority or socially disadvantaged students, "white flight" took place immediately and in very intense forms, even in those cases where the school made significant efforts to reverse the process (i.e., introduced internal separation or streaming). Massive departure of students from the majority severely affected several schools in Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia, which became "Roma-only" schools within a short while. A similar situation, however, brought about only a slight leakage of ethnic majority students from one of the Danish schools in the sample, where the proportion of ethnic minority students increased from 30 to 40 per cent subsequent to a closure of a "migrant" school and the collision of the two schools' catchment areas.

Secondary schools in the French and German samples belong to this category as well as another Danish school. In France, it is not only "white flight" but tracking and internal selection that has resulted in the construction of "minority" schools.

Students from ethnic minority backgrounds are more likely to feel frustrated by the fact that their choices are limited in terms of further education. In France, students belonging to the selected minority groups, particularly those who have been placed into vocational programmes, often begin their upper-secondary school career with a feeling of having been negatively selected and unjustly constrained in their educational options. This frustration can be experienced in the German and Danish cases where residential segregation goes along with migrant families' school preferences for a minority dominant student population. Following the above, students never expressed their dissatisfaction with attending a "minority-only" school: "they appreciated to be in a school that is attended mostly by students from a minority background. Being numerically in domination seems to give them the comfortable feeling of being in a relatively strong position and this makes them less vulnerable to discrimination" (Srrassburger and Ucan 2009).

None of the French, Danish, and German schools applied a multicultural curriculum or seemed to be committed to ethnic diversity. Some, however, provided extra classes for mastering the majority's language. (All schools in the German and one school in the Danish sample had a special focus on teaching German/Danish as a second language.)

The comparison of these cases leads to the conclusion that, besides the actual class composition or teaching methods, the way in which students are selected into a minority school is an important factor that allows students to identify themselves with the school. If students perceive that they were selected into a less prestigious institution and then they internalise this sense of dissatisfaction, they develop aversion towards the school and lose their ambitions. In contrast, if students feel that the school was their choice – even if the school is positioned in the lower echelons of the local educational market – adolescents express a more positive attitude toward the school, and all the more, teaching appears to be easier



despite its diversity. Still the educational outcome in both cases is rather disappointing: students studying in "minority-only" schools perform significantly worse than their peers in ethnically mixed schools (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

### **Ethnically mixed schools with a diversity-conscious approach**

The majority of the schools in the samples in the United Kingdom and Denmark as well as one Hungarian and one Romanian school fall under this category. These schools try to enhance both equal opportunities and peaceful relations among students by developing and designing a multicultural curriculum and boosting positive self-identification of groups that are usually underprivileged in the wider society. Such schools carefully and truly integrate students of various ethnic and social backgrounds and make sure that the division of students into parallel classes does not result in the concentration of any ethnic or social groups.

All schools in the United Kingdom are ethnically mixed secondary or comprehensive schools with a considerable proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds. Despite the fact that these schools occupy various positions in the educational market and model great variations in interethnic relations (one is an elite school, with a huge inflow of low-status ethnic minority students coming from a different catchment area, another school is a truly multiethnic school, while the catchment area of the third school maps strong interethnic divisions), all the schools are successful at handling ethnic and social diversity. Even in a school where parents from the majority described the conflicts where ethnic differences played a role, "diversity was appreciated and positively valued" and its aim was "to help students [...] to comprehend and celebrate the multicultural nature of the city's society" (Swann and Law 2010).

These words were not a superficial manifestation of the recognition of diversity, but ones that express an everyday experience of students and staff. Diversity-consciousness was reflected in all spheres of school life: in the curriculum, in extracurricular activities, in school celebrations, classroom activities, and also in interethnic relations at school.

The teaching staff of diversity-conscious schools tend to show a real commitment towards multiculturalism: most of these schools employ ethnic minority teachers and staff whose task is primarily to deal with issues and problems stemming from ethnic and social diversity. One of the Danish schools has an ethnic counsellor position whose duty is to mediate and deal with issues of an ethnic character as well as to provide a forum in which ethnic minority parents gain easier access to school-related matters.

Along the line of ethnic diversity one should pay close attention to other types of heterogeneity as well: the above-mentioned Danish comprehensive school has students from the age of 7 to the age of 17, and therefore prioritises the collaboration of students from different age groups: "As an example, in every class, 8th and 9th grade students are educated to become student mediators guiding and taking care of the younger students" (School Case Study, Denmark). Consequently, cooperation among various groups of students as well as links between teachers and students facilitate good interethnic relations and create a rather relaxed atmosphere at the school.

The case of the few diversity-conscious schools in Central Europe is somewhat different. A good example is a school in Hungary that provides education for children living in a poverty-stricken urban

slum area and introduced a highly prestigious German multilingual track, which attracts also middle-class white families. Quite unique to the region, the school principal is dedicated to the reduction of inequalities stemming from social differences among students' family backgrounds and translates her dedication into a diversity-conscious approach. The pattern works pretty well: students of various social and ethnic backgrounds are distributed into parallel classes with ethnically mixed compositions. Multiculturalism is practiced during the classes (multicultural curriculum, innovative pedagogical approaches to teaching a socially and ethnically diverse student population) as well as during extracurricular activities (Roma dance club, excursions). Further, the school aims at establishing a friendly and cooperative relationship with Roma families and the composition of the staff also reflects a diversity-conscious approach: earlier the school had a Roma teacher and now there are several teachers in employment who studied Romany language and culture at university. In a regional comparison, this school is doing well in reducing ethnic divisions, offering a comfortable, friendly environment, and providing equal opportunities. However, comparing it with schools in Western Europe, the results are weak: friendships are primarily formed along same-ethnic lines and future prospects are strongly shaped by the family backgrounds of the students. Still, this school is the only one in town in which disadvantaged Roma students have a true chance for educational and social mobility.

Interestingly, irrespective of the country, diversity-conscious schools are the ones in which ethnicity as such plays a minor role in everyday life of students due to the fact that by expressing and promoting diversity, ethnic background does not become an important factor forming differences between students.

### **'Minority' schools with a diversity-conscious approach**

Muslims in Denmark and Germany, and Roma in the Ghandi Secondary School, a community-established Roma grammar school in Hungary, would belong to this cluster. Such schools represent cases of voluntary separation, by being established with the intention to serve a certain ethnic or religious community. Unfortunately, for various reasons, none of these schools have been included in our community study samples. Among regular public schools, only one school in Sweden can be perceived as belonging to this category due to both its student composition and the emphasis on issues of ethnic background. This school has become a "minority school" as a result of the powerful residential segregation typical for the urban district where it is located. Its staff is multicultural and a significant number of ethnic minority teachers work with students: the school employs teachers with over 18 different mother tongues.

The presence of ethnic minority teachers might be an important factor for students: teachers who themselves experienced how it feels being a migrant are more likely to understand and treat empathically such instances. One such teacher said in an interview that he used his own stories and experiences in both his teaching and informal chats, which on the one hand comforted the situation of the students, and on the other, eased his relationship with them. In this Swedish school the ethnic composition of the student body is very heterogeneous in terms of students' countries of origin, encompassing students from Iraq, Somalia, Turkey, Albania, North Africa, South America, and Europe. Students' ethnic identity and their thoughts about ethnicity appeared to be significant here and have been taken seriously by all those who were involved in the educational process. As a result, the school applied a multicultural curriculum,

organised various extracurricular activities, and stressed good relations with migrant families. However, several students expressed their concerns during the interviews about the ethnic composition of classes that lack local Swedish students and thus fail to provide the possibility of socialising with Swedes. They were especially concerned about being able to adjust to their new circumstances after graduation. As put by a teacher : "These young people fear meeting Swedish society and the Swedes".

## **The role of ethnicity in shaping attendance and performance at school: a comparative analysis**

This section devotes itself to a revealing cross-country analysis that finds ethnicity, in its intersection with prevailing social divisions, to be a most powerful factor in affecting attendance and performance at school, and moreover, moulding the opportunities, aspirations, and prospects of adolescents. From the study on the comparative analysis of the survey data we learned that the selected communities "are typical working-class communities where blue-collar jobs provide a living to 55 per cent of the fathers and 43 per cent of the mothers, with the relatively high occurrence (above 10 per cent) of homemaking in the latter group." Furthermore, it was found that "the landscape of the schools shows deep fault-lines by socio-economic and ethnic compositions", and lastly that the communities where ethnic minority people make up a substantial group are characterised by a remarkable polarisation according to the level of education; while the dominance of low educational attainment is more pronounced for the minority groups than for the local majority, the case is just the opposite with regard to the proportion of those with higher education where the lead is taken by the majorities (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

The aim here is to gain a deeper insight into tendencies, indicated already in the study presenting the comparative analysis of the survey data (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010), by exploring the students' own frames of reference within the multi-layered experiences of schooling. The analysis will largely be based on the findings of the nine Community Studies. The point of departure is to ask how and why ethnicity comes so much to the forefront of social differentiation in and around education. Though we know that ethnicity is a powerful dimension of social, economic, and institutional structuring of inequality, the purpose here is to investigate how the principles and structures of inequality among young people are produced and reproduced through school practices.

The discussion in this section will be organised around the concepts of field, capital, and strategy, taken from Pierre Bourdieu and his analysis of the present "educational malaise". According to Bourdieu, "educational malaise" is rooted in the poor adaptation of the school systems to conditions that have utterly changed since the expansion of mandatory school attendance in many European countries: schools suddenly were faced with a massive inflow of social categories that previously had been excluded, either by their own will or by certain social practices to deprive them from engaging in academic enterprise (Bourdieu and Champagne 1999: 421–426). One of the most paradoxical effects of this process of "democratisation" has been the discovery of the existence of disadvantaged and previously excluded students who are the victims of conservative functions of the supposedly liberating school system. By

prolonging and consequently facilitating the process of integration and differentiation, the school system turns into a permanent home for potential outcasts, who bring to it the contradictions and conflicts associated with a type of education that is an end in itself. After an extended school career, often entailing considerable sacrifice, students from ethnic minority backgrounds and from the lower strata of the social hierarchy will start with the disadvantage of being devalued. The exclusion seems to be even more violent since social identity tends to be defined by the school system, and moreover, socially diverse experiences can easily be turned into cultural "otherness" where the differences are taken as "habitual" ones. In earlier EDUMIGROM studies, we discussed this social dilemma between an ethos of "schooling for all", on the one hand, and patterns of "exclusion from within" in relation to the differentiation procedures that take place at an ever-younger age, on the other hand, from a structural and institutional perspective. Here the social dilemma will be discussed from a student perspective and divided into two sections, the first based on strategies of educational incorporation and the second by analysing educational impacts on future plans. The questions of analysis in this part are the following: How does life at school influence students' future educational pathways? In comparison to their more fortunate and successful peers, what are the familial conditions and prevalent personal histories of those young people who face an outstandingly high risk of dropping out at an early stage, or who openly express opposition to the prevailing institutional arrangements and are determined to leave behind education prior to the next stage?

### **Strategies of educational incorporation**

We have constructed three diverging strategies of educational incorporation among the selected ethnic minorities. We use the notion of strategy as an analytical device to understand the students' positioning, and how their actions are conditioned by an accumulation of certain orientations, capitals, and dispositions. The point drawing from this notion of strategy is that the students' actions are not solely supported by consciousness, but also based on practical knowledge of what is possible (and impossible) within the scope provided by the accumulation of personal and cultural history. The strategies work as a set of dimensions across a continuum between relations of classification, strong or weak, that according to Bernstein marks the distinguishing features of a context. Classification "orientates the speaker to what is expected and what is legitimate in that context" (Bernstein 1996: 106). Some students will depend on the accumulation of capital (economic, cultural, and social capital) and are, more or less, unaware or unsure of what is expected from them when they go to school. They either fail to recognise the distinguishing features that provide the school with its unique attributes or are excessively oriented toward profiting from the differences between the family context and the school context.

The strategies are referred to as a strategy of commitment, a strategy of instrumentation, and a strategy of opposition. To further develop varieties within each of those strategies, we draw on Bernstein's concept of framing, originally defined in terms of the locus of control over the selection, sequencing, pacing, and criteria of the discourse to be acquired. While the principle of classification attempts to establish, maintain, and relay power relations on the basis of the recognition of rules, the principle of framing attempts to maintain and control relations on the basis of the realisation of rules through both the transmission of skills (instrumental order) and the transmission of conduct, character, and manner (the expressive order). As framing referring to "the controls of two embedded discourses:

an instructional discourse transmitting specific skills and their relation to each other, and a regulative discourse transmitting the rules of social order" (ibid.: 104), we can divide the strategies along the line of being more or less predominated by the significance of either social relations (regulative discourse) or the skills to be acquired (instructional discourse). These may be considered as different structures of narratives about everyday life, schooling, and educational career, and are intended to set up a framework across a continuum of relations of classification and framing.

### **Strategy of commitment**

A strategy of commitment is applied by students who strongly subordinate other interests to those of schooling in order to go beyond the school's or their parents' expectations. These students live a strictly disciplined life. It seems paradoxical that they make decisions based on options that, rationally speaking, are not available to them. However, students envision a future and believe that its attainment and realisation depends on one factor that is they themselves. They are motivated by the pragmatic view that their chances are greater than in reality and this view allows them to succeed in realising their opportunities. If they fail, they do not hold teachers and schools responsible for their failure. By placing the top priority on education, they become the best customers of the educational system. Some students might break free from social obligations if those hamper their advancement, while other students keep close contact with their families since their own success is considered as the success of the family as a whole. They can expect some academic backing from home depending on the previous educational career paths in the family and their contributions to the family's social positioning and, additionally, they may receive emotional support and a great deal of encouragement from their parents and relatives.

In the EDUMIGROM Community Studies, it has been described how the so-called "Romanianised Roma" have developed an identity strategy with the concept of integration at its core, and view schooling as an instrument for Roma emancipation. They consider schooling as a necessary means to social mobility and also as a guarantee to obtain a secure life. However, many of them are doubtful as to whether the right path toward these ends leads through dedicated studying or through early engagement in hard work. Considering the Hungarian community, we learned that a minor part of the Roma students could follow the strategy of commitment. Among them, defined as the "integrated" type, we found relatively well-performing students attending classes with the ethnic majority and who are able to adapt to the school environment. Being Roma is not a constituent part of their self-image and efforts towards social integration are the necessary outcome of outside factors that threaten their identity, such as discrimination. Similar to the above, the Slovakian sample reveals that almost all the excellent students come from families of solid socio-economic backgrounds. Although there are just a few students in the sample with excellent school results, the findings here highlight the fact that there is no waste of talents: all students with good grades plan to study further, attend university, and attain an academic certificate. Many of them, especially girls, receive moral support from their parents; however, some also have shared with us their doubts and discouragement "that I am first of all a Roma and a Roma woman has never achieved anything" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010a). An 8th-grade student in grammar school said once that his ambition was to continue studying at the Police Academy, but at the same time he wished to live in the United Kingdom with his cousin: "He has a wonderful life. They prosper indeed. They are

cool about it. I would like to go there if there is possibility, so finish the studies here or either continue my studies there or find a job there. And live there" (ibid.).

In countries of economic immigration, e.g., in Germany and Denmark, we also found students from a Muslim background devoted to the strategy of commitment. They generally feel rather comfortable about schooling and want to continue their studies at the higher level. They describe themselves as being focused and have a clear as well as explicit vision of both their school career and future opportunities. They describe school in positive terms and appreciate those teachers who set the standards high and make students able to achieve it. Their idea about success in school is closely linked to an idea of "doing well", in other words: getting good grades, having a high average, being active in class, and being academically gifted. They do also emphasise the importance of having "the right" friends as a dimension of being successful, but do not find ethnicity is of importance. One Muslim girl with a Turkish background says: "If one takes care of oneself and does the homework and participates in the classes, then it doesn't matter what country one comes from. It's up to the person to show who he or she is and not talk so much about their background" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). Another example is provided by a Muslim boy from a Somali background. His parents are both well educated. His father is a veterinarian by degree and his mother studied economics in Somalia. However, none of them have been able to utilise their education in Denmark and have been employed as unskilled labour since they arrived. This student is considering his educational career as "a natural state of affairs". He describes how his parents support him to have a university degree, and since an educational career is considered to be a factor in the family's social positioning, he feels compelled to go to higher education. Additionally, the above-described student is grateful for the fact that he has the opportunity to study in Denmark, whereas the rest of his family in Somalia lacks any prospects of education. He likes the school and his class, and he describes his teachers as supportive, and claims that "the teachers look at who you are, not which country you are from". Furthermore, his knowledge about Islam in lessons of religious studies appears to be academically profitable. Finally, his positive identity is strongly linked to his school performance: "It's one thing to do well with your friends and another thing to do well with high grades and to learn something. If I do badly, then I feel bad about myself" (ibid.).

In the German sample, the situation of Muslim students dedicated to the strategy of commitment is strongly influenced by the school system of early tracking, meaning that they rarely dare to contradict the advice of their teachers and to choose a school by themselves. One Muslim girl with a Turkish background told that her teachers were against her decision to go to gymnasium since she was wearing a headscarf in primary school. The teachers said, she explains: "You will never succeed there!" (Strassburger 2009). However, her parents supported her and she managed to enrol in a gymnasium that had been the school of both her mother and aunt. Similar to the above, a Muslim female student refused to follow her teachers' advice and to continue education in a Realschule. Supported by her elder brother and her father, she continued at a gymnasium and is actually one of the most successful students in her class.

### **Strategies of instrumentation**

The strategy of instrumentation is typical for students who come from families with a small amount of educational capital along with a commitment to support and encourage their children. In this case



adolescents are less able to recognise the distinguishing features of the school than the students described within the strategy of commitment. Whereas the classification between the context of family and the context of school is getting weaker, the principle of the framing regulates the transmission of the appropriate practice within the school context. In concrete terms, framing regulates the realisation rules for producing contextually-specific schooling practices according to the relations and distributions of skills (instructional discourse) and/or the significance of social relations (regulative discourse).

#### *Instrumentation strategy subjected to the significance of social relations*

The strategy of instrumentation among students predominated by the significance of social relations is primarily found in ethnically mixed or minority schools with a diversity-conscious attitude (see the previous section on the types of schools). Since those school contexts are seen as tolerant towards "difference" and diversity, minority students often express their feeling of safety and appreciate the fact of not being positioned as the "Other". Although students in this category generally do not question the value of schooling, they do, however, find the school boring, and for this reason pay more attention to the significance of peer relations. Attending school can also be a part of an alternative strategy toward establishing a career beyond the educational requirements. The direction among boys can be to enter into a local family-run business either in the country of immigration or of emigration. For instance, this has been the case for some students in the Swedish sample who are thinking of moving back to their countries of emigration in the future. They see this as a way out from a future scenario of segregated marginalisation in Sweden. Some students clearly express the desire to move because they consider their opportunities in Sweden to be limited, especially students from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Others mention discriminatory structures in a general way and not in relation to their own lives. Instead, they strive towards living close to their relatives. Life in Sweden is seen as a preliminary residence, and a way to reach a higher social position once they return to their home country. Generally, they consider education as a tool to achieve social mobility. Students of this category are usually more inclined to hold the schools and teachers responsible for their failure, and therefore also emphasise the importance of being recognised by the teachers.

These students do not aspire to achieve academic success at school. Although they are equipped with all the required skills, they are less sure about the upcoming decisions with regard to further education. That is to say, they seem to find it difficult to put all possible choices into one perspective. In the Romanian case, some Roma students, who live in close contact with their families and have an extended network of relationships, express the importance of schooling and the relevance of getting on well with teachers as well as the desire to continue their studies after the 8th grade. Schooling is seen as the only tool for equalising opportunities for the Roma. One parent, who finished only five classes, said: "Romanians or Hungarians should not believe that they have more fingers than we have; they should not treat us as fools; that is why we need to go to school, and to prove that we are their equals. We are gentlemen Gypsies" (Vincze 2010). Another parent stresses that school attendance by Roma is a means by which they might be included and accepted by the majorities. She says: "We are civilised, went to school at least for a while, we are not like the other Gypsies who do not do schooling at all because of their traditions, and Romanians appreciate this; this is why we never had problems of being accepted by our

neighbours, or other Romanians, they did not even believe that I was a Roma" (ibid.). Nevertheless, their experiences of school were not always positive. On the one hand, they are concerned about their life after school and are worried about losing friends and the familiar environment. On the other hand, they seem to be tired of school and find it difficult to see the worth and potential of studying further: due to their low self-esteem they fail to recognise what they are capable of. They also seem to be less organised with their spare time, and are on the whole more interested in spending time with their peers.

The predominant view of education among families with the above-described strategy is that, on the one hand, they regard education as important, and on the other hand, they lack enough incentives for their children. Some families even consider school as harmful to their children since it represents values of the ethnic majority that are rejected by the family. The same approach can be found among Roma families whose socio-economic background and housing condition are fairly stable.

The findings of the Slovakian Community Study highlight that having fun at school, the importance of peer-group relations, and relaxed attitudes towards schooling are an important part of Roma school culture. Regardless of the different "surviving" educational strategies, Roma students generally share their unwillingness to learn and study at home. They are usually more relaxed about their grades, admit that they prefer to group with other Roma in class who have similarly relaxed attitudes towards learning, and manage to maintain high level of self-esteem despite their poor school results. Roma students, on the other hand, value good relations with their teachers in spite of the fact that they do not have pronounced ambitions for upward mobility. When asking Roma students about the qualities of a good teacher, they respond:

[...] she can chat with us in a natural way, does not make differences, is able to explain subject matter, and does not shout at us on every lesson right after she walks in. Not like our biology teacher, Mrs. P., she always comes in and she's like, "I feel like I'm in Gypsy village", so what would you do? She says that at every lesson (...) because it's a shambles in class. But it's not like only we do it, also our schoolmates. Even if class goes okay, she says: "It stinks like in a Gypsy village" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010b).

Those students prefer to have a normal life: a secure, independent living and to be able to provide money for their future family. Another important finding is that Roma students do not reject students who are working hard and manage to perform well at school. They rather underline the importance of being talked to and recognised by the teachers on equal terms with the students of ethnic majorities.

### *Instrumentation strategy subjected to the skills to be acquired*

The selected minorities in the two post-colonial countries – France and the United Kingdom – are in contrast to the countries of economic migration – Denmark, Germany, and Sweden – in terms of the duration of residence by ethnic minority groups. As it was pointed out earlier, there are long-established communities of minorities from Maghrebian and African backgrounds in France, while in the United Kingdom, it is mostly the rather closed communities of Caribbean and Pakistani families that provided the background to the research. In these communities, patterns of intra- and intergenerational mobility



after immigration have shown great variations, with as many instances of ascent as of severe downward turns in status and in living standards.

One can understand why descendents of post-colonial migrants view schooling as the only chance for their children to make a difference. For those students who are heavily influenced by their parents' feelings of failure and disappointment, the school manages to transmit enough hope and aspiration to counterbalance family traumas. Among the Pakistani immigrants in the United Kingdom, those for whom the British education system is unfamiliar hold the system in higher esteem than those who have experiences and feel that the system is weighing against them. In discussing whether parents should support their children to proceed through further education, one parent says:

Yes, I would like them to have further education to become more practiced. Because it is a lot harder out there for people from different ethnic backgrounds because their colour, religion and race, everything comes to it, so they have to try a lot harder than what any other person would (...) I have achieved it, yes, but it was hard, very hard. When you are at the university and you are the only brown face in the class, it is hard. If you have not got your mind over matter you can get pulled into things but it is your choice (...) you go the right way or the wrong way (Swann and Law 2010).

Clearly, education is viewed by the majority of students in the community study sample of the United Kingdom as an essential prerequisite for attaining a higher status in society. It is also clear that students understand the value of working hard at school and progressing through further and higher education. In this sense they did not adopt an anti-school identity. However, while education is viewed as worthwhile, many of the students have average or below average school results. This means that performance shall be viewed through the lenses of pragmatism and persistence, characteristics essential for success.

This is also the case among immigrants living in Denmark and Sweden for whom education is a strategy to escape marginalisation, and thus is a means to facilitate social mobility. The importance of education to students is viewed in light of their parents' experiences being excluded from the labour market. The atmosphere described in the minority-dominated classes is generally positive, based on recognition and helpful teacher-student relationships. We find that students underline the importance of having good teachers with whom they can feel secure, safe, and comfortable. Not only is practical help considered to be important. The students additionally highlight the teachers' supportive attitude and behaviour as a source for them to find strategies to successful schooling. Several of the students, primarily females, feel supported by the teachers, both practically and mentally. In the Swedish case, a female student from a Somali background explains how her focus on education has changed during the past two years, which has been visible in her attitudes and ambitions towards schooling, and also visible in how the teachers have changed previous neglect to positive attitudes towards her. She says that they gave her another chance: "It is like they have seen that I have grown and that I am more mature now. They know that I want to strive for at good upper secondary school and they give me the chance to do so" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2009).

The same attitudes towards schooling can be found among female students with a Somali background in Denmark. For example, one describes the importance of working hard, and of being active during lessons and how she believes, in her own words, that she is "probably one of the smart ones in her class." She explains the importance of doing homework and of handing in assignments by saying: "Because you need all that you've been taught to move on in your life, for instance, if you want to go to high school, then you need to be pretty good at all subjects" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). She states, among others in this category, that her parents want her to do well in school is why she tries the best she can to succeed, also with help from her siblings; however, she adds, "but if one cannot, then one cannot".

Nevertheless, the students express that teachers occasionally set low expectations for them and do not give them real opportunities to improve their skills. They do feel that they have the qualities but they are also very conscious that their performance has to be twice as good as that of the majority students due to their origins. The importance of education can also be approached by asking how students express their gratefulness towards their parents that they have the chance to study or how they perceive the importance of higher education and whether they consider a university degree as a sign of their gratitude towards their parents. The student interviews reveal that individuals have self-confidence, are aware of their own abilities, and have the courage to realise their dreams, for example, to study and work hard in school. Even if the students talk about prejudices in general, they do not relate directly to the existence of discrimination and prejudice in their own lives and in their own educational career. Students with an African background do nonetheless emphasise that they expect to meet barriers when they enter the labour market.

### **Strategies of opposition**

Strategies of opposition can be considered as typical for families living in disadvantaged, segregated neighbourhoods in a poverty-stricken urban or suburban environment. Students tend to perceive school as a hostile and foreign world. Many of them – primarily Roma in countries of Central Europe – are the victims of segregationist policies. The distribution of Roma students is rather uneven among classes in terms of the type of the diploma being prepared for. In Hungary there is a consensus on the implementation of desegregationist policies, but schools continue practicing previous forms of selection that are manifested, for instance, in redirecting certain children to special schools, labelling them as "private students" (a special arrangement by which the student has to present himself only occasionally to sit comprehensive exams), or simply distributing them into classes that apply different curricula. By distinguishing classes with a specialised curriculum from average classes, and by classifying students in groups of "Roma" and "normal" students, embedded in a racial discourse, the reproduction of ethnic and class situations is realised very effectively, yet in a much more subtle and sometimes ambiguous way.

Although none of the minorities selected for the EDUMIGROM qualitative inquiries can be described in Ogbu's framework as "involuntary minorities" including those "who were brought into their present society through slavery, conquest or colonisation" (Gibson 1997: 319), some of the most marginalised members of the selected ethnic minority groups perceive the social, political, and economic barriers against them as part of their undeserved oppression. Certainly, this is the case for those minorities

who chose to live in another country. They believed that their move would lead to economic well-being, more opportunities in all fields of life, and better life chances for their children. The more they experience discrimination and unequal treatment in education, the more they turn to an oppositional frame of reference. Students in unruly classes and who constantly disagree with the teachers might easily feel alienated from the school and develop oppositional strategies.

This pattern is found in the French case where minority students' poor school performance is considered to be the result of an oppositional anti-school behaviour rather than a consequence of their limited potential. While majority students tend to be more thankful to the vocational schools for accepting them despite their poor school record and other limitations, minority students are more likely to hold schools and teachers responsible for sending them to vocational schools, since in addition to being stigmatised, a vocational school offers only limited opportunities for their future careers. This tendency has more to do with the school atmosphere, the streaming and classes in which minority students are enrolled, the length of residency, and the type of neighbourhood in which they have grown up than with their social background. Another finding from the French case is that students from the least desirable classes and who feel the most constrained in their educational prospects tend to refer more to their ethnic, national, or religious origins as a source of pride and to denigrate their peers using racial terminology more than students in more prestigious programs. This does not mean that the higher performing students have a weaker ethnic or religious identity than those who have been negatively selected, but simply that they do not feel the need to assert such an identity as a means of compensating for their inferiority within the educational hierarchy, and that it remains relatively independent of their educational experience and their view of themselves as students (Schiff 2010).

Within the debate over racism and racial discrimination traditional to schools in England, it is described,

how specific ethnic or racial minority groups draw on their own cultural heritages and notions of social, class, gender, and sexuality to actively create a culture of resistance to school while remaining committed to the value of education itself and the importance of obtaining educational qualifications (Stevens 2007: 160).

This pattern is also found in Mac an Ghail's study of a group of Afro-Caribbean girls who valued obtaining educational success but, at the same time, could be perceived as generally anti-school in their oppositional behaviour such as being tardy for lessons, turning in homework late, refusing to participate in group discussions, and chatting together in patois (Brah, Hickman, and Mac an Ghail 1999). Hence, being highly critical of racism and discrimination, these girls responded to such experiences in ways in which they managed to show their commitment towards obtaining educational qualification. As the latter example of oppositional strategy distances but also critically connects students to school, the former outlines an approach that creates and maintains an oppositional culture against the system (against "white-acting" classmates, teachers, the system of schooling as a whole).

In the EDUMIGROM Community Studies, we found this pattern of oppositional strategy subjected to skills that are acquired by parents from a Muslim background in Sweden and Denmark. While the students tend to underscore the rather positive aspects of attending school, some of the parents who

were interviewed have a slightly more critical perspective. One of the parents argues with reference to the teaching methods at school: "In my mind, endless freedom for young children is not a good idea. Control is the most important thing. If there is no control, things can go wrong" [Afghan, male]. Although this is not expressed in the student interviews, we know from the focus group discussions conducted with teachers that a rather large number of ethnic minority students have difficulties navigating within the methodology of problem-orientated teaching. The parents generally express a profound belief in the school and they have some objections primarily concerning the teacher: "Well, I think that some of the teachers have a big influence on the bilingual children (...) some of the teachers, it was racism, that's what it was. It was always the bilingual children that got the blame" [Turkish, female]. This criticism is primarily pointed at some of the teachers who are believed not to fulfil what parents consider important: "If you [teachers] demand something of the students, they too are entitled to demand things of you" (Danish woman, cited in Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). The German case is characterised by an extreme form of segregation that is even more intense in schools than in neighbourhoods. One possible explanation for this could be the phenomena of "white flight", which goes hand in hand with the structurally discriminating effects of a selective school system. Not only does the white middle-class population have relatively little confidence in the school system's capacity to deal with cultural diversity, but also teachers and school staff are described by minority students as being the most important actors of "othering" along ethnic lines. Thus, a Muslim background is experienced as a source of discrimination. Furthermore, in reaction to the negative public discourse on Islam, many students show solidarity towards their parents and return to emphasise their origins. Hence, the strengthening of "we-feelings" among Muslims develops further segregation.

In the case of Roma students in Romania, the strategy of opposition is developed mainly in the so-called "troubled classes": due to experiences of discrimination and inequality, students tend to distance themselves from school and aim at developing resistance to the school's order. Teachers hold negative stereotypes and low expectations towards Roma children, which like a self-fulfilling prophecy cuts their self-esteem and expectations, and negatively influences their behaviour and educational outcomes. However, there are Roma students who see success in school and manage to find a role model of importance whose life strategies can be followed. One example described by a Roma student is the Roma school mediator, because "he attended to school and became somebody" (Vincze 2010).

### **Exclusion from within: educational impacts on future plans**

The questions for analysis in this part are: how life at school influences future opportunities; who are those destined to drop out early; and who are the ones daring to oppose the current arrangements and express their will to leave prior to the – still compulsory – subsequent educational stage?

To get a sense of the more subtle relationships and hierarchical orderings that shape students' position at these educational institutions, we identified, on the basis of the Romanian case, that a possible source of frustration of teachers resulted from their marginal position in the broader teacher community. It is due to the fact that schools manage to position themselves amongst each other, and as a consequence, institutions with a staff including a large number of ethnic minority teachers occupy the lower rungs of the hierarchy. From other research we know that although there are teachers who express

a strong desire to include ethnic minority students, it barely comes into practice due to inbuilt, covert mechanisms such as grading (Gilliam 2006). The cultural framework within which the teaching is set, that is, the approach towards ethnic minority students seen as culturally backward and lacking proficiency can lead to severely deficient participation on the part of ethnic minority students in classes (see the next section on teachers). This is partly the case for Roma students in schools dominated by the ethnic majority in post-socialist countries as well as in France.

We have learned from studies conducted in Western European countries that ethnic minority students share a common "us" which is a combination of their marginalised socio-economic situation and immigrant background. While a common "us" collects many different ethnic minorities, primarily in Sweden, Denmark, France, and the United Kingdom, in the case of Germany it only denotes immigrants of Turkish background. In contrast to groups of immigrants in other countries who mostly describe themselves with reference to multiple identities, immigrants in Germany do not consider themselves as Germans, but as Muslims, and they do not express any options about becoming integrated into the majority, though a higher proportion of them hold passports and citizenship for their country of residence than peers from immigrant backgrounds do elsewhere. Immigrant status is generally associated with problems and difficulties in, more or less, all societal arenas, for instance, in the labour market, housing, health and education, whereby immigrant background in Germany is also associated with a Muslim identity that is mostly regarded as incompatible with German identity. Although, in Sweden, student mobility is common within one school's catchment area, the most vulnerable group among those who are not entitled to apply for upper secondary education are children who immigrated to Sweden after they started school. The older the students are by the time of arrival in the host country, the more severe difficulties they tend to face. It can be explained by their insufficient language skills and low socio-economic background.

Another pattern among students who plan to leave behind education at an early stage is their aspiration towards upper secondary schools where the majority of students have an ethnic Swedish background. Here, they can work on improving their skills in the Swedish "academic" language, and on developing new social networks and friendships. But the students often express that they are comfortable in their community where they feel "at home". However, they appear to be rational and realise that it is better to go to an upper secondary school in an inner city school district in the long run. A boy whose parents migrated to Sweden from Africa and who wants to apply for an upper secondary education Natural Science Programme, clearly expressed this situation by saying: "To succeed you must make good choices all the way. If you choose a school in South Harbour you will fail, but if you choose a school in the inner city it will be easier to continue at university" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010).

This striving to break out from the local, ethnic minority dominated compulsory school environment is also the case among students in the Danish community study sample. The difference is that the freedom of choice and segregation pattern of the education market is typical to Sweden with the result of serious competition among students.

In the French case cultural, racial, or social distinctions are subsumed by both residential categories and the opposition between those who come from the *cité* – in other words: the "ghetto" – and those who do not. The inhabitants are to a large extent poorly educated, unemployed or have low-income jobs, and receive social welfare. These findings highlight the fact that ethnic minority students, particularly

those who have been placed in vocational programmes, often begin their upper secondary school career with a feeling of having been negatively selected and unjustly constrained in their educational options. An interesting finding is that minority students are more likely to feel frustrated by the fact that they have not been permitted to try for the non-vocational stream and regard this as unjust. This may also explain why the transition into vocational school seems generally to be better accepted by majority students than by their minority peers (Schiff 2010).

Forced by the negative sanctions of the school system to give up or change their initial academic and social aspirations and turn away from the direction that the system itself has encouraged, in short, to rely on themselves alone, they draw themselves listlessly through a school career they know has no future. According to Bourdieu and Champagne, without realising it, those students who are trapped in the wrong educational arrangement manifest one of the most fundamental contradictions of contemporary society, "one which is particularly visible in the workings of a school system that has doubtless never played as important a role as it does today" (1999: 426).

An overall characteristic of our students is that they belong to families of a lower socio-economic position. Though the structure of social inequality is the same in all the studied countries, which means that there exists a homologous relationship between a potential educational positioning among students and their families' socio-economic positioning, the empirical scope of status is diverging. Families, investigated in our EDUMIGROM sample, belong primarily to the bottom strata of the social hierarchy, although there are families who have managed to ascertain a lower middle-class position. Their positioning is reflected by the residential and housing conditions of families, the educational level of parents, and their employment histories. These families can be described as being exposed to a common social mobility strategy which can be found beyond our EDUMIGROM-specific community study samples concerning the tendency to move out from a socially disadvantaged district and its coincidence with ethnic school segregation. Even though the socio-economic situation among "visible" minorities is relatively enhanced, for example, in Denmark and Sweden, the pattern is that they also aspire to move out from the segregated and immigrant-dense suburbs, given that education is considered the most important medium of social mobility.

To conclude this section, on the basis of EDUMIGROM Community Studies we shall state the diverging notion of ethnic and social categories, which in turn plays an important role in the participation, experience, and motivation of ethnic minority students. This discussion has shown that the future educational and working careers for students growing up and attending schools in socially disadvantaged environments are greatly influenced by a range of social factors outside of the realm of education, and that schools themselves can exert only a limited impact on changing the paths that these factors ascribe for minority adolescents. In addition, this section provided a picture of how students of ethnic minority backgrounds are exposed to the requirements of school and try to find their way alone in an increasingly complex social world.



## **A comparative perspective on school staff and their approaches to ethnic minority status**

This section aims to offer an overall comparative view of the contributions of teachers and other school personnel to the educational experiences of ethnic minority students in the various countries and sites observed throughout the community studies. After presenting a brief overview of the sample of interviewed teachers, we shall compare the situation regarding the presence and function of teachers and staff of ethnic minority origin, particularly in reference to the existence of specific programmes aimed at students belonging to the minority groups under study. Second, we shall present our analysis of the main factors that influence teaching styles and the general atmosphere in the classes observed. With regard to these elements of student-teacher relations, we shall consider whether there are any significant differences between the countries or whether other, more locally-specific factors seem to prevail. Third, we shall characterise the way teachers in the various countries approach the "problems" of ethnic minority students and the arguments they put forth in order to explain the positions and attitudes of minority students regarding their schooling. Here, we shall attempt to determine to what extent the perceptions of such students are influenced by the more general national frameworks of majority-minority relations that prevail in each country, or rather by the more concrete aspects of the particular local school contexts, such as recent school mergers and reforms, or the extent of the school personnel's contacts with parents.

### **An overview of the sample of teachers and staff**

The number of teachers and other members of school personnel inquired in each of the countries ranges from a dozen to close to forty. In most countries, approximately twenty teachers and other school personnel were interviewed, and two to four focus group discussions were carried out with teachers. As a general rule, the individuals who participated in these exchanges were directly involved with the particular classes under study, and several had specific responsibilities relating to minority students, such as teaching bilingual classes or acting as mediators or family outreach workers. The presence of teachers belonging to the selected ethnic minority groups among those participating in the interviews and group discussions was very much dependent on the national context. In France and Sweden, where teachers of non-majority origin made up over one-third of the staff in the schools with a majority of pupils of immigrant origin, they figured prominently among the sample of teachers interviewed. In countries such as Germany and those of Central Europe only one or two minority staff members became involved in the research. These consisted mainly of teaching assistants, mediators, or family outreach workers, rather than regular teachers.

It is interesting to note that in countries such as France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, where minority teachers are an integral part of the school personnel, their role and position vis-à-vis minority students is very different.

In France, where the distribution of teachers across schools is entirely centralised, ethnic minority teachers do not perform any particular tasks or roles relating to their ethnic origins and are never recruited

in this capacity. Although they tend to teach in vocational disciplines and classes, and are overrepresented among personnel who do not have permanent positions, this is due to the fact that many have not passed the relatively selective national examination certification required in order to obtain a permanent teaching position in France. In everyday situations and interactions, references to their particular cultural, ethnic, or racial characteristics are rarely spontaneously made by them or by any of their colleagues, and it would be quite unusual for them to be heard speaking a language other than French with students or colleagues who share their mother tongue. When forced by our questions to reflect on the impact of their proximity with students from immigrant backgrounds, a few French teachers of minority origin conceded that their ethnicity might occasionally create a degree of complicity with certain students. However, as a general rule, they were careful to avoid showing any form of differential treatment of students and were quite reticent to make any direct reference to their origins. They tended to be at least as staunch as their colleagues about observing a form of republican neutrality, and often avoided getting involved in debates about issues relating to ethnic, religious, or cultural diversity.

In Sweden, and to a certain extent in Denmark, the situation is very different from that observed in France in the sense that ethnic minority teachers spontaneously pointed to their capacity as cultural brokers, bilingual teachers, and role models for students who were often first-generation migrants facing language barriers. In these countries language barriers appeared much more pronounced than in France and the United Kingdom, two countries in which immigrants and minorities are predominantly from former colonies. In Denmark, one of the respondents mentioned that: "Sometimes the students have difficulties understanding what is going on in the class... That's why we have bilingual teachers in this school... They are part of work both concerning teaching and cooperation with parents." The status of bilingual teachers or second-language teachers, who have usually undergone special training in teaching to students with an immigrant background, was much more common in schools receiving a high proportion of minority students than was the case in similar schools in France, Germany, or the United Kingdom.

In the British context, the minority teachers and staff members met by the researchers were involved in special measures for minority pupils through participation in target projects such as the Black Achievement Programme or Pakistani Study Support. Here, the focus was on enhancing self-esteem, and supporting in-class behaviour and academic ambition among students referred to as "Black Minority Ethnics". These students' difficulties were not seen as stemming from their "foreignness" but more from possible inferiority complexes and lack of recognition from the wider society. In the schools in the United Kingdom, other special events such as Refugee Week or Black History Month typically seek "to help students to understand the interdependence of individuals, groups, nations, and the local environment, and to both comprehend and celebrate the multicultural nature of (...) society" (Swann and Law 2010). This trend of cultural awareness building and promotion of minority self-esteem through a variety of ad-hoc projects contrasts with what was observed in the Scandinavian countries where special measures aimed at minority pupils, such as the language study group or the parents' Ethnic Council, were concerned more with setting up effective ways of overcoming problems arising from poor mastery of the native language, or the lack of knowledge among immigrant parents about the workings of the national school system.

With the exception of Romania and Hungary, where one or more of the schools from the sample offered Romani language courses taught by teachers of Roma origin, the schools under investigation



in the other Central European countries as well as in Germany did not count any teachers belonging to the selected ethnic minority groups. Many of the schools in the Central European countries employed Roma mediators and/or teaching assistants in order to help with specific issues such as low attendance or poor communication between Roma parents and schools. The general aim in these cases was to try to bring parents and children to conform and adapt to the minimal demands of the school system and to promote a process of "normalisation" that was in most cases to be carried out through more or less voluntary integration of the Roma in non-Roma schools. It is interesting to note that although the role of the Roma mediators and assistants is strictly limited to working with Roma students and their families, these personnel often appear very different from the majority Roma population attending the school in terms of their social background, their educational credentials, and their residency outside of the most disadvantaged, typically Roma neighbourhoods.

In the countries involved in the studies one finds distinctions regarding the extent to which teachers have chosen to work in schools receiving a large number of minority students. In certain schools, notably in Sweden, France, Denmark, Romania, and Hungary, a more or less formal process of selection or self-selection of teachers has resulted in the creation of a generally positive and constructive attitude toward ethnic minority students. Teachers in such schools have often received some form of special training that entitles them to teach minority students. The school administration often encourages innovative practices and collective work among teachers who, while they might be highly challenged by students' difficulties, do not feel degraded by having to teach underprivileged minority students. In such schools one finds some teachers for whom teaching disadvantaged minority students is a true vocation or a form of social activism and who are energised by the belief that their work is more useful than it would be if they were working with more middle-class students.

At the other end of the spectrum, one finds a few schools (one in Germany, one in France, two in Hungary, one each in Romania, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic) in which the high proportion of minority students is – as it was pointed out earlier – the consequence of changes such as mergers, integration programmes, or transformations in the enrolment process of students, which have been imposed by the authorities without the teachers having been consulted or having received adequate training to adapt to the new situation. In these cases ethnic minority students often become the most tangible symbols of the teachers' dissatisfaction and sense of powerlessness. These feelings can easily be rationalised through a discourse that places all the blame for students' low academic performance on the families and their cultural or moral inadequacies.

### **Teaching styles and class atmosphere**

In all of the studied schools at least two full days of observation were carried out with several of the classes involved, thus making it possible to compare the pedagogical style and teaching practices of a variety of teachers as well as the attitudes and behaviour of students from different classes.

Although there are obvious differences in the curricula and in pedagogical traditions and training among the various countries participating in the research, we were struck by the rather wide variety of teaching practices that could be observed in each of the countries, and even within a given school. Whether the lessons resembled lectures or dialogues, whether student participation was passive or active,

or whether work was performed individually or in small groups was somewhat dependent on the nature of the discipline (vocational/non-vocational, general, or applied). Even in countries such as Hungary, where traditional frontal teaching tends to predominate, several instances of more interactive group oriented work were observed. It seems that in all countries teachers have had to a certain extent to adapt their teaching methods to the particular challenges posed by a highly diverse student population. The presence of ethnic minority students who cannot depend on parental help with homework and who do not share some of the implicit cultural references of their majority peers makes it necessary for teachers to be more explicit and concrete in their presentation of the material and to favour more active hands-on learning procedures. In this sense, one could say that the presence of minority students "forces" teachers to be innovative in their pedagogical approaches. While certain schools receiving a high per centage of minority students among those observed in Romania, Hungary, Sweden, or France have become veritable laboratories of innovation, others appear to be entirely unprepared to handle the challenges they face. In such cases the school personnel tends to resort to a traditional defence mechanism like the isolation of poorly performing minority students in special classes or sections and an overemphasis on discipline and punishment.

The issue of discipline figures quite prominently among the challenges faced by teachers in all of the countries involved in the EDUMIGROM study. In at least one class in one or more schools in each country the researchers witnessed situations in which the teacher appeared incapable of maintaining even a semblance of order during the lesson. The pattern is remarkably similar in all countries: a small group of boys, predominantly but not necessarily exclusively, of minority origin appears to have taken control of the class dynamics and has succeeded in imposing a general attitude of defiance and disinterest by intimidating the other students into following their example, or at the least into passively resisting the teacher's efforts to engage them in the material. The teachers' attitudes towards students, their personality, natural authority or lack thereof, pedagogical style, and general competence and experience certainly play a part in whether or not a potentially disruptive group manages to turn the session into a period of recreation for the students and a losing battle for the teacher. However, it should be stressed that certain "structural" conditions are necessary for such a reversal of authority to become possible, as described earlier in the section on ethnically mixed schools applying internal separation. It almost always happens in the groups who have some reason to feel humiliated and inferior within the general hierarchy of the school, either because of their involuntary separation from the "normal" students and/or because of their lack of educational prospects that such a negative dynamic develops. While across all countries such situations tend to correspond to classes in which the concentration of minority students is high, this does not appear in and of itself as reason enough to explain the generalisation of an oppositional attitude. Indeed, some of the most successful class sessions were observed in groups in which minority students composed the majority of those present, such as in the minority schools with a diversity-conscious approach.

### **Teachers' approach to and perceptions of ethnic minority students**

When comparing the interviews of the teachers encountered during the community research, one is struck, first and foremost, by the very different ways that each of the nationalities have of naming those students whom the project refers to as "the selected minority". Although this is a practical and neutral way of designating those who are the focus of our research project, it tends to mask labelling processes

that reveal the very different status of such students in each of the national contexts. Although individual teachers in the various countries sometimes held views and opinions about their minority students which differed substantially from those of their colleagues, there exists a general framework of understanding concerning the status of minority students which is very much linked to the citizenship model in each country and to its particular history of immigrant and minority incorporation.

German teachers name students either through direct reference to their nationality or to their membership in a broader ethnic or religious category. They speak about Turks, Arabs, Muslims, "migrant students", or "students of migrant background". Even though most of the minority students of Turkish origin interviewed in Germany belong to the third generation, these ways of naming stress the cultural, national, and religious divisions between the dominant norm represented by "German" students and teachers. Minority students are still perceived by teachers to be foreigners or outsiders who "should" be taught to adapt (not to say conform) to the dominant culture, even though many also admit the difficulty or impossibility of the task. Some Turkish students' oppositional stance and lack of discipline, which is a result of their experience of relegation and of the limited opportunities for success through the school system as we have seen in the previous section, is often interpreted as an expression of cultural norms and habits that are foreign to those of the dominant culture. One teacher stated that:

I am not able to change the culture. As a German teacher I can only hope that they respect me and accept the things I tell them. I mean in Turkey, teachers are not that highly respected. But I can't dictate to the families. A Turkish colleague could do this, one who lived in Turkey before and is familiar with the rules. But me as a German teacher, I am not able to do so.

Most of the interviews with students and parents, particularly from the less-prestigious comprehensive school, tended to reflect this portrayal of teacher-student conflict in terms of a cultural conflict. The mothers as well as the students of Turkish origin who attended this school expressed a feeling of being negatively pressured by teachers to conform to the dominant cultural norms, a process which they perceived as an attack on their dignity, and the authority of parent. The sense was that they needed to protect their private family life and their ethnic pride against the encroachments of the "German" teachers who were trying to "force" them to assimilate.

In Britain, the minority student population appears much more diverse than in Germany. Depending on the particular group under consideration, teachers use a variety of terms when speaking about their students. However, the official term accepted by all is "Black Minority Ethnic" (BME). This designation stresses first and foremost the "racial" characteristics and the visibility of students belonging to groups that are, in fact, culturally and socially quite different from each other (Pakistani, Caribbean, Yemeni, etc.). The main differentiating factor thus appears to be colour and this is further stressed by the fact that teachers do not hesitate to use the term "white" when speaking of those who are not "BME". In the interviews with British teachers working in very multiethnic and economically disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods serving several of the schools under investigation, it appeared that the most problematic students were not those of immigrant origin, or at least that these teachers seldom permitted themselves to voice such an opinion.

In attributing causes for diverging pathways, teachers and education workers tended to focus on families. (...) This was not aimed at Caribbean or Pakistani families, however, but a complaint solely aimed at the white community. There was a tendency for some teachers to have particular stereotypes and misconceptions about the communities they served, but it was always the lower-class white community that was discussed" (Swann and Law 2010).

The "politically correct" trend prevalent among British teachers, which puts the emphasis on the positive contributions of groups who are regarded both as an integral part of multiethnic British society and as potential victims of racism, makes it almost impossible for teachers to be openly critical of such students and their families. One also has the impression that the salience of factors such as youth styles, local neighbourhood identities, social class, and multiple migration flows tend to crosscut one another and blur the ethnic and racial boundaries to such an extent that it is no longer obvious to teachers who among their students actually represents the "Other". This creates a context in which the distinction between a dominant majority group and an underprivileged ethnic minority has become largely artificial. In stark contrast to German teachers, who often portrayed minority students' difficulties in terms of cultural conflict between families and school and who perceived students' oppositional attitude to be a form of resistance to acculturation, the difficulties mentioned by British teachers do not result from ethnic or cultural conflicts per se but rather from tensions between older minorities and recent arrivals, from gang violence, or simply from the profound socio-economic deprivation and dependency experiences of the poorest families in the area.

In France, the most remarkable feature of teachers' talk about minority pupils is the very obvious difficulties they have to find names and labels which adequately refer to what they are trying to designate. The person in charge of transcribing teachers' interviews remarked that almost every time French teachers were asked to answer a question that required them to designate students according to their ethnic origins, they tended to pause, fumble for words, to make use of audible quotation marks, and to resort to a variety of euphemisms such as "youth of immigrant descent", "of foreign origin", or "underprivileged youth". Often they simply avoided naming those they were talking about in any direct manner, as if they assumed that there existed an implicit understanding with the interviewer about a category whose existence one should not actually acknowledge out loud. French teachers rarely pointed to the students' cultural characteristics in order to explain poor performance or lack of motivation. They more often stressed the students' socio-economic backgrounds, the influence of anti-school peer culture, and their difficult home environment. It was obvious that French teachers had very limited contact with parents in general, and with minority parents in particular, except in certain specific instances where there was a concerted effort among a small group of colleagues to combat school attrition and failure through more regular contacts with parents. In exchanges about the particular positions and behaviour of minority students, it was more frequent to hear French teachers criticise what they perceived as students' tendency to overemphasise and overplay their ethnic identities than to hear them interpret students' behaviour as a consequence of ethnic or cultural differences.

In Denmark and in Sweden, the term most readily used by teachers when they spoke of the selected minority is that of "bilingual students". Here, students are defined more by their language than by

their culture, race, or ethnicity. The fact that many students speak a foreign language at home is regarded both as an added value and as a potential source of academic difficulties. In contrast to German, and to a certain extent to French, teachers' feelings that they must necessarily work "against" the families, in these countries the belief seems to be that academic success is dependent on the schools ability to work "with" the families. This makes it necessary to find the proper channels of communication. One Danish teacher framed this in the following terms: "I think the challenge for teachers in regard to getting the attention of students is much bigger than they think. We have to be more affected by their reality. We have to bring their reality over here (to the school)." This explains the central role played by bilingual teachers, mediators, and translators in these countries.

While German, British and French teachers feel obliged to act as "representatives" of their society by embodying its cultural norms and values (Germany), celebrating its diversity (United Kingdom) or acting as colour-blind agents of a presumably universal culture (France), Danish and Swedish teachers appear more pragmatic in their approach to minority students. They avoid formulating generalisations about their students based on ethnicity and point more readily to practical barriers to students' understanding of the material, insisting on the vast differences among students who come from a wide variety of countries and social backgrounds. It is interesting to note that while it is certainly in the Nordic countries that students experience the widest gap between the cultural norms, languages, and educational styles of their parents and the norms of the host country, rarely do Danish and Swedish teachers mention cultural differences as the cause of these students' lower performance. Although issues linked to more traditional gender roles, to migrants parents' more authoritative educational style, and to their reticence to engage on equal terms with teachers are often mentioned, most teachers do not view these as fundamental explanations for the diverging educational careers of minority and majority students. More importance is given to language barriers, socio-economic problems, and the prominent role of the oppositional urban youth anti-school attitude typical of segregated neighbourhoods.

In the Central European countries, Roma students are often referred to in terms such as "special needs", "intellectually deficient", or "problem students", all of which stress shortcomings that appear, rather paradoxically, as both individual limitations and as a result of collective cultural orientations. In opposition to these categories many teachers spontaneously refer to non-Roma students as "normal", "ordinary", or "standard". We did detect some differences between countries regarding the openness or the reserve with which teachers "admitted" to treating or regarding Roma students differently or to having "problems" with such students. While many teachers in Hungary, and to a lesser extent in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, spoke quite frankly about the problems they encountered with Roma students, some even voicing strong moral condemnation of Roma parents, the teachers encountered in the Romanian schools appeared more cautious in their judgements and more intent on avoiding formulations that might be interpreted as "racist" or anti-Roma.

The range of opinions was quite wide among teachers from the Central European countries as to what was the fundamental cause for Roma students' poor academic performance. It ranged from those who believe the Roma's lack of motivation and interest in school success to be transmitted through their "blood", to those who spoke more in terms of cultural determinism and educational "style", to those, relatively less numerous, who insisted rather on the students' difficult home environments and economic

deprivation. It is interesting to note that among all of the school personnel questioned in these four countries only one, a Roma teaching assistant in a Czech school, offered an explanation which pointed to the fact that Roma parents' lack of investment in their children's schooling was the result of what could be viewed as a rational adaptation to their very limited chances of eventually getting some tangible returns for their investment in the form of qualified and well-paying jobs.

The attitudes and beliefs of teachers regarding the obstacles to Roma students' success appeared to be a function of the institutional mode of integration or segregation. Whether teachers hold "anti" or "pro" Roma views depends to a certain extent on whether their school has succeeded in integrating these students in a manner that suited both the school personnel and the students themselves. It also appeared to be very much connected to the extent and the nature of the contacts teachers had with Roma families. Understandably, those teachers who never have any contact with parents, or only very occasionally in cases of particularly disruptive behaviour on the part of students, tended to portray Roma families as a homogeneous, defiant, and unfathomable entity. The teachers who regularly met with parents, either because they were encouraged to do so by the school's administration or because they were personally motivated to do so, spoke more readily of the differences between families and of the need to be realistic and flexible in their teaching style and content. In one pedagogically innovative school in Hungary where contacts between teachers and Roma parents are encouraged and organised, there is a concerted effort to take into account specific Roma culture while maintaining high standards, with the development of real projects to integrate Roma children in a school that also has high-prestige classes and middle-class students. Teachers in this school, more often than in any other Hungarian school, considered Roma students' difficulties to adapt to the requirements as a consequence of poverty and social deprivation, rather than as the expression of deviant cultural norms. In at least two other Hungarian schools the integration of Roma students was experienced as an unwelcome infliction on the part of the "authorities" and has not been accompanied by the necessary pedagogical adaptations and teacher training. Thus teachers feel that any effort to enhance Roma pupils' performance and attendance is doomed to failure, essentially because of what they perceive as culturally, occasionally even genetically, engrained behaviour and values that are contrary to the dominant norms.

This link between teachers' perception of minority students as "impossible" to manage and educate and their own experience of having been relegated into a low-prestige school and having to fulfil impossible requirements born of ill-conceived or poorly-implemented reforms was also quite obvious in the case of the German comprehensive school that receives a high proportion of students of Turkish origin. Many teachers had been transferred to this school against their will upon the closure of another school. Conversely, one might wonder whether the generally more positive views of immigrant parents expressed by Swedish and Danish teachers is to a large extent the result of the manner in which they are recruited and trained, and of the emphasis that is put on creating partnerships with parents in these school systems, in general.

It is very difficult to ascertain among the Central European countries whether the variation between schools in terms of teachers' essentially fatalistic, moralistic and, admittedly, racist outlook on Roma students and their families is, first and foremost, a consequence of teacher self-selection and recruitment or rather of a socialising process among teachers in a context in which Roma school



integration has been unevenly planned out and implemented. The head of one school in Romania, which has a particularly successful outreach program aimed at the Roma community, stated that: "If I think about it better, we have passed all phases regarding integration. It was not easy but we've overcome them, primarily through the retirement of the colleagues who could not accept Roma children."

## **The role of ethnicity in peer relations in a comparative perspective**

The last part of this essay goes beyond the educational functions of the school and analyses how (un)successful schools are conditioning, mediating, and facilitating communication and the shaping of relationships between students from different ethnic and social backgrounds. It is obvious that the school, together with the neighbourhood, are the two critical social places where young people spend most of their time and that these social settings play a crucial role in establishing everyday life and a symbolic world that are developed by the social interactions and interpersonal relations among students. In this context, we can pose a twofold question by asking, first, about the role of ethnicity in creating social groups and making friendships for young people, and second, by enquiring about the role of the school in the emerging formations.<sup>3</sup>

The discussion below is built on the data and knowledge that we acquired by making structured observations at schools and by asking students during individual interviews to reflect on the contexts and situations of interpersonal peer-relations that we witnessed at schools.

### **Students with an immigration background**

#### *Ethnic minority neighbourhood as a source of reflexive identity and solidarity*

Unlike most political debates and the public discourse in Europe, ethnic minority students welcome a certain degree of ethnic isolation in their everyday life. As already pointed out, because of the design of catchment areas by the authorities, many schools are located in the middle or at the edge of neighbourhoods where ethnic minorities constitute the majority and where they can create a social world that is similar to the one their families used to live in their country of origin. An Iranian boy residing in an immigrant neighbourhood in Denmark describes the place as follows:

Everything is special about Fraser. It is just like a small town [...] everyone here is friends with each other. Everyone knows each other. It is like one has been here for so many years, that one knows all the stones here [...] the older guys of my brother's age (21), all his friends are here. I went out with them when I was smaller, played football, all kinds of children's games.

<sup>3</sup> As we have seen, for some minority students the school is the only public space where they (have a chance to) meet and interact with majority people.



What he, on the other hand, dislikes about the Fraser area is "its reputation [...] crime, etc., [...] some of it's true, but it's not like what other people think here. When one lives here oneself, then it's a nice place." Such views were also expressed by minority students from other countries living in immigrant neighbourhoods. Families from an immigrant background who are surrounded by fellow countrymen have closer relations and more developed social networks than those living in a diaspora. As the author of the French Community Study has noticed,

[...] the fact that minority students tend to have more friends of the same ethnic origin as compared with their majority fellows, is more often the consequence of the socio-ethnic composition of their neighbourhoods, schools and families' acquaintances than the result of their membership in a structured ethnic community, or of pressures they are subjected to making them remain with their "own kind"(Schiff 2010).

Some students stressed that they did not have any friends from the ethnic majority because the latter were not accessible for different reasons. However, one of the common factors is the social distance that exists between majority and minority students. Majority students are viewed by their minority fellows as belonging to a higher social class, residing in wealthier districts, having different interests, and thus spending leisure time in some other way than them.

Similar views were shared by students in other countries for whom mutual trust, solidarity, and reflexive identity are built on the fundamentals of commonly shared experiences of being "other", i.e., non-majority, rather than having the same ethnic origin. For instance, in Sweden, interviews with students showed clearly that the experience of "not being Swedes" is an important foundation for closer relations in the community, regardless of the country of origin. Students, in this case, share the situation of "not being a part of Swedish society". Their testimonies indicate experiences of segregation and of living outside of Swedish society. The neighbourhood provides protection against discrimination: they do not have to face negative prejudices linked to their ethnic background as long as they make up the vast majority there. None of the students in the sample said they had any "Swedes" in their circle of friends or acquaintances. In their home environment they do not often meet students who they consider Swedish, nor do they meet them at school or in their leisure time. The majority of the interviewed students have lived their whole lives in the neighbourhood and have been together in the same class there since the preparatory school year. One student spoke about how good she felt about having relations with people sharing the same experiences as herself. According to this student, her friends are fundamental to her identity and sense of belonging. She doubts that a relationship with a student of Swedish ethnic background would give her this kind of feeling: "It is not like we don't like each other, but people socialise with those they feel a connection with. We have an immigrant background and they are Swedes. It's clear. We belong to different groups, it's just like that."

The social distance that exists between majority and minority people in European cities determines, and is determined by, a lack of trust and solidarity, and thus produces and reproduces negative stereotypes on both sides. Immigrants' neighbourhoods are conceived of as dangerous places by majority people who tend to avoid them physically as well as symbolically. Moreover, majority families

living in these neighbourhoods show a strong tendency to enrol their children in other schools. For instance, the strategy of German majority parents is to choose private or church-based schools, or to leave the neighbourhood.

In Germany, peers living in the immediate surrounding and same-ethnic classmates seem to form the majority. None of the interviewees mentioned a friend who did not live nearby. Thus, there are no majority students in any symbolic place in the life worlds of ethnic Turks or Arabs, and students were even surprised when we asked them about whether making friendships with ethnic Germans. As one of them said: "You don't find Germans here! In our neighbourhood you only find Turks and Arabs."

[In France,] identification with the neighbourhood can both reinforce and transcend ethnic boundaries. In their peer group made up by urban youth, those of European origin are distinctly in the minority, especially in the Parisian suburbs. This encourages the association between the local peer group communities and ethnic, racial or religious dimensions of these teenagers' collective identities. When distinguishing amongst themselves, students refer readily to their neighbourhoods, the major distinction being between the *jeunes des cités* ("ghetto" youth) and the others, which is often seen as a determinant of their style of clothing and of their behaviour in class. In fact, urban identities function as an implicit mode of social, ethnic, generational and even academic distinction" (Schiff 2010).

The unexpected consequences of the social isolation of minority students living in ethnic urban "ghettos" were revealed by comparing the Parisian periphery with the more socially mixed urban setting in Bordeaux. The subjective self-image of students from the Parisian periphery was less affected by negative comparisons between social classes and ethnic groups than in case of students from Bordeaux who were constantly reminded of their low social status by the very fact that they were much more frequently in contact with members of the middle class. Easy access to the centre of town, the fact that even in the least desirable schools and classes majority students are in a minority, and the generally rather "bourgeois" identity of the city all combine to make social, ethnic, and residential distinctions more salient both for majority and minority adolescents than in the segregated community of the Parisian site (Schiff 2010).

In the United Kingdom, the physical divide between neighbourhoods is proclaimed by some students who wear symbolic traits like coloured bandannas or graffiti the walls. Each neighbourhood has its colour or symbol. Young people from particular neighbourhoods form street gangs and go after anybody from other residential areas. Students' involvement in "postcode" gangs cut across disaffected and conformist identities within school. Schools are sensitive to the issues surrounding "postcode" gangs and some have taken a clear stance of zero tolerance. As a student tells:

One of my friends got in a fight with this other guy because he lived in S4 and he lived in Tannery Rise. So they just started fighting and the head teacher told them, »If anything like this happens again you're both going to get kicked out«. Because they both do really well in school yet they still fight.

In general, different patterns of social group boundaries and ethnic divisions were observed in the United Kingdom compared with other countries. Such patterns are twofold. First, ethnic minority students pointed to the various identity strategies of whites. These identities were heavily interconnected with music and dress styles, and are associated with groups like the Emos, the Goths, and the Chavs. Emos and Chavs were universally disliked. Discussions of these groups featured across all three schools under study and often provoked strong reactions, "We have Goths, Emos, and Chavs and stuff like that. (...) I am just going to be truthful, I hate them" (Caribbean boy). This was a pattern that emerged throughout all the schools. Although ethnicity was not used as a defining characteristic of these groupings in students' talk, this was the case: Emos, Goths, and Chavs were white (Swann and Law 2010).

Second, divisions between different minority groups were recognisable. Caribbean and Pakistani students represent ethnic communities with a distinct social status, which produces social boundaries and related stereotypes. At school, certain antagonisms arise through puns and minor insults, followed by laughing among affected students, which serves as a symbolic tool to reduce tension and potential conflict. At schools with mixed social classes, strong emphasis is given to the neighbourhood, and with that an implicit sense of social ranking. Pakistani students have very definite ideas about which areas are the best in the given locality (Swann and Law 2010). Similar to the Bordeaux students, understanding residential segregation in this way shows keen awareness of social class and ethnicity.

Not all ethnic minority students feel confident or express pride related to their residence in an ethnic neighbourhood. Our Danish colleagues identified a group of adolescents, mostly girls with rather mixed ethnic identities, who tried to distance themselves from troublesome immigrants. This kind of mixed identity is shared by the category of children forming a second generation of immigrants, because they are aware of how they are changing their identity compared with their parents since they are together with peers of many other ethnic backgrounds.

However, in general, a tendency for social groupings to follow ethnicity or majority as opposed to minority belonging is more than evident. We have noticed that, rather than open conflicts, situations at schools can be characterised by more or less visible boundaries between groups that are formed by shared experiences or life worlds constructed around them. Many times, students do not reflect on these boundaries and social distances but take them as a matter of fact. Let us quote an ethnic Danish student to show a telling example:

[...] there's an invisible border between us [...] We're, kind of, in groups, maybe, aren't we? I don't know, I, I just thought [...] It's not because we have anything against each other, that's not what I'm saying [...] You're all looking at me as if I'm saying something wrong [...] It's not because I'm saying that I wouldn't go to them or the other way around [...] but I have more ethnic Danish friends than bilingual, that's all I mean. It's not because there's something wrong, but it's just like that, automatically.

### *Structure of leisure time*

Inquiries into leisure time activities revealed important gender differences among ethnic minority students. The after-school activities of boys usually take place on the streets. The most common answer to questions regarding free time was that they just hang around and do nothing special. The other common activities they engage in are sports like football or basketball. Here, it is important to notice that, besides unorganised sports activities on the streets, in some countries ethnic minority students attend organised sport clubs. However, joining clubs is much less common for minority students than for their majority peers because it is costly. Engaging in activities that do not require spending was outstandingly frequent for minority students, differentiating them from those from the majority. At the same time, contrary to doing sports on the streets in the neighbourhood, organised sports activities in regular sport clubs promote great opportunities for interethnic friendships, as reported by students in Denmark.

For girls, leisure time activities are linked to their families in the first place. This is primarily true for families with Muslim affiliation. German Muslim girls explained that they had different interests than ethnic German girls that stem from different behaviours and attitudes. For instance, going out to parties and discotheques as a frequent activity of ethnic German students is strongly linked to drinking alcohol that is prohibited for Muslim girls. In addition, drinking alcohol at that age of 15 or 16 is prohibited on the whole, thus not only specific cultural values but the legal aspect of underage alcohol consumption was also taken into account by our Muslim interviewees.

Moreover, the activities mentioned above are undertaken in mixed groups and are strongly related to the intention to get in close contact with the opposite sex. In the eyes of our informants, it seems to be very important for German peers to dress sexy and to gain experience with sexual practices. Girls and boys who distance themselves from this kind of behaviour risk becoming treated as outsiders who do not have fun because of strict social control of their parents and their out-of-date moral attitudes. As a Muslim girl noticed: "The German girls in my class party all the time, like to get drunk, and seem to think that to have fun they need to have some boys around. I don't want to pretend I would like that. I prefer to be honest and take the consequences. We don't think they are doing the right thing."

Our German colleagues summarised three main aspects of everyday practices that are structured differently or have different meanings for ethnic German peer groups and Muslim peer groups: (1.) different time limits on going out, (2.) affinity to socialise in mixed groups versus inclination to separate by gender, and (3.) alcohol as an instrument to socialise and meet friends versus prohibition of drinking alcohol (Strassburger 2010).

Although hanging out on the street was frequently mentioned, especially by boys from ethnic neighbourhoods in almost all countries, in fact, not all minority boys are members of street gangs. It is also true that girls and students who are enrolled in some prestigious programmes as well as recent migrants tend to spend their free time at home, whilst boys, often of North African or Afro-Caribbean origin, living in public housing units, tend to hang out on the streets. On the other hand, the French case shows that sometimes being a member of a street gang is more an image created for school than a reality in the neighbourhoods. Certain French schools function as entities that exacerbate students' urban youth identity and push them to act out this trait. As the author of the French Community Study noted:

It is a space in which the social norms of the 'ghetto' become references even for those who do not actually live there. Indeed, we often had the impression that boys in these schools felt that, in order to be respected by their peers, they had to adopt a certain posture associated with the stereotype of the urban ghetto youth, when in fact their life outside the school was closer to that of the ordinary lower middle-class provincial youngsters (Schiff 2010).

### *Shared language as a source of social groupings – dialect, slang, jokes, and language barriers*

Language issues seem to be another crucial aspect of social belonging that is interlinked with ethnicity. Many minority students reported that they were bilingual and even majority students called minority students "bilingual". Thus bilingual became a label for being "other", being non-majority. If skin colour refers to the concept of "visibly other", then language refers to the concept of "audibly other". If students live in a social environment where the use of the mother tongue is preferred, then language barriers at school can be difficult to overcome. A boy of second-generation immigrant background from Ethiopia, residing in Sweden, explained that most of his friends were from his school and that they did not come from the same country. However, during his leisure time he meets some boys from Ethiopia doing sports activities. He said that even if he meets his Ethiopian friends less often, he feels closer to them because they share a common language and a somehow common history. The student recalled that he had found friends among the Swedes in his previous school. However, he experienced feelings of not belonging. Even though the other students thought that he spoke "good Swedish", there was something about how they used the language, a certain way of speaking, he was not familiar with. That deficit made him feel different. The other students did not exclude him from activities, for example, from socialising during breaks such as playing football. The social distance between him and the other students, and the process of "othering" in that context, was revealed in more subtle ways, for instance, how other students reacted when they considered his Swedish to be incorrect.

Our adolescent interviewees in Denmark referred to stories when not only majority students but also teachers expressed that minority students were not speaking the language properly, which had negative impacts on students' self-esteem. In being corrected because of their accent or bad grammar, minority students are not only excluded from communication during the lessons but they consider this as a form of discrimination and injustice that influences their school results. "Sometimes they [teachers] would say: 'Why don't you know those words?' [...] So it's like the Danes are better than us (minority-ethnic)", or as described in another way by an ethnic minority girl trying to put herself in a more profitable position: "You aren't stupid just because you are from a different country [...] Yeah, but all the time they say things like Danes can do more, for example. It might well be that they are better than us in Danish but I can still be better at English, Maths, Physics, and stuff like that."

As described in the preceding section, teachers in focus group discussions confirm this pattern among ethnic minority students. One of them said: "Thus these students are 'behind' from the beginning. This also explains why 'minority ethnic' students tend to get lower grade averages. Poorer language skills do not only affect the grade (and learning process) in Danish, but all other subjects as well, since language is the key to learning."

However, not only bilingualism is a concern of this issue. Students use special dialects, slang, and humour that is part of their social group belonging, and thus language is an effective tool for inclusion in the in-group as well as tool for exclusion from the out-group. Whereas speaking the majority language improperly is a barrier and a form of exclusion from wider social activities, special dialects can serve as an instrument for inclusion into subgroups of those who voluntarily distance themselves from the "majority culture". The Danish analysts called the specific language style of immigrants "multi-ethnolect" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). Some of the boys expressed that they would not be able to imagine themselves talking like ethnic Danish youngsters. One female student said when expressing her view about how students try to fit in with their classmates: "[...] If there's only one 'perk' in a class where there are Danes only, then maybe the immigrant will act just like the other Danes. If a Dane comes in to an immigrant class [...] then he would, for instance, be like the immigrants, he would, for instance, have same 'perk'-style and talk the same language."

This indicates that there might be there a linguistic style among minority peers in the given neighbourhood (e.g., Fraser district) that is different from both the official school language and the other linguistic styles popular among peer groups. It is hard to say if this linguistic style can be solely defined in terms of improper knowledge in Danish but, interestingly, how they express themselves shows the intersecting effects of a youth subculture (a form of rebelling by expressions) and "multi-ethnolect", and it seems this combination adds to the local dimensions of self-perception and reflexive identity (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

The last issue that was mentioned in almost all countries concerning language usage are jokes.<sup>4</sup> Jokes or special phrases that make fun of different ethnic groups are widely used. When asked about racism issues, students denied it was an issue at their school. However, they frequently referred to making fun of other groups of students in this context. They do not consider this racism, but it is clear that the borderline between innocent jokes and interethnic bullying or mocking that can harm the personal identity of students or can develop into serious conflicts is very thin and fragile. Students in France reflected on the issue in the following ways:

It's true that there are always little jokes, for example, about Arabs, but it's not racism. You can easily get a joke about blacks, but in this high school there's no racism. We can say that the foreigners are on top. If we were in a high school like Sainte Marie (private Catholic), maybe it would be different.

Interviewer: We observed the class all day and there were moments when the atmosphere was tense.

No, it's just for fun, it's always like that. Like when we're in the neighbourhood, we laugh like that, and since there are several of us from different neighbourhoods [projects], we're always having fun like that. It's in our character to provoke each other, it amuses us. Sometimes teachers take it well and have fun with us, some don't. It depends on the teacher's personality. I've already been called 'dirty Arab' and far worse, but I take it with a smile.

4 See a detailed discussion of the subject in the second essay of this volume on "othering".



## Students of Roma origin

If students from an immigrant background hesitated to admit explicitly that ethnicity was the platform that interpersonal relations and social groupings were built on, then their Roma counterparts spoke more openly about ethnic divisions that evidently exist.

In Slovakia, authors of the Community Study noticed that it was two levels of friendship that Roma students brought up in the interviews. On a general level, they agreed that they had both Roma and non-Roma friends. However, as we noticed, by friendship they meant chatting with non-Roma schoolmates. When the issue was more thoroughly discussed, it became evident that the majority of them had only Roma friends. Girls usually referred to one best friend they grew up with and have shared experiences with, and this best friend very often belonged to their broader family. Boys usually have Roma friends with whom they hang out or listen to music.

Some Roma students pointed out that they preferred Roma friendship because they did not trust non-Roma fellows due to previous disappointments, betrayals, or rejections by them. Various theories of "psychological" differences of ethnic groups seem to be also developed ex-post, after experiencing some awful sell-out. This is indicated by attributions of such general characteristics to non-Roma as "double-dealing" and "false". Turning false non-Roma away is the case with an excellent Roma student, Ema, who attends a class where one-third of the classmates are Roma so, theoretically, she has the opportunity to make both Roma and non-Roma friends. However, she is on friendly terms only with Roma schoolmates. She claims having been let down by a non-Roma friend in the past (she does not specify this disappointment) and she is not sure if she would be able to trust non-Roma anymore.

Since Roma students suffer from severe stigmatisation caused by negative stereotypes, they welcome any classmates who do not make differences. Roma friendships are also positively interpreted because of ethnic solidarity and mutual trust: "I understand better Roma [students] because non-Roma are [...] simply [...] they make differences that [...] you are Roma, you are Gypsy and you have no access to us." Or to put it differently: "I know that if something happens a non-Roma will not stand up for me, or if the problem will involve a non-Roma, he will rather back up his side, not mine" (Roma students from Slovakia).

In Slovakia, like in other Central European countries, it is common that Roma students are excluded from after-school activities or school trips. Various interpretations were given by Roma students and their parents to explain why they do not participate in those activities, but three claims were especially frequent: (1.) dislike of classmates or teachers, (2.) lack of financial sources, and (3.) parents worrying that "something bad could happen".<sup>5</sup>

Roma families live in more or less segregated housing areas in all the investigated Central European communities. Roma students usually live in large families with many relatives in their surroundings, and their lives are subsumed to the broader social units of their friends or relatives. When living together, Roma build a real community of established social networks and contacts with emotional and personal ties and mutual solidarity. As a 14-year-old boy living in a Roma neighbourhood in Hungary

<sup>5</sup> Similar fears also were discovered among Muslim parents, where worries may stem from similar causes: strong family ties and distrust of wider society outside their social networks.



said: "Those of us who live in the same settlement belong together. If anyone needs help we lend out a hand at once: for instance, someone needs to see the doctor and we have a car, so we can give him or her a lift and we offer our help straight away. We never ask the person to contribute to the cost of refuelling. Solidarity is in here."

Most of the Roma schoolchildren in Hungary live in ethnically segregated neighbourhoods, in so-called Roma "ghettos", surrounded by their relatives. This kind of isolation prevents them from having a private life, so they consider individual activities boring and pointless. Preparation for the next school day at home is approached with a similar attitude: "I do study, but it's sometimes boring, I have to say, boring, and then it's also difficult to study. It's boring being by myself, however, when my cousin N. comes by, or some other friends, we study together and have fun and then it's good."

These teenagers do not have a separate room and their flats lack space for privacy. Their free time is characterised more by social interactions than a set of individual ways of spending time.

The lack of intimate space was also stressed by the authors of the Czech Community Study. According to them, in Roma families children appear to be much earlier and more intensively included in the adult world than their majority peers. There are at least two reasons for this: (1.) they are customarily more exposed to adult entertainment or arguing and, compared to non-Roma children, they also typically take an active part in adult, often agitated, discussions (which then may make it difficult for them to behave "like good kids" at school: not to shout during classes, not to interrupt the teachers and classmates, not to use profanity, etc.); (2.) unlike non-Roma adolescents, Roma youth also tend to take part in money earning activities from an early age (in some cases already at the age of 14, especially during the summer school break, and of course "informally"), and are often supported in this by their own parents (for more details, see Marada et al., in this study).

The different structure and meaning of the home environment has huge impact on Roma students' life at school. On the one hand, home and school represent two different worlds for them: in the former, community values are on the top, whilst in the latter, individual success is praised and demanded. On the other hand, home and school spheres can easily overlap under conditions of segregated Roma schools or classes. This phenomenon was reported in Hungary where the most burning issue in "Roma-only" schools is that the school fails to understand the lives of the children and promote the creation of new spaces, new problems, and new relations. Hence, children maintain their activities and relations brought from home. The majority of the students of segregated classes know each other well from outside the school, as they are either relatives or neighbours, or have some friends in common. When opening the door and entering the school building, the environment does not carry in itself any sense of change for them. According to the teachers, one must encounter difficulties if the borderlines between social spaces – such as the family, friendships, or the school – get blurred, and the teacher is in charge of making teenagers focus on school matters again. They claim the problem is that students know each other too well in the Roma class: they hang out together after school; they live in the same neighbourhood; and they might also be relatives. Hence, they always discuss their own issues during the class, which makes the teachers' work difficult in such ethnically homogenous classes:

Interviewer: Do you mean that the school communities and communities outside of school are overlapping with each other?

Yes, there is no difference between the two. We, outsiders, have to figure out how we could become part of their lives, because they are living their lives the way they did at home. It's not that easy not to stop them when something occurs to someone and says something to a friend that this and that happened and how it happened and that is what I did. We have to try to bridge it and return to our original topic, since we have a task in class we have to focus on.

At schools where Roma students are enrolled into the "weaker" classes, interethnic relations may cross the line of differentiations between the classes. This issue was identified in Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary. In Romania, authors of the country Community Study noticed that Roma students did not feel such relations to be a means of ethnic "othering", and not even as causing some disadvantage, whether or not based on ethnicity; but they took it as something natural, and made the supposedly superior "others" seem inferior by calling them duds. They tacitly accept their "otherness" by avoiding occasions and places where they might not be welcome (like school festivities), though they do not explain their absence by this argument but mostly claim that these events are boring. Thus, also in this case, they try to symbolically change the hierarchy between the excluded and the excluding.

Students from Roma origins in the Central European countries experience even stronger verbal attacks from majority students than their ethnic minority peers in the West. Sometimes such aggression adopts the form of jokes; however, occasionally they may be manifested in more serious mocking or bullying. Jozef, a Slovak Roma boy, has good relations with a "good" non-Roma classmate (boy) with whom he spends a lot of time together. "He is more often with us than with whites". However, Jozef and his Roma friends feel embarrassed when they see that their non-Roma friend is laughing at a Roma joke or notes when Roma are being made to appear ridiculous. He says that they share their embarrassment with him: "When he is with us, we ask him why he laughed at such jokes. [We tell him]»You are either with us or with them!« " Jozef notes that sometimes teachers give a smile when hearing such jokes, or even make offensive remarks. For him, laughing at such jokes is a crucial attribute of the out-group of those who do not like Roma.

If they rarely occur, Roma boys may interpret interethnic friendships by claim that their majority friends are like Roma. "I have a friend, he's white and he often says, 'If I'm white, I'll kill myself.' Because he would like to be like Roma. Interviewer: And why? Boy: He has better relations with Roma than with whites." – As it seems, be they intra-group or inter-group relations, ethnicity is an inescapable dimension of togetherness and belonging.

## Conclusions

As a result of the types of schools chosen and of the underprivileged urban settings in which the community research took place, the general trend is that of a relatively low degree of educational integration of a considerable proportion of the ethnic minority students observed, at least in relation to the dominant norm in each of the countries involved. However, the distance between minority and majority adolescents, both in terms of their academic performances and their social relations, varies rather substantially across countries and to a lesser extent among the different schools in each country. Many extrinsic factors such as residential segregation, avoidance strategies of middle-class, majority member families, and tracking systems which result in the high concentration of ethnic minority students in certain types of schools and classes explain that individual schools do not always have the power to implement the integration measures that are required from them. Within schools it does appear, however, that teachers and administrators have some responsibility as to the manner in which classes are constituted and regarding the development of pedagogical measures that ensure at least minimal educational opportunities for minority youths.

We have seen how schools deal with ethnic minority students ranges from their negative segregation into relegated and devalued dead-end classes reserved for handicapped, troubled, or very low performing students – which do not address the particular needs of these (mostly Roma in the Central European countries) students, but rather seeks to preserve the majority from contact with them – to those schools which have recruited qualified personnel of ethnic minority origin and have developed specific pedagogical measures to respond to the needs of immigrant or bilingual students (Denmark and Sweden). In other national contexts, such as in Britain and France, where we observed the celebration of multiculturalism or the assertion of the principle of colour-blindness, the particular treatment of ethnic minority students does not appear to have such clear negative or positive consequences on their educational trajectories and academic performances.

As far as students' perceptions of their schooling is concerned, the varying strategies of commitment, instrumentation, and opposition revealed that – depending on both extrinsic factors such as parents' cultural capital, and intrinsic factors such as the existence of a clear hierarchy between classes – schools could represent, on the one hand, the unique means for individual success and emancipation, a possible investment in order to increase one's chances of overcoming the lower status associated with one's ethnic group, or become, on the other hand active agents of exclusion to be resisted. It appeared that the more underprivileged and potentially oppositional students were most sensitive to their particular school's policies and practices regarding differential treatment, while the highest performing, most committed students asserted an unflinching belief in the meritocratic principle regardless of the reality of segregation or of their actual chances of success.

The manner in which teachers relate to minority students is the result of a combination of national traditions and ideologies regarding the role which should be played by ethnicity and the recognition it is due, of the individual school's organisation and coherence (notably the authority of the school director and the manner in which any reform has been implemented), and of the training received by teachers in matters such as intercultural communication, bilingualism, and the implementation of a differential pedagogical style.

The analysis of some of the major means by which students identify themselves and assert similarities and differences with their peers revealed the fact that, compared to the often simplistic ethnic and cultural distinctions that adults tend to resort to, for minority youth there exist complex intersections between ethnicity, local neighbourhood identities, cultural style, leisure activities, and personal tastes. Youthful humour, interethnic banter, and the use of derogatory ethnic epithets can serve either as a way of releasing latent racial tensions, or as a means for deepening interethnic animosities and reinforcing strong socio-ethnic hierarchies. In this sense, teenagers can be regarded as a social group that is particularly sensitive to the dominant social hierarchies and racial stereotypes, and also as representatives of a globalised culture capable of transcending and subverting national traditions of differentiation and ethnic categorisation.

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**THE EXPERIENCES AND CONSEQUENCES OF 'OTHERING'**

**Ian Law, Margit Feischmidt, Sabine Mannitz,  
Gaby Strassburger and Sarah Swann**



## Introduction

The purpose of this cross-country comparative chapter is to provide a meta-analysis of the specific themes and issues examined in the nine Community Studies, produced by country teams in June 2010, with a specific focus on the experiences and consequences of "othering".

This essay presents a comparative analysis of the experiences of "othering", focusing first on the voices of young people examining how these experiences are understood and how responses are framed, and second, on voices of adult authority, including parents, teachers, and community representatives.

### **Voices of young people, student's discourses of 'othering', and the construction of difference**

This section identifies the ways in which students have understood and expressed their perceptions of the causes and manifestations of "othering". It starts with the description of the structural constraints delimiting a minority student's relations to the unmarked majority and to other minorities as well. In this regard, we identified two crucial delimiting factors. The first is residential segregation (students living in contexts of ethnic segregation have much less chance of having any out-group contact than those who live in mixed ethnic neighbourhoods). The second is school streaming that works most often in more obscured forms of ethnic separation. As a consequence, most studies showed that students, who, due to the related residential and school segregation as well as strong family ties, socialise only within the same ethno/religious group and have very rare – or even absolutely no – contact with "others". There is a second category, to which young people from ethnic minority backgrounds belong: those who have regular contact with peers belonging to different ethnic and religious minorities; however, they never or almost never get in touch with majority youth. Mixed peer groups – including the children of the poorest strata of the ethnic majority – are most common in the socially disadvantaged residential areas.

Many examples have shown us that the structural factors do not sufficiently explain the existence or lack of interethnic peer relations, and even less the form, the content, and the social consequences of these relationships. All these also hinge on cultural factors governing the perception of the involved relationships. These we try to comprehend through discourses and performative acts of "othering", which our target group is exposed to and takes part in as well (even if in a weaker structural position). We will also emphasise that "otherness" or ethnic difference is not experienced continuously in most mixed milieus. As we formulated elsewhere, ethnicity is experientially invisible or irrelevant in most nominally mixed interactions (of course, which does not mean that it is structurally irrelevant) (Brubaker et al. 2006: 302). The same is true of otherness as well, which we see as the core element of social construction of ethnicity. The experientially relevant "other" is created in certain moments of nominally constructed

interethnic relationships. Different cases will be compared here: on the one hand, the strength of ethno-racial perceptions in students' everyday relations, and on the other hand, the extent of the freedom to choose other categories for presenting oneself as similar to the mainstream or simply as not different from it.

Our third point summarises the typical topics and issues that we encountered in minority students' discourses of "othering", underlying not only the similarities but also the typical differences among diverse minorities and European countries. Here, two subsets of typical issues will be presented: first, those that are in closer relation with students' personal experiences of "othering", starting with narratives on (1.) teachers' fair and unfair attitudes towards minority students, continuing with stories about (2.) being treated differently because of language barriers, through (3.) conflicts around study trips and other extracurricular activities which raise basic questions concerning the school's relation to the students' private sphere, and finally (4.) differences in understanding what is appropriate concerning leisure activities, friendships, and partner relations. The second subset is related to more general topics starting with (5.) racism and discrimination on institutional and personal levels, including the media, and its coverage of the criminality issue, which works as validation of the most fundamental or radical version of "othering", and finishing with (6.) cultural and religious traditions being seen as a justification for incompatible lifestyles.

In the last part of our comparative analysis we will discuss the performative aspects of "othering": starting with (1.) verbal conflicts or insults using usually derogatory or racist terms, continuing with (2.) ethnically or racially framed teasing or joking, through (3.) self-confident avoidance or downplay (under-communication) of ethnicity, and finishing with the reactive showing off or over-communication of collective self in ethnic terms, often applying a subversive strategy.

## **The structural constraints of peer-group relations**

### **Residential constraints**

Residential segregation of most of the ethnic minority families with children was found to be one of the most general tendencies in the nine countries. At the same time, their selective inclusion in the school system – formal inclusion combined with various forms of ethnic and social exclusion – was also a very frequent phenomenon. As a consequence, for most ethnic minority students it is hard – or even impossible – to socialise with their majority (or ethnically unmarked) peers, even less with those who belong to a different social class than their own.

Among the communities in the "old" member states of the European Union, we found the most striking difference between the German and French case: despite similar cultural backgrounds of the ethnic minority groups, their chances of relating to the majority are quite different. In two districts of Berlin we found minority youth attending almost entirely segregated schools, consequently having almost no

contact with their majority peers despite the fact that they live in less segregated multicultural districts. In the two schools in Paris, where most students come from socially deprived urban neighbourhoods, the two schools appeared – as Claire Schiff (2010) formulated – more like spaces relatively protected from the harsh difficulties of social life and offering their students a chance to openness to other categories of young people. However, segregation is perceived by students in both cases in a positive way, as far as it protects them from confrontation with the "other" which may remind them of their disadvantaged status. (The last point, the protective effect of segregation, goes hand in hand with the exclusive inclusion of minority groupings that we will discuss later.)

Paradoxically, and certainly with local variations, "ghetto youth" seem to be the most integrated as far as the interethnic peer group relations are concerned. Being at the sites either in France or Hungary, in Denmark or Sweden, students of urban ghettos are most likely to refer to their neighbourhoods, the major distinction being between the "ghetto-youth" (*jeunes des cités*) and "the others". The difference between "us" and "them" is often seen as a determinant of their dressing style and of their behaviour in class. In fact, urban identities function as an implicit mode of social, ethnic, generational, and even academic distinction. These distinctions synthesise all the various dimensions of their identity, while permitting a degree of mixture between various ethnic groups since membership is acquired and not transmitted. Many students' feelings towards their local identities are highly ambivalent. The ghetto identity is the major source of belonging for young people who feel removed from their parents' sense of community and from the dominant national identity, too. At the same time the stigma attached to the image of the "ghetto youth" combines all the processes of differentiation and exclusion that impede their prospects for social integration (Schiff 2010).

Students stated that their friends were of several different origins and that they had met them in their neighbourhood or through primary or middle school. It was even more so in the Fraser area of Copenhagen where students also described their friendships with other immigrant peers as important and valuable. Some of the families themselves are mixed already. The mixed identity associated with the ghetto is constructed in opposition to the ways in which the ghetto is stigmatised by the outside world. However, in the case of Denmark the minority students going to a school situated in an upper middle-class environment declared that they got along with and had friends among their classmates. Pertaining to differences in various interethnic student relations, the authors of the Danish community study concluded "[...] the level of interethnic activities among students was high, as they say even surprisingly high. Signs of racism in student-student relations appeared to be largely absent" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

In countries where large immigrant minority communities are concentrated in certain urban districts and, at the same time, in certain schools young people do manage to socialise with other immigrants. This is the case of the two German sites (Berlin Moabit and Kreuzberg) reported on by Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz (2010):

[...] student peer groups are often mixed but usually Turkish and other different groups of Muslim students socialise with each other. But they rarely have German

friends because, as they pointed out, they hardly find any German families in their neighbourhood. This is a fact deriving mainly from the residential segregation of the immigrant population often legitimised with cultural differences on both sides. Another important reason is that German families who live in a neighbourhood with a large Turkish and Arab community show a strong tendency to enrol their children in private or church-based schools or to leave the neighbourhood. Students of Turkish, Arab or Muslim background who live in communities with lots of peers of similar backgrounds – with whom they understand each other “without words” – do not seem to feel any need to get into closer contact with German peers. Some students have even directly argued that it is a very good feeling to be in a school where minorities are in majority, and the similar can be true about the neighbourhood as well. They feel more relaxed and regard their neighbourhood as a kind of protection against being discriminated by the members of the dominant society.

The British site of our research, Northcity, has shown features of the youth ghetto life, which, although partly case-specific, illuminate something very general about this milieu. The issue of “postcode” gangs frequently emerged in discussions and how they worked was explained by a Caribbean girl. She used the example of walking into the territory of the rival gang: “So if I walked in to Northcity3 with a green bandanna on, I would probably get knocked out for wearing a green bandanna in a black bandanna area. And if a black bandanna came in to a green bandanna area the black bandanna would get banged up for wearing a black bandanna in a green bandanna area and same for all of them.” For some young people the postcode gangs were associated with ethnic minorities only, especially with Pakistanis, Somalis, and Yemenis. Pupils at one of the schools did, however, align themselves to the Northcity3 gang. Researchers found that age and gender differences (like ideas of “strong” masculinity) are very important in the formation of gangs. Concerning ethnicity, they claim, however, that there is a high degree of fluidity (Swann and Law 2010). The inter-gang relations are often obtrusive and, as a consequence, the relations between the different ethnic categories are also not necessarily friendly, but rather on the contrary, they are quite hostile. This is characteristic of the Caribbean and Pakistani youngsters in Northcity.

Extreme forms of segregation were found in the case of Roma adolescents in the four Central European countries. Due to desegregation policies initiated across the region, the majority of Roma are not enrolled in separate schools anymore. Nevertheless, in many cases they still go to separate classes often located in separate buildings. The large majority of these children come from segregated neighbourhoods as well. The consequence of the two simultaneous circumstances is that most of Roma pupils do not even meet non-Roma peers. As the author of the Romanian Community Study formulates, there is a lack of interethnic contacts across classes as there are no relations at all among them. But one may suppose that this is a hidden manifestation of at least the reluctance to share the school space with the “others” (perceived in ethnic and/or socio-economic terms). Roma students do not feel this as “ethnic othering”, and not even as a disadvantage based or not based on ethnicity, but they take it as something natural, and make inferior the supposedly superior others. They tacitly accept their “otherness”

by avoiding occasions and places where they might not be welcomed (like school festivities) (Vincze 2010). At the same time, the sense of difference between different Roma groups and families is more important for them than the difference that they feel towards the majority.

In Slovakia, three-quarters of the interviewed students live in segregated neighbourhoods. For them, the mixed schools offer the only possibility for interethnic socialisation. However, both Roma and non-Roma teenagers make a difference between the "integrated Roma" with whom Slovaks and Hungarians want to socialise and the "non-integrated" ones from whom they distance themselves. The refusal is often explained by majority students by their parents telling them to keep away. However, Roma students feel that the main barrier to friendship with their "majority" peers is that they are not "accessible" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

In Hungary, three different kinds of out-group social relations of Roma youth were identified. The most closed and segregated youths live in so-called "Gypsy colonies" with their families in deep poverty. In these colonies the social life of students is organised around their extended families; therefore, peer and family relations do not constitute two separate spheres in their life. In fact, not having other relations, the new generation reproduces the outcast situation, uninfluenced or even untouched by the school, and without any chance of breaking away. The world of the urban ghetto is quite different. Here, the most important point of reference is the peer group and it has a stronger class than an ethnic character. The Roma representation of the ghetto is, on the one hand, a majority construction. On the other hand, it is the focal point of a youth counterculture asserting itself in opposition to the latter, and more generally to the majority's racism by purposely combining global cultural styles with local ethnic traditions. The third category is formed by children of socially mobile parents having permanent jobs and living in lower-middle class neighbourhoods. To them, "being Gypsy" means the grievances caused by the majority society, standing as an obstacle in the way of individual success, while its communal component has completely vanished. They are usually atomised boys and girls who get mutual support from their schools and teachers, but remain in an in-between position in their peer relations characterised by a lack of ties in any direction (ethnic and non-ethnic) (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

### **Diverging school experiences**

In most case studies we have learned about two categories of minority students, those with career ambitions who think that school will help them to achieve their aims, and those who have no ambitions, no concrete plans, and therefore think that they do not need the school for getting along. As the authors of the Danish case study have suggested, both perceptions are accompanied by a special strategy towards schooling: the strategy of commitment and the strategy of instrumentation. (About their consequences upon "othering", see more details below in discussing its performative aspects .) Besides the two ideal types, there is one more: students who have ambitions, are committed to learning, but who feel that they are not supported enough. Some of them even think that this is because they are discriminated against by their teachers. This perception is most common in our sites in the "new" than in the "old" member states of the European Union that affect Roma students. However, in the French case, where the main distinction was between students in the non-vocational stream, who had usually chosen this path and

had specific career plans, and those in the vocational streams, who often had little idea of what they wanted to do, and among the latter ones, a high ratio of minority students were also complaining about poor advice and insufficient support by their teachers.

### *The experiential relevance of 'othering' or of being identified as different*

We supposed that the intention of individuals of an ethnic minority background was to distance themselves from their ethno-cultural "othering" and marking, though the relevance and the success of this intention could be very different. The theoretical foundation of our research allowed us to see the flexible and situational reality of ethnic distinctions and identifications and to differentiate situations when ethnic "othering" becomes relevant from other situations when students' ethnic identities remain in the background because a different set of categories are utilised to interpret the situation. This is even more so in the case of adolescents and young people who are struggling for social acceptance and identity in the different arenas and dimensions of their lives.

While we found in all sites that (virtual) ethnic "othering" was often irrelevant to students' daily experiences, there were considerable differences concerning how categories and experiences of "otherness" became prevalent and when. Perhaps one extreme is the case of the immigrant adolescents in the two Danish schools, about which the authors of the Community Study say:

Generally speaking, our impression from the individual student interviews is that they seem to distinguish themselves from experiences of being treated differently because of their ethnic minority background. They more or less try to describe how they are just like everybody else among their peers who they know from the school and the neighbourhood. One tentative explanation could be that they do not want to be looked at as something special just because of their ethnic minority backgrounds; and to some extent hesitate to answer the questions of the interview regarding their "ethnicity". However, this does not mean that that they are not at all concerned about how their daily life and future aspirations are affected by their position as ethnic minorities (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

It very often happens that the nominal difference – which is a virtual feature present in almost all mundane situations – will not be realised in practice and reflected by the usage of ethnic categories. Somewhat less prevalent, though present in many minority situations is the concrete refusal of being "othered", including a refusal to engage with the best-intended multiculturalist approach. This is what the authors of the case study in the United Kingdom found: at a surface level diversity is appreciated and positively valued; however, a considerable number of students do not want to take part in programmes aimed to promote inclusion representing a multicultural reality. They feel that ethnicity has become a constraint, a pressure coming – ironically – from the dominant society.

The other extreme is the situation of those Roma students whose sentiment of shame – because they are dressed improperly and regularly go to school hungry – and a common feeling of fear – because of the many experiences of humiliation suffered from their social environment – are embodied so deeply

that there are very rare moments in their life – and these are usually when they are among themselves – when they can be abstracted from these feelings. The deepest and the most unconsciously habituated distinction is when people avoid the physical proximity of the persons "othered" and try to keep the greatest physical distance possible. The Slovak Community Study documents the lack of ethnically mixed seating order in the classes that is all too frequent in Roma/non-Roma relations also in the other Central and Eastern European countries. Students sit in pairs and these pairs are self-selected. A generation ago the seating order was a pedagogical tool: excellent pupils were asked to sit with weaker pupils to "have a positive impact on them" and self-selection of pairs was tolerated only at the second stage of elementary school. Now, the autonomy of children to sit freely with whom they wish also has been extended to the lower grades of elementary school. This strengthened the tendency to form ethnically homogeneous pairs. Ethnically mixed sitting is increasingly taken as "non-standard". Non-Roma children regularly refuse to form pairs or hold hands with their Roma classmates (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010). The perceptual aspect of this kind of interpersonal hostility is a dichotomous set of ethno-categories that dominate Roma youngsters' view of "us" and "the others", as the authors of the Hungarian case study wrote about a very similar, deeply habituated situation of segregation in Chemtown.

Referring to one's identity by reflecting on collective experiences of being "othered" depends very much on the key aspects of one's social position. We know far too little about the important nuances to be able to address this issue in all its details. However, there are some connections that suggest that students who are successful in school and have future plans are realising a mobility project with the support of their parents. These adolescents seem to be less preoccupied with differences and they are even inclined to hide or downplay their experiences of injustices and discrimination. However, from the German and the Hungarian community study we have examples that show that the successful minority students develop a higher degree of ethnic and political consciousness and are more inclined to comment on grievances and put collective complaints on a political agenda.

## Issues of 'othering'

### *Teachers' fairness and unfairness*

Most students in our international sample think that they are more safe in their schools than they are in the broader society, and that their teachers are fairer than the adults of the majority in general, about whom most of them claim to be racist and discriminative. We heard complaints about minority students being treated differently by teachers in only a couple of cases. In Berlin, minority students complained about their teachers paying more attention to majority students and being stricter with minority students. Similar complaints had Roma students in Slovakia, Hungary, and Romania as well. However, this is far from being an objective statement. Pupils can have very different motives to blame their teachers. Nonetheless, what we can see from the international comparison is that there are schools and countries where students never complain about their feelings of systematically being discriminated and treated differently because of their ethnic origin or skin colour, and there are others where it is openly said that this happens regularly. Based on the experiences of students in the *Gesamtschule*, they are convinced that most of their teachers are not as they ought to be. Some students feel discriminated



against, others frustrated by their teachers, while yet others cannot understand why their teacher does not respect them (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

While British, French, Danish, and Swedish school staff seemed to be very conscious about the principles governing the relationship between schools and society and the role of the teachers in managing the conflicts and injuries arising from this relationship, their Central European colleagues declare that this is not their duty when faced with Roma students. Sometimes, even worse, they reproduce – unintended or not – the anti-Gypsy attitudes of the dominant middle class, be it Hungarian, Romanian Slovak, or Czech. As an example, the authors of the Slovak Community Study wrote that “[...] *the use of the adjective ‘Gypsy’ as a synonym of under-education and bad manners is rather widespread*”. As quoted earlier, Roma pupils from a Slovak school talked about a teacher who often made the following comment upon entering the classroom: *“I feel like in a Gypsy village!”* by which she meant that the classroom was messy and stinky (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

In all four Central European countries students complained that cases of harassment (oral or physical) among students were not punished at all by teachers. Teachers usually do not even notice these incidents because – as the interviews with teachers suggest – most of them think that the school is not about changing cultural habits and presumptions. However, neither of the schools facing problems with educating Roma children had any special programme that would support mutual friendships among youths from different social strata or ethnic groups. Neither of the schools in the study has a special programme supporting self-reflection of teachers in their daily communication with minority children (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

The cultural aspect of teacher–student relations is not only affected by students’ cultural background. Teachers are also an important component of the relationship. We assume that minority students in our French, Swedish, Danish, and partially British schools feel more comfortable and relaxed because in these sites one-third to half of the teachers have minority origins. The significance of minority teachers in the education of minority students was recognised in the “new” European Union member states as well. New programmes have been initiated to support the hiring of Roma teaching assistants. However, it will take a long time to reach the level of their Western counterparts and have schools with Roma and non-Roma students taught by both Roma and non-Roma teachers.

### *Linguistic defects as barriers*

There are certainly “objective” differences between minority and majority students that can be treated differently by teachers. One of these is minority students’ linguistic barrier that is more problematic in the case of first- than second-generation immigrants, and even less so for Central European Roma (though it exists even in the last case). We had the most first-generation immigrant students at our Danish sites, where students talked about their experiences with disadvantages in acquiring subjects and getting good grades due to their lower language competency than majority students. Teachers do not try to cope with the problem and sometimes they even make remarks on the language capacity of students during class, which the students sometimes find derogatory. The authors of the Danish Community Study, who paid more attention to the language issue, have found that spending more time in the country of immigration (Denmark) does not solve the problems of the national educational system with bilingual children because

they remain socialised, to a large extent, in their ethnic community. Others, who grow up in an urban ghetto become used to a special "multi-ethnolect", which is still far from the official school language:

It is hard to say if this linguistic style can be solely defined in terms of improper knowledge in Danish but interestingly, this way of expressing themselves shows the intersecting effects of a youth subculture (a form of rebelling by expressions) and "multi-ethnolect", and it seems this combination adds to the local dimensions of self-perception and identity. Multi-ethnolect is a term of language variety and stylistic practice associated with mixed groups of language users for whom Danish is a second language. This multi-ethnolect is known and developed among youngsters who are brought up in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods in Copenhagen, with Danish as their common language (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

### *Study trips and school festivities*

One of the most important themes among the sensitive issues targeting and thematising the process of "othering" in classroom relations was the question of students' participation in extracurricular activities, especially in study trips. In the "old" member states the problem rises from the general expectation of the schools that all children, regardless of their social, ethnic, and religious background, should participate in more than a day-long outdoor activity regularly organised at the end of each academic year. This is most problematic for Muslim families who think that teachers do not regard Islamic rules as acceptable or important. A mother argued in a focus group interview in Berlin:

Teachers think differently about us. They put our children under pressure. We see it each Ramadan, how hard they try to prevent our children from fasting. I'm sure they would also encourage our children to try things we don't want them to do. They would be really glad if our children would act and think like Germans do.

Another Turkish mother in this discussion group answered directly to this argument:

For me it's totally normal what the Germans expect. We live in Germany and we should strive for integrating. This isn't an Islamic country. I always sent my daughter to class trips and never had any problems. I have a good relation with her teachers because I understand them. One cannot forbid children everything just because we were educated like that. Our children's future is in Germany so they have to conform to this country.

This remark is instantly answered by a third mother:

Who says that we don't adjust? We do follow all the rules and laws. Our children participate in everything, like daily excursions and all the other things.

The latter continues:

One does not have to adjust in every aspect. The Germans also have to understand that we have a different religion and different opinions on how we want to live our private lives. But teachers put such a big pressure on us that I don't know how to react. They should accept the differences. Do we criticise their way of living? No, we don't, but neither should they.

The argument makes clear that class trips transcend a line where school life interferes with private life in a way some parents cannot accept (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

The situation is exactly the opposite in Central European schools having a large number of Roma students. In Slovakia, as well as in Romania and in one of the sites in Hungary, Roma students do not attend any of the extracurricular activities (including the ones which take place in the school), but for very different reasons. In these countries the graduation ball after the last year (8th grade) of primary school has a similarly important and crucial role as the study trips for Muslim youth in Germany. The Slovak Community Study mentions the telling example of a young man, an excellent student, who did not take part in this festivity. His explanation was that he did not go because nobody would have danced with him. Others both in Slovakia and in Romania say that in fact they do not want to participate because these events are boring, and nobody likes them, including their majority peers. From a sociological point of view this, however, cannot be explained other than by being the manifestation of the internalisation of a very cruel and powerful social distinction. In this sense, what happens at school festivities resembles the general patterns of public celebrations in the same localities. (The authors of the Slovak Community Study added the information that in the studied localities there were no or only strikingly few Roma taking part in some events like the Juniáles festivity at Egrešová School in Krásne or the "Nightingale" singing contest in Hrdé where there were no Roma pupils among the representatives of either of the primary schools from the Hrdé district ([Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010])). We experienced just the opposite, namely the most general tendency for the exclusion of Roma people (of different ages) from spaces and public ceremonies, in Beta School in Coaltown. The eighth-grade Roma students were accompanied by their families and relatives to graduation ceremony which was then followed by a celebration either at home or in a restaurant, similar to weddings or baptisms. The photos were organised in an album for both classes and one could recognise that Roma and non-Roma students were standing next to each other (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

### *Leisure, gender, and partner relations*

There are some further issues that create and habituate cultural and religious differences in the field of leisure and age-specific activities of young people. According to the interviewees in Berlin, German, Turkish, and Arab youths have different time limits for leisure activities (evenings spent within or outside family), different locations where peers meet (with or without alcohol, with or without social control), and with a different composition of peer-groups (mixed gender vs. gender-separated groups). From the beginning of adolescence these differences seem to get even larger. In the eyes of Muslim youths and teenagers, the major distinction between them and their German, French, or English peers is

their different understanding of gender roles and partner relations. The latter are characterised by more sexual freedom than they think to be appropriate. In their opinion Germans do various things that are unacceptable in their own community. Most examples may be interpreted as somehow relating to the danger of sexuality without any social control. Like, for example, to come home late at night or to drink alcohol is probably understood as a danger of losing self-control. Clubbing and attending discotheques are further examples for the type of behaviours that are considered as unacceptable from their own perspective (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

Consequently, not only liaisons between Muslim girls and Christian boys (and vice versa) become prohibited, but also a culturally defined distance and difference between Muslim and Christian girls as well as Muslim and Christian boys turn out to be more and more important. (This is certainly less significant for those young people for whom religion is just a symbolic issue that does not regulate their choices.) Although the most distinct gender roles and concomitant norms are created by Islam, different understandings of gender roles can be found in the Roma/majority relations as well. In the case of a Romanian Roma group (the Gábor Roma) religion, a fundamental evangelical church, together with a very strong patriarchal ethnic ideology, is the main guardian of ethno-specific gender distinctions. Though generally not accepting public education, the attitude to school has different implications for boys and girls. The girls do not reach other levels of education than that of secondary school. There are many cases when Roma girls abandon school because of family traditions; for example, they may marry at the age of 12 or 13.

However, young women's relation to school, as well as the school's effect on their understanding of gender roles is much more complex. Eniko Vincze (2010) gave a deep analysis of this ambivalent relationship. The young mother of one of her Roma interviewees from another Roma group observed that although "[...] each and every Romani girl quickly falls in love [...], we, the emancipated Roma, do not marry at the age of eleven or twelve". These kinds of differentiations prove that the boundaries between different Roma groups are also maintained in terms of norms referring to female sexuality, marriage, and childbirth. Nevertheless, our interviews show that even the "non-traditional" Roma mothers of today's teenage daughters advise them about not marrying and giving birth at an early age, they themselves usually having married before their twenties and abandoned or never attended school. And frequently, these teenage daughters do have older sisters who have similar life trajectories to their mothers. Altogether, one may conclude that even if women from these Roma groups aspire to give up their traditional destinies shaped by a patriarchal gender order, they hardly practice those models of life that they would like to follow (attempting by this to become "a civilized modern woman"). In this way they remain in-between two value systems, but have their strategies for solving the tensions resulting from this situation: while mentally detaching themselves from models that they did not agree with (incorporated by Gábor Roma), being unable to put into practice their options for lifestyles that they consider positive, they pass the mission of accomplishing the latter on their daughters. At their turn, as children of their times, these girls (and in another sense boys, too) embody a new generation that give the signs of being ready to transform the symbolic/desired integration into a pragmatic/fulfilled one among others through (re)negotiating their assumed Roma bonds (Vincze 2010).

Besides the religious differences, the ethno-cultural proscriptions which prohibit any intimate relationship between Roma and non-Roma peers are sometimes even stronger and (re)produce the

perception as well as the social reality of a caste-like hierarchical system. Financial possibilities and the place of residence is another factor limiting students' possible options of leisure activities. Many Roma boys living in villages or ethnic slums, who would like to do different sports, cannot afford this. The separation of places for leisure activities, or rather the exclusion of certain groups from the common facilities, is the most powerful form of "othering", or more precisely of racism. The authors of the Slovak Community Study give the example that there are several discos in one of the studied localities where Roma are barred from going in. At the same time, there is at least one pub that is considered to be a "Roma pub" and non-Roma people avoid it (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

We were expecting that ethnicity would be less relevant in many respects for students than other age-specific differences such as different dress or music styles. This expectation was only confirmed by research in the British case of Northcity. Here students openly discussed social groupings concerning dress styles and music tastes. Adolescents reported socialising with others from a range of different ethnic backgrounds, so on the surface ethnicity did not appear to be significant: "Everyone is just like mixed, like sometimes you will see White people together, sometimes you will see Black people, Pakistani people, White people, and sometimes you will just be with Emos and everyone just mixes really" (Caribbean girl, School 2, cited in Swann and Law 2010).

### *Racism and discrimination*

Concerning the students' reports on cases of discrimination and their general experiences with and perceptions of racism, our researchers have identified very different situations in the nine case study countries. In some countries, for example, in France, young people reported having very few experiences of racism, while for others, like the Hungarian Roma, racism as an act of exposure and its legitimising ideology seemed to be a central topic.

Claire Schiff (2010) writes the following about France:

[...] in individual interviews it appeared quite clearly that most students did not wish to portray themselves as victims of "othering" and that for this reason they were very circumspect in their answers to direct questions regarding their personal experiences of racism or discrimination. Similarly, relatively few of the students interviewed offered testimonies about having personally been a victim of racial discrimination in school or outside of school. Several students specified that while they had not "yet" experienced any discrimination because they were still in school, they expected that such a thing might happen to them someday.

The polar opposite was evident in the case of Hungarian Roma. The most frequently heard narrative modality in which the social experience of being Roma was presented was various forms of complaints. The "ethnic complaints" of the young girls and boys are much like those told by their parents, reinforced by their experiences of discrimination in the workplace, in their interactions with officials, and in many different informal interactions. These experiences are complemented by age-group-specific grievances arising from contacts with anti-Gypsy and racist youths and music subcultures, especially virulent in Chemtown and the neighbouring villages, that is, the research site in the north-eastern part of

Hungary. Students attending segregated "Gypsy" classes, however, meet the symbols and representatives of subcultures of skinheads and "national romanticism" not only in the street and in bars but also at school, reminding them day-to-day of the fears provoked by such phenomena (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

Though the complaints are generally somewhat less central, the experience of being "racialised" and discriminated against was presented in the Slovak, Romanian, and the Czech case. The experiences of those who have darker skin are considered to be worse than those with pale skin. One of the Slovakian Roma parents explained that one part of the family has light skin and they experience decent treatment, while "those who have dark skin and low education are totally lost" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010). The moments when they were "uncovered" are very cruel and traumatic. A young woman told how she was punished when her Roma origin was revealed. Tamara told us how she was "uncovered" as Roma when her boss met her with her older daughter, who had darker skin colour than she and her younger daughter. She said that she was later fired as her boss hated Roma. Many students share their experiences (after being repeatedly invited to do so) of "othering" only after being pushed aside by their classmates (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

Hierarchical or conflicting relations reproduced by structural and institutional forms of discrimination are accepted as a frequent characteristic of minority-majority relations. However, it can be peculiar for relations among different minority groups, too: the Pakistani community differed from the Caribbean community in the United Kingdom in the sense that most Pakistani students lived in a traditional "stable" family structure of married parents, siblings, and extended families. Strong family ties and cultural values potentially gave them a stronger sense of identity. Living in predominantly Pakistani neighbourhoods also potentially gave a stronger sense of community. Unlike the experiences of the students from the Caribbean, Pakistani adolescents never brought up the issue of racism as a matter affecting their own lives and some parents also shared this perception. On one hand, all parents felt that life in the United Kingdom offered their children better opportunities than living in Pakistan (Swann and Law 2010). At the same time, many members of the Caribbean community were hyper-aware that ethnic disparities still continued to exist:

If you look at every particular statistics in this country; if you look at the prison system you will see that there is a high proportion from the BME [Black Minority Ethnic] people in the prison system. If you look at education you will see that BME are 3–6 times more likely to be excluded than the White counterparts. If you look at Middle Management, you will see that there are only a low per centage of BME people and the same with the Police. It is the same old, same old particular problem (second generation Caribbean man) (Swann and Law 2010).

Criminalisation is one of the worst and most oppressing forms of racist perceptions. This is usually linked to the image of the urban ghetto or the ethnic slum but often to concrete ethnic categories as well. In the British case study this aspect of racism was more deeply analysed, but it is also relevant to other sites. Society's expectations of Caribbean boys were felt to be extremely low, even to the point of being dangerous, "He sells drugs, he uses knives and guns, he isn't a very nice person, be scared of that



person, your phone will get stolen" (Caribbean girl, School 3). Similarly a focus group discussion described much of the same: "And, yes, if you're a Black person with a hood, they straight away assume that you're a criminal. Yes, a gangster and everything. If you see a Black guy with a hood on then you're just going to walk the other way, aren't you?" (School 2, focus group discussion). Blackness is symbolically threatening with its associations of drug culture, crime, and therefore danger, which means that Caribbeans are more likely to be avoided or shunned in public spaces (Swann and Law 2010).

The racist images of minorities are, to a large extent, produced by the media and students from immigrant or minority backgrounds are aware of it and its consequences. Negative images of Muslims delimit their public reputation and the chances for social recognition of youngsters belonging to many different minority groups, even in those countries where discrimination and everyday racism do not belong to students' personal experiences. This is the case of the minority students in Copenhagen who reported investing enormous efforts in distancing themselves from perceptions of immigrants being associated with gang crime, social problems, and religious fundamentalism.

### **Deprecating cultural or religious traditions**

A special form of discrimination is the lack of recognition of the right to difference. The most salient manifestation is when students experience being disparaged if they show their religious or cultural identity. As the authors of the German Community Study formulated, several students reported about discrimination because of their headscarves. One of them told of teachers in primary school who criticised her headscarf and told her to remove it in sports: "One female teacher was so brutal. She once even forced me to leave the sports hall without my headscarf." Now, in the gymnasium she is allowed to wear a headscarf. "They accept it. Therefore, I like to be here. Teachers here are used to us." Conflicts between Muslim girls and teachers about covering the hair may be seen as somehow "traditional", if we take into mind that the girl's mother already faced plenty of problems because of her decision to wear a headscarf when she was nine. Her father went to school to explain that he did not expect his daughter to cover her hair but that it was she who decided to do so (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

Many students are annoyed by teachers who frequently force discussions about issues like headscarves, arranged or forced marriage, and family life in Islam. Yet these teachers do not show any intention to enter an open discussion but just want to make clear what their own perspective is:

I have no idea why we are talking about these things. What should we learn from these discussions? Nothing! What they really want is to blame us. Even if we explain why certain things make sense or have to be seen another way, they stick to their opinion. Never make a difference between Islam as the religion, on the one hand, and Muslims who are sometimes acting badly, on the other. It's like the media. If there are German families who have abused their children, you will not read very much about it in the newspapers. But if a Turk or an Arab does something wrong, newspapers are full of it (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).



In the two Danish schools minority students also registered some complaints about their teachers' intention to talk about cultural differences using them, the immigrant students, as personal examples. Although this happens with the best intentions, certain students disagree because they feel that it renders more difficult their strategy to become similar and disguise their special cultural habits in the school environment.

Deprecating is certainly not the only way cultural peculiarities of minority students are treated in the studied European public schools. There are many schools, like the German gymnasium that the young woman quoted above attends, which have a kind of multicultural policy. However, in the critical eyes of the adolescents, its negative aspects are dominant. As the authors of the British Community Study have shown, although there were schemes in place that aimed to recognise and promote diversity and increase community cohesion among different ethnic groups, in practice they were not utilised effectively as learning resources. This was a point brought about in student discussions about Black History Month: *"We haven't done anything on Black history; I've done nothing on other people's history either"* (Caribbean boy, School 3). Black History Month takes place every October in Britain to specifically highlight Caribbean and African achievements, icons, cultural history, and experiences. Although posters were put around school to promote Black History Month, there were not any learning activities within lessons around it (Swann and Law 2010).

Students in the Central European sites are not complaining about the lack of representation of the community or their cultural peculiarities. We encountered one initiative in south-western Hungary where one of the schools attended by a large number of Roma started to deal openly with Roma identity. Since lots of Roma children feel ashamed about their origins, the school put a special emphasis on showing the positive values of Roma culture. They had a "Gypsy club" where once a week, in a two-hour session, children learnt dances, songs, and tales. This activity stopped two years ago due to a lack of financial support. However, Roma students do not miss it and generally they did not express a desire for more Roma recognition in the curriculum or in extracurricular activities. This is because the initiative started at the moment when the majority of Roma population of the respective locality (and even more of the youngest generations) had already been acculturated and had lost their emotional ties to their language and specific traditions.

The most eloquent counter-example in the Central European sites was that of Gábor Roma, and similar traditional Roma groups can be found all over the region. Their otherness is perceived by the outside world with a special mixture of consternation and disdain, while the members of the group look at themselves with some kind of pride. Eniko Vincze (2010) explains their "ethnic pride" in the following way:

This is about the pride of their mother tongue that also functions as a medium through which social and cultural norms are transmitted. Their dress (particular hat, long moustache for men, coloured silk skirt for women, coloured blouse with various patterns, pleated apron coloured as the skirt and head scarf) makes them different not only from the majority, but also from other Roma. They also guard their distinctiveness through specific marriage practices. They marry at a young age and parents choose partners for their children exclusively from other Gypsy-Gábor families.

## Performative aspects of 'othering' in everyday interactions

In the following paragraphs we will change our focus from the discourses and issues of "othering" to the performative aspects of the everyday interethnic interactions and the acts of identifications. We will present four ideal types of "othering", partly inspired by the analytical framework mapped out in one of our earlier works (Brubaker et al. 2006: 301–315), and partly relying on the comparative analysis of the ethnographic material of the EDUMIGROM Community Studies. This perspective highlights very clearly that being different is not a continuous experience or issue in minority youths' lives and social relations. It comes up in a situational way, largely in ritualised forms of communication.

### Verbal conflicts, insults

We begin with conflicts and insults that show the intersection of different reasons and frameworks for the interpretation of everyday relations. Ethnic or racial tensions, animosities, and conflicts almost never manifest themselves in a "pure" form independent of other dimensions of social relations that involve distinctions based on factors such as residence, academic performance, attitudes in class, style, migration, or simply interpersonal affinities or animosities. Claire Schiff (2010) has also pointed out that it was impossible to interpret the testimonies and observations about conflicts and tensions among students or between students and school personnel in terms of a direct causal effect between the ethnic origins of the individuals involved and the particular instance of rejection or opposition observed. In fact, what appeared to the outside observer as the most frequent and often violent manifestation of racism, i.e., the use of insults and derogatory comments by students in reference to each others' ethnic origins, was not regarded, at least explicitly, by the protagonists as expressions of racism. When questioned about their propensity to tease each other about their ethnic and racial origins, minority students, in particular, would say that it was precisely because they could not be suspected of actually thinking what they were saying (in other words of being racist), that they were allowed to say it (Schiff 2010).

While the ambivalence of these situations has been emphasised by most researchers in the "old" European Union member states, there is a striking difference in the majorities' relations to Roma in most Central European countries. As the author of the Slovak study has emphasised, the most frequent form of learning of one's otherness is through being the target of verbal abuse. For example, while complaining about situations when they were called "Gypsy", one student remembered, "I didn't tell anything anybody. It was that way. It was such a peculiar feeling. Then it stopped as I have grown older." "Softer" forms of chanting (calling, "Hey, Gypsy") are embarrassing as well. Another teenager remarked on how it felt very unpleasant and frustrating that her schoolmates regularly treated her differently because of her darker skin: "It's [disgusting] this shouting [...] For instance, if a Roma girl goes around, they start to shout at her: 'there the Gypsy goes, look at her, Gypsy'. However, if a white girl goes around, it's normal [nobody cares]" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

The Hungarian Roma youth living in the ghetto district of Coaltown also complained about the verbal insults which they had to endure from their Hungarian peers and, first of all, from those whom they label as "racists". When asked about such a situation, two young interviewees described it as follows:

Someone says something, I say something back, and then the fight is on.

Tell me one or two stories like that!

Last time, down where I live, like a street or two from my house this guy was walking along and he says "What's up, Gypsy?" just like that, when I never said anything to him. I went up to him and said, "Who are you calling Gypsy?" and then kicked off...

Do they call other people their names, too?

Well, that's pretty standard in school. Everybody calls everybody else names, but that's just kidding around.

Can you help me understand the difference between the kind of calling you names that's just joking and the kind you take seriously?

Well, they can also say "What's up, Gypsy?" but they do it jokingly. So I understand that as being a joke. If he's serious, he'll come over, start pushing me around, like that one time, and then that's it. Then I get riled up, too (Fleischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

## Teasing and joking

As shown in the above example, young people in all countries in our sample find kidding and teasing, which combines humour with structural constraints, the most acceptable ways of playing with their "otherness". The manifestation of these "fun" instances are, nonetheless, very different concerning their forms and outcomes. The most common subject of teasing is skin colour, as the following citation from a Hungarian mixed focus group discussion shows:

[...] but we have our little jokes. Like, for example, chocolate boy, something like that. That's how we show F. we love him.

Feri, who was mentioned in the dialogue above, is a successful and popular Roma student among his peers, not so much because of his academic achievements but because of his sporting prowess and his masculinity, as one girl characterised:

Like, F., who said like, I'm F. in all the capital, the big badass, would like shush me, but he was just kidding around like, when he said "shut it" and he's the one who usually says things like, "what's wrong, Vivi, don't you like coloured people?" but he's only kidding around."

Different possibilities for or different restraints on ethnic teasing can mark the difference between majority and minority participants of such interactions. In this regard it is worth recalling the earlier presented story of a Slovak Roma boy who was telling about his good relations with a "good" non-Roma classmate with whom he spends a lot of time. "He is more often with us than with whites."

However, as he pointed out, he and his Roma friends feel themselves embarrassed when they see that their non-Roma friend is laughing at Roma jokes or remarks that make the Roma seem ridiculous. "When he is with us, we ask him why he has laughed at such jokes. [We tell him] You are either with us or with them!" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010). Joking is not always so different from insults; the mixture of the two is characterised with an ethnographic example in the Community Study in the United Kingdom. In a focus group discussion about connections to other countries, one Caribbean boy commented:

"Ah, Pakistan. They used to run round playing football in bare feet" [laughs], to which the Pakistani boy responded with, "Ha-ha, no, they didn't". Later on when asking a Pakistani boy why having more Pakistani teachers would be a good thing, the same Caribbean boy responded, "They have more fear of terrorists" [laughs], to which the Pakistani boy responded, "I'll slap you, you Black shit" [laughs]" (Focus group, School 2).

Although both boys were laughing, which suggests harmless fun, there was a deeper layer of significance behind these exchanges. These were not examples of injecting humour into social interaction. Neither did it seem to be a marker of social intimacy. Rather these were verbal jabs given by the Caribbean boy to the Pakistani boy and the laughter from both served to reduce the potential tension. When the meaning of these remarks was challenged, the Caribbean boy stated:

"No, it's just a joke; we are only messing about with each other". However, there was a feeling in all three schools that suggests a wider social division between the two groups than school-based issues. What was significant was that Pakistanis tended to "accept" these exchanges. Although there was evidence of actively challenging it through "I'll slap you, you Black shit". This was a limited and highly constrained form of resistance (Swann and Law 2010).

The author of the French Community Study also emphasised the role of joking and teasing in reference to one's ethnicity using terms that referred to each other's country of origin, to stereotypes concerning immigrants "fresh off the boat", or to particular representations about the negative characteristics of various ethnic groups. This kind of bantering, most frequent among minority students, often expressed itself as a form of competition between groups in view of proving the "superiority" of one's own community over that of the "adversary". Throughout the fieldwork it appeared as a common feature of youthful collective verbal exchanges in the multiethnic urban neighbourhoods in which the research took place. Students from majority origins usually do not participate as actively as their minority peers, perhaps because they are more at risk of actually appearing to believe what they are saying, and thus of being accused of being racist by others. Majority and minority students are as likely to be designated by such jokes, although the stereotypes concerning the different groups are different. While Arab students are more readily portrayed as delinquents or terrorists, Black students are portrayed as lazy and uncivilized, and whites or, as students say, the "French", are more often cast in the roles of nerds, the overly effeminate or spoiled rich youngsters (Schiff 2010).

## **Avoidance or downplay**

When students comment on situations of conflict or teasing, they tend to give them an ethnic interpretation – this is illustrated by most of the examples above – but in other situations they may downplay the role of ethnicity, and moreover, neglect even the most plausible racist motivations. The author of the French Community Study emphasises that the minority youth in Paris and Bordeaux deny the clearly racist motivation of ethnic/racial teasing, because their primary intention is to minimise the ethnic dimension of interpersonal relations (Schiff 2010).

When minority students carry out a strategy of avoiding ethnicity or downplaying their experience of different treatment, they can do this with two different intentions or motivations. They avoid it rather unconsciously, because ethnicity is simply irrelevant for their social identity and self-understanding, whereas they are preoccupied with other issues and try to keep the communication on generation-specific topics. On the other hand, it implies a more conscious effort by minority individuals who would like to be accepted and appreciated by the school system or/and by their peers, and to this end they try to hide everything from their personal story that they feel will impede them in this effort.

The authors of the Danish Community Study found that this strategy is characteristic of students who, on one hand, seem to be aware of their "otherness" (and assertively keep contacts with their "own" people), but, on the other hand, seem to have aspirations to be accepted otherwise: they rather think ethnicity neither will be a "capital" nor a "hindrance" in making their careers (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen, 2010). In the Central European countries the Roma have very little chance to downplay their ethnicity, except for those who have a solid social and economic background and who are integrated both in terms of their residence and schooling. They also have the freedom to strengthen their other identities and ties.

## **Showing off**

The gap between minority students' aspirations and their limited chances of success in school, as well as their inferior position in many peer relations, create a diffuse yet persistent feeling of dissatisfaction and demotivation. What the authors of the Danish Community Study are proposing in two different perceptions of and strategies towards schooling – the strategy of motivation and the strategy of instrumentation – is characteristic of most cases examined in this project. The two strategies are very much in synchrony with the last two strategies of handling "otherness" in everyday situations. The strategy of avoidance and downplay is strengthened by an attitude of subordination of all other interests to those of schooling and to efforts for getting ahead. This results in a strictly disciplined lifestyle, where showing off is linked to an oppositional attitude towards schooling. Students in the latter category found the school boring and they paid more attention to peer relations. Their feeling of hopelessness that is transformed into the rejection of the school system is expressed through unruly behaviour, constant banter in class, absenteeism, and hypersensitivity to expressions of criticism on the part of teachers.

Whether this anti-school peer pressure permeates the general atmosphere of the class and student relations, such as is the case in the boys' vocational classes in Brassens in France, or whether it appears more latent and intermittent, such as is the case in the classes where girls are present, is not linked in any obvious manner to the proportion of minority students in the class or to their particular

influence. Although the two opposing figures of the submissive versus the rebellious student tend to be racialised in common sense representations, in the actual situations observed or recounted those who are teased and rejected by their peers for being too studious may be of minority origin (especially, if they are first-generation migrants), while one finds majority origin youth being some of the toughest and most oppositional students (especially, those who have grown up in public housing projects) (Schiff 2010). The acts of opposition to the school regime are very similar in the Central European countries as well, smoking in the school, running off from school during classes, hanging out in the streets or in shops near at hand, and provoking smaller or bigger affrays and disturbances. The oppositional attitude sometimes finds its form and frame of meaning through ethnicity, where this is used as a basis to show off their repression and subvert racist discourses.

Despite the oppositional version of showing off, rooted in and mixing with youth subcultures, there are occasionally special events that work in a traditional sense as public representation of certain minority communities. Muslim religious holidays, such as Ramadan or the various Eïds, are occasions during which students tend to assert more openly their ethnic pride. In the Paris site, in particular, there is a considerable amount of peer pressure for students of Muslim origin to "show off" their religiosity during these periods. On such occasions religious affiliation seems more akin to respect for youthful standards of what is "cool", than to an organising principle of one's life. The fact that religiosity is more symbolic and externally determined among most students belonging to the second and third generation is made more obvious in contrast to the few cases we encountered of first-generation students from Muslim countries (Schiff 2010).

## **Voices of adult authority**

This section presents the ways in which teachers, parents, and community representatives have understood and expressed their perceptions of the causes and manifestations of "othering". This includes their assessments of whom or what is responsible for the relevant social differences, and who should do what to solve the problems of differentiation and inequality that influence their own pedagogical successes in terms of students' school performance, and finally, also students' life chances, which depend on what school exams they have gained. These discourses evolve around key explanations including the role of the family; the role of ethnicity, culture, religion, and race; or the role of socio-economic differences/class. First, the views of teachers are analysed, and this is then followed by an examination of parents and communities' views.

### **Parents' views**

In the cases of France, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, structural discrimination was understood to a certain extent by a person's given physical and neighbourhood location as parents were able to articulate physical ethnic boundaries in the cities they worked and lived. Although issues regarding the families'



low socio-economic status remained fairly hidden during interviews with parents, their "exposed socio-economic position in society" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010) was signalled, as already discussed, through a distinctive language style such as "multi-ethnolect" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010) and fragments of discourse. In Romania, Roma parents talked embarrassing situations: "when the school asks for money; however, they should not do this, they make you feel ashamed in front of other parents if you are not able to pay". Financial insecurity, combined with the peripheral physical position of one's neighbourhood and limited social networks, meant that parents did not have much opportunity to help their children overcome existing obstacles in entering the labour market and become an integrated part of mainstream society. As a result, the parents' disadvantaged position and general low sense of status towards themselves in relation to mainstream society were often unwittingly transferred to their children.

The educational background of students' parents was modest for the most part. Most parents had not advanced past compulsory education. Most were working on temporary contracts in low-status jobs usually in the service industry. Some were receiving some form of welfare provision such as unemployment benefits. To raise income, some had undertaken illegal or semi-legal activities in the past (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010). Their own low socio-economic status and experience of being excluded from the job market seemed to prompt their ambitions for their children. This seemed to be the case in Sweden, in particular. However, there were disparities in how ethnic minority parents framed their children's success and achievement in school. On the one hand, many parents viewed school as providing an opportunity to "succeed" in life by gaining qualifications that would enable entry into a high-status career. Parents justified the importance of school by drawing on their own difficulties as adults arising from their own insufficient schooling. In Germany, Romania, the United Kingdom, Denmark, and Sweden, parents spoke about wishing their children entering high-status careers in law, medicine, and teaching or as a pilot. From this point of view, education was worth investing in. This sense of ambition seems to have been transmitted to their children as there was – as it was already demonstrated – a common perception of some ethnic minority students having a higher sense of ambition. However, although many parents understood the importance of good educational performance, many doubted that their children would have equal chances in the labour market. This was the case for Roma parents in Hungary. Parents in Denmark supported their children but also felt their children were disadvantaged by inadequate resources such as the supply of teachers in their particular schools. In other countries some parents did not consider education as a source of social mobility at all. For example, in Romania and the Czech Republic, some parents tried to guide their children towards traditional crafts because of family traditions that were a way of maintaining identity within ethnic confines.

Despite the apparent enthusiasm for education, in practical terms, parents' participation in school life often was low, perhaps reflecting an ingrained attitude of despondency resulting from their structural position. Their low participation meant that they often did not understand what was required of their children and so their expectations were often misinformed. Many parents who migrated as adults did not know much about the country's education system and had to rely on the information they got from their children. Although parents saw it as their responsibility to support their children, by making sure they do their homework and assisting with assignments, many simply could not. Several parents in the Swedish and Danish samples expressed difficulties because of limitations in the national language,



foremost expressed by poorly-educated parents. Likewise, the Gypsies in the United Kingdom who had undergone some schooling nevertheless experienced severe problems as they could not read or write. As one mother commented, "I just write on the letter 'too hard, my child cannot do this'. [...] Do you think I can read or write? Do you think I can do miracles? I'm only barely starting myself do you know what I mean? I'm not confident, I can do it but I'm not confident, you need more confidence."

Parents who were highly educated were able to manipulate strategies to improve the educational situation for their children by transferring them to "better" schools where they would benefit widely from social networks. This was the case in Sweden and the United Kingdom. School reputation tended to be learnt via informal social networks in the United Kingdom.

Second-generation parents had better personal insights since they once had been part of the system themselves. This worked as both a benefit and a constraint. Parents' own negative experiences influenced the way they looked at their children's schooling in the present. In particular, Gypsies in the United Kingdom and Roma in Romania shared, among many commonalities of experience, community-wide memories of the persecution their ancestors had suffered in the Second World War. In Slovakia, however, Roma memories of this period seemed lost forever, as the generation of Roma survivors from that period had already died and their experiences and memories seem not to have been shared with or preserved by their descendants. Stemming from their own negative experiences, the main parental strategy in most countries seemed to be one of protecting their children against discrimination.

The sense of cultural divide or cultural conflict between home and school emerged through parents' narratives. It expands to school trips where parents feel immense trepidation about their offspring being taken away. Among the Roma in Romania and Gypsies in Britain, school rules and daily participation in activities with children of different ethnicity is – because of old customs – a threat to cultural traditions. Likewise, earlier reference was made to parents in the Czech Republic who tried to steer their children towards traditional crafts. This can be viewed as a means of ensuring identity is maintained within ethnic confines.

While there was a clear focus on higher education both among poorly-educated parents and those with an academic background in Sweden, the educational background of Pakistani parents in the United Kingdom did seem to matter more. Some poorly-educated Pakistani mothers had a firmly placed belief in the role of serendipity for their children to succeed in their academic career as well as wider life. Similarly the Roma in Romania expressed their belief in "luck".

The judgement of parents was often influenced by the general atmosphere and ethos of the school. In some countries the school context provided a sense of hierarchy, "an imaginary top chart" (Romania) that was emotionally transmitted to parents. Complaints about teachers and/or school tended to come to the surface later in interviews, presumably because respondents felt trepidation in expressing their "true" feelings immediately for fear of negative academic scrutiny. In Romania the researchers note, for instance, that "[...] at the beginning everybody thought [sic] saying that they were pleased and 'everything was quite fine', but this gave way to complaints which were articulated through 'the language of discrimination and a tone of protest'" (Vincze 2010).

Most perceptions of discrimination and unjust situations were explained by the individual micro level interactions experienced among their children and teachers, other students, or their own interactions

with educational professionals. Mothers in Romania and the United Kingdom relayed cases of interethnic bullying and fighting between children that occurred due to the negligence of the teachers and the fact that they refused to recognise it as an incident motivated by racism. Overt tensions also arose between parents of different ethnic backgrounds. In Slovakia, one Roma mother described a parents' meeting where a non-Roma mother said she suspected that her daughter had caught head lice from a Roma classmate. This resulted in the Roma mother having to take a defensive stance. "So I also stood up and asked the teacher to tell parents right now that if she's ever found lice on my daughter and to explain things to parents and then the teacher did tell them that my daughter never had lice and she's always dressed cleanly and often better than some children from white families".

The implication was that Roma children were unclean, exemplifying how distinctions are enforced in daily interactions between the majority population and the ethnic "others".

### **Teachers' discourses of 'othering' and the construction of difference**

The positions which teachers have taken on the issue of their ethnic minority students' experiences of "othering" are mixed with the teachers' own views on the "otherness" of the student groups at issue. This double meaning must be kept in mind when reading the following summaries and analyses. We summarise what the country teams encountered as the teachers' perceptions of "othering" practices that ethnic minority students face in their everyday school life. At the same time, when discussing the presumably collective experiences that members of a certain ethnic group have to cope with – according to their teachers' views – we also represent the teachers' group constructions that are in themselves representations of the everyday "othering" processes going on in schools (and outside of them).

A first comparative finding that we would like to stress is a certain convergence in the teachers' discourses: there seems to be a common set of problem foci that the teachers address across the countries included in the EDUMIGROM study. In spite of the national particularities of different welfare regimes, immigration histories, and formal conditions, or of the ethnic compositions in the different countries, we find the same problem sources addressed by the teachers who were interviewed in the selected schools. We shall therefore present the interview statements in accordance with the structure of the encountered narratives. The teachers have pointed to the following focal points as being crucial, in their perception, for the (re)production of the differentiated school performances of ethnic minority/majority youths:

- Separation of classes along lines of ethnicity and ethnically-biased streaming;
- The emergence of "minority schools" through "white flight" and socio-economic flight phenomena;
- Low learning standards and reduced educational demands in "minority schools", producing an "island culture"; and
- The role of parents in school: perceptions of parents' abilities, consciousness, and willingness to take part in their children's school lives.

The last point particularly colours the teachers' perceptions of the "other" family cultures. It is, as such, the most prominent example for the ways in which the teachers themselves construct the "otherness" of the ethnic minority youths.

A second dimension that we want to shed light upon with regard to the cross-country comparison concerns the ways in which teachers have taken explicit positions on the assumed differences between their students, be they explicit in taking for granted the "otherness" of a certain group among them, or else explicit in terms of a declared indifference towards the impact of ethnicity, culture, religion, or socio-economic factors on the students' school performance. In this respect we find some differences between the studied countries that relate to the basic features of the respective political cultures. This divergence becomes visible in the extent to which specific positions were taken on the above mentioned issues, and it will finally also be addressed as an expression of the:

- The reach of political correctness norms in ethnic minority schools.

### **Separation of classes along lines of ethnicity and ethnically-biased streaming**

In spite of the fact that different policies for the integration of minority youths have been followed in the studied countries, there was an overwhelming perception among many teachers that these integration efforts have been illusionary, and that educational separation along the lines of the majority/minority population groups was a fact of school life. The extent to which teachers assessed that ethnicity actually biased streaming varied. In most cases from our sample, it was simply taken for granted. The cases of Hungary and, to a certain extent, of Slovakia are exceptional in this respect. In the two Slovakian case study schools, opposite strategies are applied. The headmaster from the Vážne school advocates such streaming and refers to an overall improvement of school results for all students. She admits that Roma parents disagreed in the beginning, "[...] but later, when the first group of streamed pupils graduated, we found that they had learned much more [...]". Her colleague from the investigated school in Hrdé is vehemently against separating Roma from non-Roma children because he expects negative effects for the schooling of Roma: "If they are too many together, they begin to set their own agenda". In the Hungarian schools the separation of Roma and non-Roma pupils was treated rather as the only viable option. Teachers of the Gamma School in Hungarian Chemtown were "shocked" by the announcement that the town's "Roma school" had to be "fully integrated" by their institution according to a directive of the Ministry of Education. None of the interviewees there considered the opportunity that teachers and school management could be active agents in the process of integration, but they appeared to be passive bearers of a top-down decision-making mechanism. In particular, they were afraid of the parents' reactions and feared a large scale "white flight". They feared that, if that happened, they would be forced to work with a completely different "material of children". Thus, they maintained the "pre-integration state", which they organised within their school: Roma children were separated from the ethnic majority, and the parents of the latter were convinced that "everything was the same as usual". Chemtown's Gamma School created a Roma-only class that produced a highly differential within-school composition primarily along ethnic lines. Hence, "Roma" and "Hungarian" were conceptualised as mutually exclusive entities with a significant gap between the two. Everyone's social place and ethnic origin or – as the students said, "race" – has been taken as if it were a natural phenomenon. The norm of integration has thus remained an abstract idea and strong segregating mechanisms evolved to prevent any change. Together with some Czech and Slovakian teachers' statements, this example from Hungary is one of the

most pronounced across our sample countries. Likewise, a number of Czech colleagues stated openly that they simply could not imagine teaching Czech and Roma students together.

In the other countries, the teachers either stressed that special classes were only built on purpose in order to foster the purpose of educational integration (like in the shape of preparatory classes), or they refused to apply segregating practices, and thus implicitly – or maybe just officially – confirmed the aim of an educational integration of the minority students – even when the situation in their schools belied this notion. After all, one finds cases of factual ethnic separation across the countries although they appear to have been caused by mechanisms of choice, for example, due to certain occupational choices in the French vocational schools, or due to a distinct educational agenda that is chosen to be followed, like in the voluntarily separated Muslim schools in Denmark or Germany.

Teachers have rarely admitted the active part that they play in the ethnically differentiated allocation of students. The following example from Romania is typical of this. While the headmaster of School 2 in our study explained that the distribution of the students over the parallel classes was just a matter of chance or coincidence, it was obvious that the most ambitious so-called "Special English class" was populated only with non-Roma students who lived in better social conditions and showed better school performances. The Roma students were all enrolled in the "other" or in the "second" class from the fifth grade on. More generally, however, at the enrolment into the first, and later the fifth grades, a great part of the Roma pupils had been already advised to choose a special school. In view of the fact that many parents – even poorly educated ones – respect the school very much and have considerable educational aspirations considering their children, the (in particular, elementary) teachers' advise to choose a particular school appears to be crucial. Yet this important and powerful role that teachers play in giving certain advice for or against the school types is a subject that remained unexplored by teachers in their accounts to an astonishing degree. We could thus only speculate about the driving motivations behind what seems to be one important allocation mechanism to reproduce ethnic and social segregation.

### **The emergence of 'minority ethnic schools' through 'white flight' and socio-economic flight**

The flight of better-off families is something that teachers fear – and have to cope with – in all schools with a considerable share of ethnic minority students from less privileged family backgrounds. The Hungarian example was again the most extreme in the ways in which this concern has been voiced. The management of Beta School in Hungarian Coaltown was most fearful of "white flight" as a possible response to integration (in the proper sense) of Roma children in their school. The experience and/or anticipation of the teachers at this school pointed in the same direction. They saw the major issue, and also the main source of conflict with non-Roma parents, as the mixing of Roma and non-Roma children in classes. In other words, they felt under pressure from the non-Roma parents to continue with discriminatory practices against the Roma. In view of the competition of schools for students, the headmaster explained that teachers "[...] would do more for the Roma students if they didn't have to take into consideration the interests of the non-Roma majority upon whom the school, and indirectly the teachers, depend existentially". In this respect, and similar to ethnic streaming, the teachers' discourses in the other countries were less explicit.

The difficulty of teaching many students from weak socio-economic backgrounds was reflected upon throughout the cases of the sample, and the fact that resourceful parents tended to remove their children from a school with too many ethnic minority students was likewise described to be a problem in all cases. Yet in contrast to the Hungarian example of Coaltown where the teachers appeared to surrender to the preferences of the majority parents, most teachers in the other countries were rather critical of the lack of additional educational resources and material conditions to counter this well-known problem. A common opinion among the teachers was that teaching in a school with many students from poor families makes their work extremely hard and calls for special measures. In Sweden, for instance, it was described by teachers as being particularly difficult "[...] to do a good job in a school like Harbour School with enormous needs and very limited resources. [...] Many students are very weak and there is often a need for smaller working groups". The teachers generally see a gap between the available resources and the equipment they would need for effective work. The lack of finances has been frequently mentioned as an important factor that complicates their work and hinders the effectiveness in schools that face "flight" phenomena (lack of pedagogical tools or money for educational excursions, etc.). In the Czech case, however, teachers in several schools judged the scarcity of means, although a burden in itself, to work as a gradual selection process in itself. Since their work was more demanding, compared to standard Basic Schools, a great deal of new teachers would leave after a short time, and only those with positive attitudes and special commitment would remain. This underlines that teachers feel they get too little support in terms of additional resources to cope with what they feel to be an additional hardship. In additions to material conditions, the lack of political support was criticised as well. For example, in both of the German schools, teachers declared that they felt they were left out of political decision-making with respect to this issue. While the concept of the Gesamtschule had originally been to bring together students from different socio-economic and educational backgrounds, there had not been any accompanying political strategy to make this vision a reality. The school choice that is left to parents creates segregated schools. In the same vein, a teacher at the studied gymnasium in Berlin pointed to a structurally discriminating education policy that does not effectively react to the common knowledge that German families who live in a neighbourhood with a large Muslim community generally enrol their children in private or church-based schools or leave the neighbourhood. Ethnic minority families with high ambitions or an academic background frequently do the same, and this has also been reported in other (West European) countries.

### **Low learning standards and reduced educational demands in 'minority schools', producing an 'island culture'**

The school staff, whether head teachers, teachers, or teaching assistants, described more or less the same problematic habitual behavioural patterns of their students to be the characteristics of the "minority ethnic" schools or classes: a low capacity for concentration among students, loudness, a lot of physical action going on in class, immediate expressions of personal views and feelings, that is, a general lack of discipline. As these disturbances mount, the teachers adapt their expectations. Most of them tend to tolerate minor transgressions that would be sanctioned in "normal" school situations

(e.g., shouting in classes, interrupting teachers and fellow students, bad language), but react harshly to more serious activities (like physical assaults, thefts, drug abuse). What the teachers (across the country sample) described as a lowering of their standards was not restricted to the students' social behaviour. Teachers also admitted that they had reduced the teaching content in order to cope with the particular situation in this setting. Curriculum content was cut to the utmost minimum, just to make sure that the pupils succeed in proceeding to the next grade. It is often decided to put increased effort into basic subjects (mathematics or the national lingua franca) at the expense of subjects that are considered as being less important (like the arts or foreign languages). Such decisions over teaching priorities are taken because teachers feel obliged to react to the problems facing them in terms of discipline and social manners that they observe among their students from ethnic minority families. In other words, they try to inculcate a minimum set of basic habits and conventions that they perceive as being the "normal" behaviour. Concretely, they train conspicuous children to wash their hands, blow their noses by using a handkerchief, sit quietly at a desk for a while, or ban the use of insulting words. Most of the teachers who work in a such respective school or class showed their frustration over this problem. They do not see any alternative since a certain degree of disciplined behaviour is a necessary prerequisite for teaching. But the question remains whether teachers should be in charge of establishing these prerequisites. Most teachers do not see it as their duty but regard it as an additional burden that not only makes their work rather hard but also leads to a lowering of teaching standards and to less time that can be spent on conveying the curriculum (this was reported particularly from schools in Germany, Sweden, and the Czech Republic). According to the interviewed teachers, too much effort is invested into the students' socially disadvantaged situations, leaving too little time and space for increasing the students' knowledge in the taught subjects, or for improving their skills further. A result of this adjustment is the development of an "island culture" that can be found in many of these schools: ethnic minority students feel safe and comfortable because they are not marginalised there; teachers tend to expect less of them so that even weak students may experience a certain level of success which they might not have elsewhere – at least that seems to be a fear among students. This has been articulated most pronouncedly in the French, German, and Swedish cases. Even high-achievers among the students are hesitant to leave the confines of their socially detached context. They fear a confrontation with the majority society because they expect (more) discrimination but they also expect to be unable to meet the requirements. For example, in a secondary school with mostly students from ethnic majority backgrounds:

The student coach of Harbour School [in Sweden][...] often meets students in 9th grade, who are going to attend upper-secondary school in the city district. [...] Young people with immigrant background are frightened and worried, even if they are successful in school with high grades. They are concerned that they will not fit in at their new school and that it will be too difficult to keep up with the teaching. One teacher there, of Chilean background, has experienced a similar context among his students, with South Harbour being their point of social reference. They are accustomed to the life there and think it is safe. He says additionally that the students know that in their new school, most other students will have an ethnic



Swedish background. He points out that it is not unusual to be worried about what school and programme to choose for upper-secondary school, "everyone is", but what distinguishes these young people is the fear of facing "Swedish society" and "Swedes" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010).

The teacher can, in light of his own background, understand the students. Nevertheless, he thinks that it is important for him as a teacher to make clear to them that this is something that must happen sooner or later. This fear of confrontation might indicate that teachers in the presumably cosy "minority schools" tell their students unmistakably that they regard their performance level as being below the average, and that one would "normally" have to demand more of them. Peer pressure within the "island culture" further contributes to limiting their social mobility aspirations, that is, the internal distinction among students between "nerds" or "intellectuals": those who conform to the teachers' expectation are viewed rather negatively by their peers, while the most undisciplined and oppositional students tend to have the upper hand as far as the power relations among peers are concerned. Although this is a general problem and not particular to the "island culture", it appears to be much more pronounced that high achievements are valued negatively among peers here, and this takes on an ethnic twist. It is not unusual that the students from ethnic minority families perform as good as or even better than their peers of the majority population from comparable socio-economic backgrounds, but the mobility aspirations of the ethnic minority members are lower. This tendency is also gendered, although girls from the ethnic minority groups tend to perform better than their male peers, their upward mobility aspirations are (even) lower. Such differences in learning motivation and a lack of role models were described to be significant in limiting their pupils' aspirations and school success by many teachers across the country contexts. Consequently, if teachers from an ethnic minority background are present, they are regarded as important role models for the students. This is something that the (altogether still small number) of respective teachers were well aware of, and most of them made a conscious use of their own biographical records to motivate students or ease situations for them. France is somewhat exceptional in that respect because of the norm of republican neutrality and voluntary ignorance of the students' cultural and religious differences in the classroom. In respect to the teachers with ethnic minority backgrounds, the republican policy made them extremely cautious not to show any form of preferential treatment of students according to ethnic or cultural criteria. Many of them seemed particularly careful to limit debates about racism or expressions of religious or national identities by students, since they did not want to encourage self-victimisation or the exclusion of those who do not belong to those groups. The teachers' own biographies were not drawn upon for role model purposes in the French schools. Nevertheless, the presence of teachers with ethnic minority backgrounds does, of course, work as an example in itself and in that way confronts the "island culture" with alternative options.

### **The role of parents: teachers' perceptions of parents' abilities, consciousness, and willingness to take part in their children's school lives**

Teachers in the "minority ethnic" schools have shared the view that the parents of the "problematic" students are insufficiently involved in their children's educational careers. The reasons for this are seen on



many different levels, and reactions from the schools differ as well. While some teachers have attributed the virtual absence of their students' parents from school life to a lack of abilities in the first place, others have assessed it to be a sign of a generally lacking consciousness among socio-economically weak families about the importance of parents' engagement. A common opinion among teachers seems to be that poorly-skilled parents tend to have either virtually no or very unrealistic expectations of their children's school careers, and that they would really not know what is required in school. Since many of the concerned parents have themselves either not enjoyed much schooling, or – in the case of immigrants – went to school in countries where traditional concepts of authority may see the teacher (and only the teacher) in charge of all school matters, the aspects of a certain consciousness, the sheer knowledge, and culturally informed role concepts, all of which are factors influencing the availability and forms of parental support, are conflated in these problem assessments. For many teachers, the notion of the ethnic minorities' "cultural differences" thus comprises a number of these, if not all of these aspects. The key narrative around cultural difference is that of the "different worlds" among which the children move. In all the countries teachers have expressed with this phrase their view that the school symbolizes something very different from the ethnic minority students' home environments, yet there seems to be a certain East-West divide in terms of what moral judgment is implied in the concept of the "other culture" of the minorities. In the Western European countries the positive self-image of the majority draws upon personal freedom, individuality, and gender equality, besides taking the adherence to disciplined forms of learning, regular school attendance, etc., for granted. Many of the immigrant families, and Muslims in particular, are seen against this image, representing an outmoded authoritarian lifestyle, denying girls' and women's equal rights, and limiting their children's freedom too much, in particular when it comes to adolescents' gender roles and their sexual coming of age. As an already cited Swedish teacher from Harbour School said, "the immigrant students moved between two different worlds". At home they would often be very strictly limited by rules, while the school was an area with more freedom, something that belonged to Swedish society. In school they could try things that were impossible at home. For instance, some Muslim girls removed their veils in school and put them on again when going home. The opposition of a Western, liberal culture to a repressive traditionalist culture conveniently found in immigrant social contexts marks this discourse.

In the Central European cases, where we looked at the experiences of Roma youths, the notion of their "other culture" seems to be less focused on gender but upon perceptions of less discipline in "their" families and operates with a positive self-image of majority society as being based on sober industriousness and self-discipline. It apparently does not entail as much reference to ethnically and culturally different relations and actions of girls and boys as is the case in Western Europe. Apart from these special accentuations of the own and "other" cultures, the perception of culturally different patterns of parental involvement in school has been reported from all the countries, but it is also combined with an acknowledgement of the weak socio-economic position of the respective ethnic minority groups. While some of the teachers stressed that the economic and educational background of the minority families, most explained the low participation rate of these parents in school activities with a sort of "culture of poverty" account, and others saw cultural factors like a different pedagogical agenda, or expectations about the role of school versus that of parents, as the main source of the problem. Yet they did not deny

that such factors have different impacts, depending on the social and educational resources within particular family settings. The discourses are hence not clearly distinct according to a typology of culturalist versus socio-economic explanations but are typically drawing on the net-effect of disadvantaging conditions under which the ethnic minority families live. This applies not only to the comparative reading of the voices from different countries but likewise to teachers' discourses within those countries. For example, the teachers' statements in the two studied German schools on this issue have mostly drawn on culturalist arguments. The immigrant parents' expectations of what the school should inculcate beside conveying learning contents were judged to differ, and the tendency among Turkish and Arab families to cling to their original cultural norms and to their mother tongue would simply work against their children's educational integration. Only one teacher in Berlin stated that he saw the problems of too little parental support as being mainly caused by socio-economic factors because he recognised the same problem with German families. In sum, teachers in the Gesamtschule didn't regard the parents as partners in solving education problems but as an important cause of them, and they felt they were blamed for failures of socialisation in the family. "We can't make up for their mistakes" is the message that was given in many variations, and there were no attempts to improve the parent-school relations. In the higher-attaining gymnasium the same problem was described, with just half of the ethnic minority parents attending the parents' evenings. One of the colleagues there favoured the development of an outreach strategy by the school and a change in the teachers' approach, "[...] most parents can't make appropriate suggestions to our students. Therefore, it is our charge to provide information on career options and paths". Traditionally, a special outreach policy is unusual in schools in Germany. It is simply expected that parents support their children by assisting them with homework, attending the parents' evenings, and meeting the teacher at least once in a term to talk about the child's achievements and possible strategies of assistance, if needed. If they fail to do so, it tends to be treated as their own fault. To illustrate the discourse of cultural differences with one more example, the interviewed teachers in Denmark also described the cooperation with parents as being an issue of great importance and as being a source of problems with ethnic minority families. In Fraser school, they saw the need to improve this. It had even been defined as one of the school's target areas. In Belleview school, however, the teachers characterised the ethnic minority parents as being resourceful and as showing great amount of interest in the school education of their children. The majority of parents there did participate in the four mandatory school meetings each year. Still, teachers found it difficult to balance the need to inform ethnic minority parents properly in order to understand the significance of independent learning skills with the desire to establish a mutually respectful relationship. Coming from other countries and school systems, many of the ethnic minority families seemed to expect the teacher to act as a "traditional" authority and saw it as a signal of weakness if a teacher practiced an inclusive and dialogical pedagogy. Parental cooperation was therefore given special attention by employing a translator in order to overcome lingual but also cultural barriers to comprehension. Cultural differences were also seen as responsible for the students' ways of behaving in Fraser school, for example, a lack of respect was attributed to be typical of Somali students, while Albanians were assumed to be hardworking. Teachers differentiated accordingly between Arab and Somali families that they described as being rather problematic and reluctant, and Albanian families that they characterised as being kind and

cooperative. The combination of an assumed cultural difference with the consideration of poor socio-economic status was also characteristic of teachers' comments on Roma parents in the Central European cases. Among the sample, teachers' perceptions in Hungary drew the most upon the assumed cultural characteristics of Roma, whilst the negative impact of their weak socio-economic status was stressed to a stronger degree by teachers in the other cases. In Hungary, almost all the interviewed teachers emphasised the different value systems of the Roma and the non-Roma to be a significant cause of problems. The poor living conditions of the families and the hopelessness of unemployed Roma families also were regarded as important but they ranked lower than cultural differences in the eyes of most teachers. Interestingly enough, none of them took into account the structural mechanisms of the school system or teachers' attitudes as factors that might render an influence on the school advancement of Roma students. Only one teacher among the interviewees admitted that teachers share responsibility for the Roma children's educational career. At one school in Coaltown teachers seemed to be a little more concerned about the problems of deep poverty, unemployment, and experiences with discrimination that are so widespread among Roma. This school aims at developing and maintaining strong relations between teachers and parents, which could explain why teachers showed a greater awareness of the conditions under which the Roma families live. In the Czech Republic, teachers from several schools also used both interpretation frames to explain Roma students' low interest in education, their poor school performances, and the distance from the mainstream educational system. These accounts emphasised, first, the inadequate material conditions of the families, which affected the children's physical and mental readiness, as well as material equipment needed for good school performance, and second, the cultural and lifestyle differences that are incompatible with the educational system's requirements, especially material preferences, a lack of discipline, the habit of immediate consumption, and low life expectations. What they heavily emphasised here as well was the complexity of the problem in a neighbourhood inhabited by people with a low income from social benefits or occasional low-skilled jobs, with no or little education, and with a high prevalence of drug abuse, criminality, inadequate housing, etc. To help Roma children from such neighbourhoods to achieve at school, preliminary classes existed for their preschool preparation. The Czech teachers perceived this program as being essential to help socially disadvantaged Roma children to adjust to the school environment because the norms and routines were different from what the children were familiar with.

The same variables were expressed in Romania, with the dominant interpretation being that the Roma's lower level of school performance was determined by the children's "family background" but the relation between material and cultural factors (and the values driving the latter) tended to be seen in a different order there. Teachers explained that some Roma youths did not have any real home, some families would not earn anything, other children were raised by single parents or grandparents, or they had many siblings to take care of. It was assumed that "under these conditions" parents would not take any interest in their kids' school education. It is hard to evaluate how far the teachers' moral judgments of the families' living conditions and presumed cultural habits also influence their assessments in class. In the Slovakian study such an interrelation suggested itself when divisions between "good" and "bad" Roma pupils were argued to be based on the students' living conditions and their parents' degree of cooperation with the schools. Success or failure was seen to depend on the quality of social and

family environments. In several Slovakian schools, those Roma pupils who were judged to be the most problematic also had parents who ignored school meetings or communication attempts. One teacher at Egřešová school divided Roma parents into one group that cares for their children and a second one that does not. In fact, he has no contact with the second type of parents, so that he just assumes that they do not care but does not really know. Instead, he draws conclusions from the divergences in the clothing and behaviour of different Roma students. The headmaster of Egřešová School in Slovakia confirmed that the teachers were helpful to children if their parents cooperated. This points to a dynamic of responsiveness that has only exceptionally been addressed by the interviewed teachers. In the Czech Republic, teachers of some schools pointed to the institution's culture as playing a key role for building mutual trust. Mistrust of the Roma toward the "institution of gadjo people" may be overcome in their eyes if the school managed to be open and created a climate that satisfied parents and children. When these teachers were supposed to describe the philosophy of their own school they said, "we're open to families and parents", "we go straight to them", "we must know the families where our pupils live", etc. In their views and experiences, such concepts can help break the barrier between school and disadvantaged families that creates different worlds between which the children oscillate. The Czech case also demonstrates that the structures of the educational system can be designed in such a way that they create incentives for schools to win the trust of stigmatised "problem groups". It is due to the competition between schools caused by the funding system, where more pupils mean more money for the schools, that a "family-friendly atmosphere" can become one of the added values of a school profile.

This strategic attempt to win over Roma families by the Czech school system appeared to be exceptional among the Central European cases. The teachers' discourses in Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary, in particular, expressed various forms of declining responsibility. In many interviews, the low performance of students and their seemingly dead-end educational careers were regarded as the evident outcomes of the poor social conditions of the families, suggesting the low educational level of the parents who do not motivate their children and simply do not care. Furthermore, it was commonly held that all the above indicates a "culture of poverty" that is incompatible with the norms and values of the majority and is (or was in the past) sustained by the welfare state's benefits and allowances. In a sense, all the interviews with teachers suggest that the school has comparatively little influence on the educational careers of children when compared to the impact of the students' family backgrounds. Instead of identifying the school and its staff as important actors that influence a child's future career, most defined the family's social background, financial opportunities, and cultural ideas as being crucial. This can be interpreted as a discursive and psychological strategy to cope with personal and institutional failures and frustrations. Why, after all, would states have invented general schooling if it left no imprint on children? Only the most exceptional teachers faced up to their own responsibility for the reproduction of unequal chances throughout the study.

### **The reach of political correctness norms in 'minority ethnic' schools**

The question of the impact of political correctness norms comes into play when we consider how frankly teachers spoke about their students' belonging to a cultural, ethnic, or religious group. In this respect, France is a special case: the republican norm to voluntarily ignore the existing differences among

pupils creates a special public culture that teachers are obliged to represent. However, it might be less opportune and also politically incorrect to speak of "the Turks and Arabs" in Berlin, or to discuss "collective features of Muslim culture" in Sweden. Yet the French norms of politically correct speech reach much further, in that they demand diversity and colour-blind approach in all public institutions in order to create Republican equality. Teachers are to represent and to practice this institutional culture, and they are therefore expected to refrain from activities and statements that might be taken as discriminatory. Thus, even positive discrimination or affirmative action in support of particular groups seems inconceivable in France, and that distinguishes the situation of schools in France from other cases. The teachers in Paris appeared indifferent to their students' ethnicity. This is probably due in equal part to professional training and the deeply engrained republican ideology of normative colour-blindness, and to the habit and practice of teaching predominantly students from an ethnic minority population. The overwhelming visibility and diversity of students makes the issue a simple fact of everyday life, at least in the minds of those who have been working in such an environment for several years. Yet the latter holds true for the other studied cases as well, where explicit statements on cultural differences have become a routine. The context in the United Kingdom is the polar opposite, with a declared policy of racial and ethnic inclusion that demands the respect of ethnic and cultural communities and attention to reducing ethnic inequalities. In between these two poles of well-meaning rejection of collective difference and well-meaning affirmative recognition of collective differences, teachers from the other countries either avoided or stressed the collective traits of their ethnic minority students but seemed to be uninfluenced by either of these master narratives. Some of the quotations from teachers in Hungary or Slovakia about Roma would be treated as expressions of pure racism in the United Kingdom, France, or Germany (e.g., comments on Roma as being messy, dirty, stinky, but gifted in dance and music – "like Afro-Americans"; indicating *inter alia* that the existence of racist stereotypes that are openly drawn upon are not restricted to the Roma population alone).

Despite this divergence in general approaches, not all the individual schools simply fit the dominant narratives that mark the mainstream position on ethnicity and education in their countries. Coaltown's Beta School in Hungary is one such example, for it takes an essentially different approach towards Roma children: neither segregationist nor colour-blind. They aim at a "colour-conscious" education, similar to official policy in the United Kingdom. Beta School has always been the school in town where most of the socially marginalised and deprived children were sent and the school felt prompted to address the problem openly in order to solve it. The most important factors stipulating the success of this local concept of a multicultural education depend on it being implemented within a professional context, where the quality of teaching and pedagogical innovation are given high priority, and within a social context where both teachers and children/families feel comfortable and trust one another.

## Community representatives' views

Community representatives were chosen as part of this study because they are rich in local knowledge and have frequent contact with ethnic minority families. Many different kinds of people fill different roles as community representatives, whether they be pedagogical assistants (Romania); sports trainers (Denmark); volunteers working in schools, paid assistants, librarians, and parent advisers (Germany); nongovernmental organization (NGO) and state institution representatives and pedagogical assistants (Czech Republic); government ministry officials and people working directly with youth as career coaches, disaffected youth workers, social workers or youth club workers (Sweden); representatives of local authorities and services and civic and church organisations (Hungary); local council officials, welfare and social custody officials, social workers, youth centre directors, and psychologists (Slovakia); and outreach education service providers and youth workers working with ethnic minority students (United Kingdom). Many of these representatives helped to access the groups under study.

Structural discrimination reproduced and promoted by the operation of social and economic contexts was cited as the main reason for differentiation. This group tended to give a holistic picture of the factors impinging on students' (non)participation in education which included: parents who are unemployed or live from a bare-minimum income; being raised by single parents; and a student having other siblings whom they are expected to care for. Under such constraints parents were not always able to give sufficient attention to their children's school education. Parental support and life at home, however, was deemed imperative for a child's educational success.

"Minority ethnic" status was sometimes viewed as a constraint and at other times viewed as a benefit by community representatives. Many community representatives, particularly those who were ethnic minorities, acted to a certain degree as mediators between minorities and the larger society, which brought about particular conflicts. On the one hand, as ethnic minority adults working in professional roles, there was a sense of reaching a point where they felt comfortable with their ethnicity. This was viewed as a feature of reaching adulthood and was often contrasted against their own experiences as teenagers where they wrestled with issues of identity. In the United Kingdom one Caribbean man reflected how he had felt like a "Bounty Bar"<sup>6</sup> whilst growing up as a Black child on a predominantly white council estate, living with white working-class values and norms inside a black skin. In this way he felt exposed, "I was the most visible being in a predominantly white school". To some extent this feeling had continued into professional life as other Caribbean community workers discussed the peculiar internal conflicts that working as a Black man in a professional position within a white middle-class system brought about. In one community representative's words, "I think England for a long time has been polarised, but at the same time I still feel comfortable in England, which is really weird, it is almost feeling comfortable in something which is uncomfortable" (Swann and Law 2010).

In conceptualising the causes of "othering", the notion was that power and influence operated on the basis of white middle-class norms and success could only be achieved by fitting into that "norm": "BME people are always going to be at the opposite end, because people who have got power are often

6 A milk or dark chocolate bar with a white coconut filling.



middle-class whites; policies and politics are made by middle-class whites" (Caribbean community worker, United Kingdom). This in itself provides a dichotomy. At a community meeting in the United Kingdom one Caribbean parent highlighted herself and her children as the discriminated against "Other", which conflicted with the Caribbean civil representatives in their official role. In a Caribbean community meeting where a parent complained about unfair treatment by white officials, a civil representative who himself was Caribbean raised the point that the session would have no utility if it turned into "white bashing". Despite some seemingly progressive policies, there remains a distinctly uncomfortable awkwardness in talking about ethnicity and racism.

For success in their professional roles, community representatives counted very much on certain forms of active participation from individuals in schools and strategic organisations. Participation was becoming more of a political issue towards the time when the field research was concluding with massive cutbacks experienced in public services in the United Kingdom. In particular, the decision to absorb the service responsible for raising BME pupil achievement into another service focused more on disaffected learners put levelling the playing field in education for BME groups in jeopardy. In particular, the head of the service (who himself was from Caribbean origin) was viewed as "selling out" and his staff felt that he had not fought for their corner.

Recognition of structural constraints on family and children's lives has been perceived differently across the selected countries. Some countries, such as Denmark, the United Kingdom, and Sweden, undertook strategies that aimed to improve integration and diminish the occurrence of "othering". In Sweden, action was taken by providing resources to help young people with applications for employment, designing CVs, and helping with contacts to employers. This was not always received in a consistent fashion, however. While the community representatives working with Caribbeans and Pakistanis in the United Kingdom felt that large steps had been taken over the past few years, the inclusion officer working with Gypsies complained that discrimination was still very much apparent and that this group was always sidelined in favour of other ethnic minority groups.

Discussions with civil representatives sometimes reflected the view that students from an ethnic minority background performed academically better than white students and were more likely to undertake an upward pattern of social mobility than their white counterparts. The career coach in Sweden stated that students with immigrant backgrounds performed better than students with a Swedish ethnic background and were more likely than their Swedish counterparts to achieve a better future labour market position than their parents. In the United Kingdom there was also a definite sense that white working-class students did not take full advantage of the educational opportunities afforded them in the same way as ethnic minority students. As such they were commonly deemed the most "at risk" group.

Educational success was viewed by community representatives as being determined to a large extent by the students' home circumstances. This was phrased succinctly by the career coach in Sweden: "You should have the right parents to succeed in school". Exactly what values "right parents" encompass ran along common themes. It meant investing in their child's education and even making sacrifices to achieve. Some judged individual students' problems in terms of their own and their parents' character, and the degree of priority placed on school education. In the United Kingdom some community workers felt that the likeliest students to drop out of education were from among the Caribbean students and



the highest achievers were deemed to be Pakistani and Somali girls. Deeply intertwined within these beliefs was knowledge about family background. One representative mistakenly made the assumption, for instance, that both pupils lived in single parent households that were on full benefits. Children and adolescents with parents who are unemployed and with a low educational level do often not have the "right" sort of cultural capital or the "right" sort of linguistic ability to express themselves in the way white middle-class systems require:

[...] sometimes people who are not educated by the system will find it hard to converse, they will have difficulty doing so, because to the other person it will come across as being aggressive and "do you really know what you are talking about?" They will find it hard trying to communicate what they are trying to say (Caribbean community worker, United Kingdom).

He later gave an example of a Caribbean mother who had attended a community-based workshop around understanding the education system. She was highly emotional and spoke about the daily discrimination she faced as a Black woman living in England. As the community representative saw it:

She wanted a forum somewhere where she could offload how she was feeling. And in a way I felt a bit sorry for her, because it was a cry for help really. And basically what happened was they were basically telling her, "this is not the right place, this is not the right forum". And obviously she came from a Caribbean island, she was looking for a Black support group and that was it; that is what she found (Swann and Law 2010).

Community representatives, possibly as a result of their own ethnic minority status, were much more ready to recognise racial and ethnic inequalities and institutional and individual discriminatory practices than teachers. In all the countries, practices and behaviour were described which excluded ethnic minority groups. Although overt racism<sup>7</sup> was very rarely apparent in any direct manner in teachers' behaviour towards students, community representatives recognised discrimination in seemingly innocuous everyday interactions. The social workers in Slovakia said that teachers were "verbally aggressive" to Roma pupils. This came about through criticisms or verbal taunts that served to humiliate individuals in front of their class. For instance, one worker reported how a teacher responded to a latecomer: "Hello, you're here? What's the holiday today? What's happened that we're worthy of such a reward?"

Rather than simply apportioning blame, community representatives also referred to community values and norms that were often in contradiction with those upheld by the schools. The French team was told by school personnel of several uncomfortable incidents of immigrant fathers who had slapped their children in front of school personnel during interviews concerning the students' academic and behavioural problems. The researchers viewed this as a mismatch stemming from insecurities on both sides:

<sup>7</sup> Examples of "overt racism" would include things like racial violence as well as everyday insults, jokes, and abuse directed at racialised groups.

[...] because parents are only called in to schools when their children's behaviour is very unacceptable, and because immigrant parents are very sensitive to the negative representations of them as parents who are either much too lenient or much too severe with their children, they probably tend to overplay the role of the authoritative father in such situations in order to save face in front of their child and the teachers. This is rather traumatic for teachers, and one such isolated incident in a school can easily be upheld as an example that is then applied to all immigrant parents. It can also be referred to by certain teachers to avoid facing the fact that they actually would rather not bother with calling in immigrant parents, with whom they often feel uncomfortable (Schiff 2010).

In Denmark parents expected teachers to use a traditional authoritarian approach and viewed teachers' "inclusive and dialogic" pedagogies as "weak". A common issue in all the countries was the fact that parent-teacher contact remained very limited. This may stem from the fact that individual meetings between teachers and parents took place only if the student was displaying academic or behavioural problems. Sometimes, as in the case of France, parents were not aware of instances of their children's misbehaviour within school.

Handling ethnically diverse student populations generates a huge amount of tension between maintaining neutrality and respecting cultural differences. Each country has a different way to handle this. In France a colour-blind approach was used stemming from a republican ideology. In Sweden representatives for local authorities and organisations stated there was not any distinct ethnic grouping that led to conflict within the district. In Denmark, interviews with representatives showed that "integration [...] on Danish majority terms is one of the most distinctive features of those institutions". Here, students attended sports activities in their leisure time. Rather than these activities being aimed specifically at ethnic minority students, they were aimed at everyone, meaning that friendships were formed with students from different ethnic groups whom they seldom had the opportunity to know from school (Moldenhawer, Kallehave and Hansen 2010). The Czech Republic reported some of the same. However, the Czech Republic also found that organised activities run by NGOs were often "purposefully and explicitly oriented to Roma kids". Although, "many of their activities are in principle open to non-Roma kids, too, they may be little appealing to them, as the general impression remains these are 'Roma clubs', and also the interest to join such activities replicates the informal stronger ethnic divisions among teenagers outside schools" (Marada et al. 2010). The NGOs sometimes receive funds from the state and other agencies under the condition that they target the funded activities explicitly at Roma youth, and that's the way they are advertised and perceived. In the United Kingdom, the situation is to some extent the polar opposite of France and something more like that described in the Czech Republic, except with more explicit reinforcement of programmes of activities focused on particular ethnic minority groups both inside and outside school. As the coordinator pointed out, to be eligible for one of the programmes, students had to be from a "Black Minority Ethnic" (BME) background. Likewise, Pakistani Study Support was set up to improve educational outcomes specifically for Pakistani students. Community representatives working on such programmes and parents whose children attended had very positive views of such schemes, viewing them as valuable opportunities to

raise pupil achievement, but as reported elsewhere (Swann and Law 2010), students did not always share their positive attitude. In France, ethnic minority bodies are used strategically to promote "exotic" cultural or artistic activities. A close examination of the names of those occupying prominent positions reveals the "quasi absence of individuals originating from the African continent". Those that have a role practically all appear in the "world cultures" sector since their position validates and deems the sector authentic rather than more prominent strategic sectors concerned with youth, housing, schooling, or ordinary leisure activities.

Such strategic emphasis on ethnicity signifies relational identity politics, where one group is seemingly valued more than another. Just as enrichment activities in the United Kingdom work by differentiating pupils according to ethnicity, in France people with European names work in strategic sectors, and ethnic minority bodies working in "world cultures" are there for authenticity's sake. They are not integrated into the mainstream but kept on the exotic periphery. Such mechanisms shape social opportunities but also always creates "outsiders", and thus perceptions of unequal treatment and discrimination. While such activities are recognising and responding to ethnically diverse student populations, this works by circumventing bounded "islands" of racial and cultural distinctiveness which by proxy eliminates the possibility of school as a "melting pot" or fusion of different ethnic identities. Discourses of race are tied to issues of self-formation as much for those who are not racialised as for those who are. One white informant working in the behaviour unit drew concern to the exclusionary practice such practice authorises. She felt that white working-class students who were most in need of help were being sidelined in favour of those from ethnic minority backgrounds. Policy-sanctioned attention focused on an ethnic "other" can perhaps be interpreted as the opposite of "colour-blindness", but this is not unproblematic.

Within schools there were a variety of informal and formal practices that maintained ethnic boundaries. In Slovakia, Roma students were segregated by being placed in "special classes". They were also excluded from extracurricular activities as those who received benefits had to bring documentary evidence for their participation, perceived as an added hassle they did not wish to complete. Many community workers actively tried to challenge the structural faults that led to discrimination. In Slovakia, for instance, a number of social workers had been employed whose "main task is to assist the socially excluded and help to fight against truancy" in schools. Their focus was mainly on school absenteeism and assistance with administration issues. The researchers witnessed a situation when a Roma mother had received a letter from school that invited her child to be registered and she discussed the invitation letter with a community social worker about whether she should go or not. While the mother expressed a preference for her child to be placed in a special school, the social worker tried to convince her to register the child in a mainstream school (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

## Conclusions

This essay has presented a detailed analysis of the perceptions and experiences of "othering" across the case study countries. The persistence, durability, and in some cases, increasing strength of ethnic identities, divisions, and conflicts across these national contexts is evident, as has been confirmed in previous reports (Law et al. 2009). There are significant variations and differences in migration processes, economic development, welfare provision, and forms of citizenship across these countries, and there are differences in ethnic composition, ethnic mobilisation, and patterns of racialisation that make a direct comparison of the countries a complex task. Nonetheless, this chapter has identified a cross-cutting set of key themes and issues in the perceptions and experiences of "othering".

In these varying situations of school-based and community-based "othering" young people from ethnic minority groups adopted a range of responses. Three types of peer relations were identified among young people, with some having very little contact outside their own ethnic group, some having weak social and friendship networks, others where strong bonds were formed. Young people did perceive teachers as generally fair, but language barriers and extracurricular activities were key sites of conflict. Outside school young people provided highly diverging accounts of racism and discrimination ranging from little experience (France) to being a central topic of conversation (Hungary), with linkages between "othering" racialisation and criminalization being a key site for conflict and criticism. This chapter has identified the main types of reported experiences of racial and ethnic "othering", which include teasing and joking, verbal hostility and abuse, forms of racial and ethnic discrimination, patterns of segregation, and other types of differential treatment. It has examined how interethnic mixing and patterns of informal ethnic segregation characterise everyday life, and how practices of "othering" are enacted in the domains of school and peer relations and also in the wider contexts of neighbourhoods and families, for example, by downplaying hostility to showing off. It also shows where and under what circumstances children have experiences of discrimination and the factors that might lead to students perceiving ethnic bias. The gap between minority students' aspirations and their limited chances of success in school as well as their inferior position in many peer relations, created a diffuse yet persistent feeling of dissatisfaction and demotivation for many. Highly complex and differentiated positions, strategies, and perceptions were articulated by young people in relation to their experiences of school and community life. Young people's yearning to escape being "othered" was strongly voiced with some able to articulate narratives of emancipation and liberation from differential and discriminatory treatment. But many felt locked into and unable to escape a tangled web of constraining circumstances and social worlds with serious consequences in terms of declining educational aspirations and dropout from the educational system altogether.

Parents' narratives confirmed the sense of cultural divide and conflict that existed between home and school, and they pursued a number of varied strategies to both protect their children from discrimination and hostility and provide a range of forms of caring and support to facilitate their progression through life, often voicing well-articulated educational aspirations. This evidence contradicted teachers' perceptions, as many tended to blame "the home" (especially parents' lack of interest and negligence) for low performance and also the "island culture" of ethnic minority students. Parents identified patterns of

residential segregation as a key constraining factor on young peoples' life chances, as did young people themselves.

Concerning teachers' views on the factors behind an unstoppable (re)production of the differentiated school performances of ethnic minority and majority youths, there is a convergence of the discourses around five key themes. First, processes of ethnic separation and segregation, including streaming, characterise Central European countries and this was seen as normal by many teachers. Second, the emergence of schools with a considerable, and in some cases increasing, share of ethnic minority students ("minority ethnic" schools) through "white flight" and "socio-economic flight". Third, lower learning standards and reduced curriculum are the prevailing pattern in "minority ethnic schools", accompanied by the development of an "island culture" where ethnic minority students feel relatively safe and comfortable and where teachers have reduced learning expectations. Fourth, teachers tended to perceive many parents of ethnic minority children as problematic through a process of "othering", whereby parents were seen as uninvolved in their children's education careers, with low attainment resulting from poor family backgrounds; sometimes this involved negative moral judgements of these families, with an accompanying decline in teachers' responsibilities. Evidence of racialised teachers' perceptions was documented as well as evidence of exceptional teachers who faced up to these varied challenges. Fifth, national policy approaches to ethnicity and education, whether colour-blind (France), colour-conscious (United Kingdom), or segregationist (Central Europe) were not always evident in school-based approaches and in teachers' perceptions, with differing and in some cases oppositional narratives in the foreground.

While examining community representatives' views, it was clear that processes of structural discrimination in social and economic contexts, together with the power of white middle-class norms and values, were seen as central to understanding ethnic differentiation. Paralleling teachers' views, home circumstances were also seen as key to educational achievement, but they were much more ready to acknowledge racial and ethnic inequalities and discrimination. Community representatives were also critical of both the need to engage with and change aspects of community values and norms, as well as informal and formal practices that maintained ethnic boundaries within schools.

While the teachers interviewed were mainly white and middle class, a large proportion of community representatives were from ethnic minority backgrounds, for example, those in the United Kingdom and also the pedagogical assistants in the Czech Republic. They had sometimes experienced their country's specific education system firsthand and were working in community-based roles with young people. As such, community workers often had more background knowledge of the neighbourhoods and families that schools served than teachers and more awareness of everyday youth activities than parents. Whereas teachers tended to adhere to the abstract, endorsed ideal of equality in discussing their experiences of teaching in ethnically heterogeneous schools, parents and community workers tended to voice a more grounded version of everyday social realities.

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## **IDENTITY FORMATION AND FUTURE ASPIRATIONS**

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## Introduction

This chapter focuses on the conditions of identity formation among our target groups: second- and third-generation migrants in selected Western countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) and Roma youth in four Central European countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia). The major goal is to show how self-identifications and ascribed identities intervene in the educational careers, attitudes and achievements of students in transition from the elementary to the secondary school level. Our work is based on extensive field research, consisting of interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, in which not only the major target groups (students 14–18 years old) have been involved, but also their parents, teachers, teaching assistants, school principals, social workers, and representatives of local NGOs and authorities. We have especially oriented our research toward ethnic identification and self-identification, which often get articulated in relation to – in opposition to or affiliation with – national, racial, religious, or local identities. We take (ethnic) identity and self-perception as reflective notions: ethnicity is not a natural given but a perspective that social actors adopt and employ in their orientation toward the surrounding world and in their self-understanding.

The following discussion has faced some methodological challenges. Its central subject is the conditions, models, and strategies of identity formation among 14–18-year-olds, who presumably are in an age of exuberant self-expression, sometimes playful, experimental, or provocative, and at the same time, often emotionally charged as tied to (the development of) a sense of personal dignity or stigma and related to the growing sense of personal autonomy. Therefore, the analysis had to take into account specific developmental/cultural facets of "the self in the making". That is, the role of age had to be reflected both when we tried to understand the "reality-status" of the data (respondents' propositions, etc.) as well as when we interpreted the data within a larger context. We had to take into account that the respondents' self-identifications reflected the general ethnic (religious, national, racial) labelling at hand in the given country context in a particularly sensitive way.

The understanding of identity and its formation has evolved tremendously over the past decades. As opposed to the previously held, non-problematic, and essentialist notions of identity, in which it was seen as a fixed trait permanently attaching one to a certain community that he or she is seen as a representative of, the contemporary professional literature acknowledges the diverse, unstable, and often contradictory and ambiguous nature of identity, underlying its potential internal tensions.<sup>8</sup> Ethnic identities are particularly prone to internal conflicts, such as those between ascription and self-ascription, social pressure and voluntarism, as far as their formation is concerned, or positive and negative associations, and the simultaneous or alternative presence of different qualities and references, in terms of content. This type of identity thus is likely to be compound, de-centred, and hybrid. The sense of belonging characterising minority social groups is especially liable to become problematic and

<sup>8</sup> Actually, two primary types of understandings of identity coexist and are occasionally mixed. For instance, in discussing the hazards of "modern" identities, Charles Taylor (1992) deals with some typical contemporary challenges of identity formation, while heavily drawing upon a relatively essentialist conception of identity formulated by Erik Erikson (1980).

perceived as such, pointing out these recently discovered characteristics of modern identities.<sup>9</sup>

The essentially unfinished nature of identity gains extra significance and, indeed, validity in the case of the adolescents at the centre of our research. These 14–18-year-old students belonging to some visible social minority that is seen as representing the "Other" in the eyes of the majority obviously do not possess ready-made identities. Therefore, in the course of community studies or when conducting individual interviews and focus group conversations, it is important to keep in mind that the personality of these young people, as they give an account of their future plans and aspirations, has not matured and is still in formation. Thus, although the narratives presented reflect upon the respondents' actual experiences in the family, school, peer group, or broader environment and express the ways in which they see and interpret their position in society, the future visions expressed by our students are often not all that realistic. Hence, while presenting plans and aspirations in connection with the social background of individual persons mapped during the research, we refrain from understanding future perspectives in terms of a predetermined fate derived from the present.

The professional literature, in particular, studies in developmental psychology and social psychology, suggests that ethnic identity is formed as the result of a long development, over the course of which a person belonging to a minority group acknowledges his or her ethno-racial membership. An important element of this process is the selection or, rather, the identification of values associated with the given group, which determines whether the individual will be able to achieve a positive identity by appreciating his or her group (Tajfel 1981), or, on the contrary, he or she will show negative self-image and identity as a result of denying his or her group belonging because of the negative connotations attached to it, either in inter-group comparison or owing to some outside threat (Voci 2006).

The formation of ethnic identity enables the development of a kind of understanding, whereby persons from a minority background can position their group in society-at-large. This kind of consciousness may develop only gradually, as a result of a process that has three stages, according to Phinney (1992). The first or "unexamined" phase is when the minority person does not yet question but simply adopts the opinions and attitudes regarding the group to which he or she belongs, mediated by his or her family and narrow environment. The next phase is that of "exploration", when the child born into a minority group starts comparing the customs and cultural traits of his or her community with those of the dominant social group. Finally, the third or "achieved" stage is characterised by an elaborate knowledge of ethnic heritage that includes not only information concerning the group in question but also a commitment to its values and aspirations. Insofar as awareness regarding ethnic identity is attained in this way, ethnicity plays an important role in the person's life. However, depending on the given social setting, this process of psychological development may be intensified and accelerated or hindered and prevented from becoming fully realised.

A minority person's identification with his or her group of belonging may be frustrated by normative expectations arriving from the majority that specify the way toward successful social integration. The pressure exercised by the majority puts individuality, differentiation from others, the

9 Post-colonialist and post-structuralist literature has greatly contributed to the study of identity issues by exploring the effects of power and violence, domination and exclusion, symbolic representations and political constructions in the formation of identities, as well as by outlining political and cultural strategies to combat identity threats and achieve autonomy (Fanon 1963, Said 1978, Hall 1996, Bhabha 1993, Gilroy 1993, Spivak 1988).

coherent internal organisation of identity, and positive self-esteem at risk. Any group easily identified by the social majority based on outward appearance is an easy target of such identity threats. For instance, skin colour, gender, or even characteristic behaviour and clothing attached to cultural belonging represent typical starting points of stereotypical notions resulting from the perception of the group in question as a homogeneous whole. Minority persons, in turn, who notoriously experience being treated not as individuals but as members of a stereotypically viewed group, inadvertently internalise this kind of majority projection in their self-regard.

Although not in a positive direction, the formation of ethnic identity may be facilitated by such everyday experiences like the scarcity of opportunities available for minority persons or their inability to access services, activities, or practices open for their majority counterparts. Racism and stigmatising differentiation faced by minorities, including ethno-racial discrimination experienced either on a personal or on an institutional level, represent serious threats contributing to minority consciousness to an even greater extent. At the same time, reactions to discrimination are also assumedly related to the adoption, awareness, and acknowledgment of ethnic identity. Differentiation is regarded differently by those perceiving its manifestations as simple and isolated events and those identifying racism, for instance, as a system of thought historically developed in the given society. Responses to discrimination may take a variety of forms, too, depending on personal differences as well as conditioning by the possibilities made available by the community and the society. Typical reactions include withdrawal from pernicious influences and enclosure into one's own community; resigned acceptance of the status quo; and the active and confronting opposition to majority society perceived as a hostile entity.

The following discussion consists of two larger parts, each containing further sections. Part I addresses the intervening factors and contexts of identity formation. Part II accounts for the various identity models thus formed and explores the strategies with which these models are adopted and employed as well as their impact upon educational careers and experiences. To begin, Part I identifies three levels of environmental conditions that affect the identity formation process, and it is respectively divided into three sections:

*The larger environment.* Here, we explore and compare the role of the dominant civil rights discourse (in the given countries as well as internationally) in providing symbolic and legal representations (points of reference) for collective identity formation among the observed communities. We look at the ways in which respondents refer – directly or indirectly – to mediated images (stories, reports, public opinion polls, etc.) as a source of collective self-understanding and/or categorisation. The discussion makes note of the fact that it also is the existence or non-existence of official ethnic categorisations (statistics) that affects the self-understanding of ethnically-minded actors. And we also take into account the possible or actual role of symbolic representations of particular (ethnic, religious, national) communities, especially in sports and arts, and – to the extent to which we have available relevant and reliable data – also in other contexts (world politics, science, media icons, etc.).

*The proximate environment.* Here, we especially focus upon the role of the family environment and neighbourhood in the process of identity formation. We try to understand and describe how particular types of family arrangement and patterns of socialisation intervene in the identity formation process, especially in its ethnic-collective dimension. Intervention of the families' socio-economic status in this

process is also reflected. Furthermore, we explore to what extent and in what sense the particular character of a neighbourhood (e.g., ethnically mixed or homogeneous) may be a source of either positive or negative ethnic self-understanding. This may also be reflected in the role of peers and street life, organised activities outside school, local congregations, NGOs and various types of community authorities in the process of identity formation.

*The school environment.* In the final part of this section, the focus is on the role of the school environment in the process of identity formation. We deal with the question of how the character of the school – the ethnic, social, gender, etc., composition of the student body in school and in classes, the ethnic composition of the teaching staff, the location of the school in a particular neighbourhood, the reputation of the school, etc. – can or does intervene in the identity formation process. But we also focus on more dynamic aspects of the matter in that we ask, for example, what is or may be the role of actual experience within schools: such as school performance, relationships with other students and teachers, possible feelings of injustice (from teachers) or bullying (from other students) where ethnicity is either openly acknowledged or tacitly assumed to play a key role, possible disciplinary transgressions, possible language problems, present or absent multicultural education, extracurricular activities organised by the school, etc.

Part II employs some of the findings of the previous section as well as more general results of the country Community Studies, in order to comparatively account for dominant identity models among the target populations and especially for the more dynamic aspects of the identity strategies.

*Identity models.* In this section, we define the identity models of students and families living in selected communities of the participating countries. Considered as decisive factors of the social construction of ethnic identity, we analyse the role of socio-economic and educational background of families, different family types and ways of life, families' relations to religion, traditions, country of origin, language, and the various forms of families' social embeddedness within the local and broader communities. We take into account that all these aspects have a potential influence upon parents and students' attitudes toward schooling and education, which can be mediating factors in social mobility and integration into the majority society. Identity models reflect upon facts, experiences, views, and ideologies that have been formulated by our respondents in connection with the above mentioned structural factors and shape their perception of being a member of the given ethnic minority group.

*Identity strategies.* This section will explore how "minority ethnic" students relate to their "ethnic" belonging and how they see their current and future positions in society. We analyse the interplay of social, gender, "ethnic", and religious factors in contributing to how different groups of ethnic minority students define their positions within the immediate and larger communities. The discussion focuses on how far these adolescents feel that their culture, customs, behavioural rules are acknowledged and respected, or to the contrary, how far they feel excluded because of the given implications and traits of their "ethnicity". We then construct a typology of educational and occupational aspirations of ethnic minority students, in order to cluster the varied aspirations and planned strategies related to future life. The central question is whether the envisioned educational paths, chosen occupations, and family life may possibly strengthen ethnic separation and reliance on one's own community or whether they may lead toward integration into the larger society.

Each section of this essay, while elaborating on the distinct topics mentioned above, addresses the following general questions:

- To what extent, in what contexts, and in what ways does the *sense of ethnic distinction* (difference) appear in and through the data: at what occasions does it matter; in what kinds of relations does it get stronger or weaker; for whom is it important and for whom is it unimportant; is it associated to or in conflict with other factors intervening in the identity formation process (social class, gender, religion, etc.); how such a sense of ethnic distinction (if it exists) affects or may affect self-positioning within a larger social-cultural environment (relations, e.g., to the national community, other immigrant or ethnic minority communities, and – where and if relevant – minority cohorts in other countries or in countries of origin in the case of immigrants)?
- How is the process of identity formation tied to educational experience in the broadest sense of the term: is identity formation related to adoption of certain attitudes toward schooling and the school; are general attitudes about (the worth of) education part of a particular (collective-ethnic) self-understanding; are there any conflicts around this issue among the concerned actors. Consequently, we reflect upon whether the identity formation process and/or internalised self-understanding is in any way related to school performance and how personal and ethnically coloured self-understandings affect further educational or professional aspirations, plans or visions, etc.?
- Given the comparative nature of the study, each section also employs a comparative perspective in its topical discussion and analysis. Throughout, we address possible differences (around a particular issue, like, e.g., the typical family environment and identity formation) among various countries or types of observed communities, following closely cases illustrating similar or identical patterns and the factors at work in the background. Finally, there is the question of whether there are any signs of possible clustering among the analysed country cases or community types.

## **The larger environment**

*This section will account for how historical, social, cultural, and symbolic structures and representations shape and influence the collective identity formations among youth in the observed communities. A comparison among the EDUMIGROM countries reveals considerable differences in the patterns as to how these structures and representations affect the collective identity formation of immigrant and ethnic minority youth. The following discussion will give an overall account for the revealed patterns regarding the importance of the larger environment for the collective identity formations among the observed*

*communities. The reasoning will follow the line of geo-political divides to shed light on the divergences in the observed patterns against their historical formations. First, it will be Roma youth in the Central European countries to be put into the focus, then it will be followed by an account along certain corresponding variables about immigrant youths in the Western European countries.*

## **Central Europe**

The marginalised and vulnerable situation for the Roma population in the studied Central European countries has historical roots. Since the Roma entered Europe in the fourteenth century, the life of the ethnic group has been marked by marginalisation and discrimination (Law et al. 2009). After the Second World War, the communist regimes in Central Europe were engaged in an effort to eliminate national differences, which included an attempt to assimilate the Roma population. The specific nature of the Roma community and the particularity of the Roma culture were denied. In Romania, for instance, the consolidation of national unity and the idea of a homogeneous Romanian society were priorities of the communist regime's agenda (Magyari et al. 2008, Vincze 2010). The target was to eliminate national differences, and assimilate ethnic minorities. Roma were considered to be foreign elements that had to become Romanians. The communistic government improved the living conditions for the Roma by improving the access to education and employment. Nevertheless, the social situation for the Roma was further weakened since the provided employment was mostly unskilled and low-paid, which resulted in obstructions for them to get access to civilized housing, health services, and education. As a result, the Roma were confined to the lowest social strata. A consequence of the suppression of ethnic and cultural differences was that the claim of the Roma population to be recognized as a specific ethnic group was denied. The situation was similar in all the observed Central European countries (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010, Katzorova et al. 2008, Kusá, Dral, and Kostlán 2008, Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010, Laubeova and Laubeova 2008, Magyari et al. 2008, Marada et al. 2010, Vajda and Dupcsik 2008).

The situation for the Roma changed dramatically after the fall of the communistic regimes in 1989. This can be illustrated with the cases of Slovakia and the Czech Republic. In Slovakia, the fall of the regime brought about a dramatic economic recession that resulted in considerable unemployment, especially among Roma, followed by significant changes in social security (Kusá, Dral, and Kostlán 2008, Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010). This development caused double harm to the Roma population. First, the general decrease in social protection of the unemployed gave cause to a continuous dependence on social welfare for many Roma. Second, inadequate social security gave cause to a general deterioration in the Roma's ability to live in accordance with public expectations of the majority society, such as sending children to school, paying rent, and so on. This contributed to negative attitudes toward Roma who were considered "lazy", "dirty", and "uncivilised" by the majority population. Another aspect of the development for the Roma population in Central Europe after 1989 was the official recognition of Roma as an ethnic minority group. In Czech Republic, the Romani culture and language was recognised, and several Roma became members of the Parliament (Laubeova and Laubeova 2008, Marada et al. 2010). However, a parallel development in Czech society was the growth of racism and the emergence of extreme right parties that included anti-Roma measures in their political programmes and a general growing tension in the relations between the Czech majority and the Roma. These examples illustrate how the history of



the Roma has influenced the social position of the ethnic group within the observed communities, and have had a significant impact on the attitudes of the majority populations and the interethnic relations. Since the 1990s, Roma have been repeatedly stated in opinion polls in all observed Central European countries as the least acceptable ethnic group. The anti-Roma attitudes have also manifested themselves in discrimination and open expressions of racism.

This historical retrospect points at a set of important factors that influence the collective identity formation among Roma youth. One important aspect has to do with relations to the majority populations in the observed communities. In general, there is a division line between Roma population and the non-Roma population, which is clearly reflected in the self-identification and collective identification of the Roma. The observed communities in Central Europe are marked by substantial cleavages between "us" and "the others". The general rationale behind these contrasting categories is that "us" refers to the majority population and "the other" to the diverse Roma population. One example is the Czech Republic (Laubeova and Laubeova 2008, Marada et al. 2010). One of the most numerous groups of immigrants in the country is from Ukraine. Due to historical reasons the Ukrainians are legally defined as a traditional national minority and are therefore entitled to be represented in official bodies for national minorities and to be supported in cultural and educational areas. The Ukrainian minority is not positively viewed by public opinion, but still it has a better reputation than the Roma. The general view of the majority population depicts Roma as uncivilised, stupid, dirty, criminal, and promiscuous. Public polls indicate that a large proportion of majority Czechs want Roma to be excluded from their neighbourhoods and that they should be denied all welfare benefits. The cleavage between the Roma and the majority population is clearly reflected in the conducted interviews with Roma youth. Quoting a Roma student living in Hungary: "They are showing off because they are Hungarians. They are the bigger ones, they act differently, and they despise us while they are talking to us. I don't feel well while I'm with them". Several of the interviewed Roma students indicate the existence of social barriers to friendship between Roma and non-Roma. A Roma student from Slovakia puts it this way: "I understand better Roma (pupils) because non-Roma are [...] simply, they make differences that [...] you're Roma, you are Gypsy, and you have no access to us". However, Roma can also be an active part in building up barriers to exclude non-Roma. In the Czech Republic, for instance, there exists a significant division line between "gadjo" (meaning in this context non-Roma Czech) and Roma, where the label "gadjo" symbolically and literally means "not one of us". The "gadjo" label can also affect members of the Roma community if they diverge from the social, cultural, and traditional ways and expectations in their community and close environment.

Many Roma in the studied Central European communities are proud of their ethnic belonging. However, not all consider their "Roma-ness" as an important aspect of their life, or as something positive. One Roma student from Slovakia explains that he is proud of being Roma. He says: "I'm proud that I'm Gypsy". Nevertheless, he considers his ethnic belonging to be a disadvantage and describes how he and his friends often are faced with rejection and restraints due to the fact that they are Roma. This experience is shared with Roma students from the other observed communities. One boy from Romania says: "It's a disadvantage to be a Roma, because Romanians know that many Roma are dangerous, bad, and steal, so when they see you as a Roma, they may think that you're alike". Similar patterns have been reported from the other observed Central European communities. Romania has both the largest number of Roma



in Europe and a considerable Hungarian minority (Magyari et al. 2008, Vincze 2010). Both politically and symbolically, the Romanian interethnic map is dominated by the Romanian–Hungarian relationship and the so-called “Roma issue” is generally viewed as principally a socio-economic problem by the public, or occasionally as an exotic cultural element. Romanian society is marked by the existence of anti-Roma prejudices and discriminatory attitudes towards Roma both in case of the majority population and the Hungarian minority. In Hungary, being Roma is often associated with widespread negative stereotypical images, stigmatization, and various forms of discrimination and in some cases physical violence (Vajda and Dupcsik 2008, Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi. 2010). Similarly, Slovakian Roma experience that their ethnic affiliation is a disadvantage due to prejudices and discrimination (Kusá, Dral, and Kostlán 2008, Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010). In spite of historical and social differences between the countries in question there is a salient and significant dividing line between the majority population and established larger national minorities on one side and Roma on the other, and a general perception of “us” and “the others” accompanied by stereotypical images, prejudices, and discrimination. In general, this dividing line has a spatial dimension and coincides with socio-economically and ethnically segregated housing and schooling. In many cases the Roma are in a disadvantaged position. The spatial separation and the maintenance of the dividing line between Roma and non-Roma can, however, be both voluntary and involuntary. The cleavage between “us” and “the others” can therefore be viewed both as an undesired stigmatising and discriminating hindrance for Roma, and as a valued source for an ethnic collective cultural and social identification.

A comparison among the observed communities reveals the existence of social hierarchies and dividing lines also within the Roma-population. For instance, in the Hungarian case the observed community reveals the existence of three subgroups with distinct characteristics: Vlach Roma, Beash, and Musician Gypsies (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010). The relations between the subgroups are strained and all three groups emphasise existing differences as a means to reinforce their distinct ethnic identity as a defence to the homogenising perception of Roma presented by the Hungarian majority. Similar patterns are to be found in the other observed Central European communities. In the Czech Republic, for instance, there is one dividing line between poor Roma concentrated in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods and better-off Roma scattered outside these communities (Marada et al. 2010). Another division among Czech Roma is between the Olah Roma and the other Roma, where the former view themselves as the “real Roma” and therefore, for instance, prevent inter-marriage with other Roma subgroups, and the latter regarding Olah Roma as uncivilised and the main reason for the majority society's discrediting of Roma. In other words, the Roma population is diverse and consists of several sub-ethnic groups characterised by different historical, social, cultural, and economical attributes. The intra-ethnic relations within the Roma population are marked by tensions, conflicts, and stereotypical images of “the others”, at the very same time as the Roma population at large constitutes a joint “us” (or “the others”) in relation to majority society.

In several cases, but not all, the Roma neighbourhoods are marked by an evident absence of the majority population. The Roma districts are often tarred with a bad reputation and receive undue negative attention both from the public and the media. The conducted interviews and focus groups show that both students and parents integrate these social and symbolic structures and representations as

a part of their self-picture and identification. A general feeling exists among Roma that the majority society is hostile and discriminatory towards them. Students expect suspiciousness and discrimination in their contacts with majority society. In general, they feel unwelcome, or that they don't belong, in the surrounding environments.

Quoting a Roma student from Hungary:

Well, let's think about the skinheads. They hate the Roma. It happened when we went downtown and they kept picking on us. There were 3 or 4 bigger guys with us who could have beaten them all. I said that we should disregard them, otherwise they would report us to the police and then our Roma origin matters. It happened many times that I was differentiated. Even in my street. A few Hungarians live there. They threatened me that they would report us [...] They said they wanted to call the police because there was music going on after 10 p.m., say. And the police came as always. However, when we call them because they play music loudly, the police don't always come. Sometimes they do, and sometimes they don't.

At the same time, the interviewed Roma students and parents describe how the Roma neighbourhood is viewed as some sort of a protective shield against hostility from the surrounding society. It is worth reiterating the words of one Roma student from Hungary: "Those of us who live in the same settlement belong together [...] Solidarity is in here." A salient social and mental distance has emerged between Roma and non-Roma as a consequence of social and ethnic spatial segregation. An existing social and ethnic distance has manifested itself in spatial segregation due to historical reasons, as the current spatial segregation simultaneously reinforces the existing social and mental distance between ethnic majority and Roma. Both the majority population and the Roma have a generalised and/or stereotypical social picture of "the others" based on collectively reproduced experiences.

As the accounts of Roma students about their experiences of different manifestations of "othering" in school and their contacts with the surrounding society testify, the dividing line between "us" and "the others" is clearly present in everyday life. One direct manifestation is the evident school segregation in the observed communities, both between different schools and within schools. "Roma schools" or "Roma classes", an epithet ascribed schools or classes with a large proportion of Roma students, are generally viewed as less demanding, marked by social problems, and therefore have a bad reputation. The Roma students compare themselves with non-Roma students, and often picture themselves in disadvantaged positions. In contacts with their majority peers their appearances, like how they dress and their skin colour, is generally a clear disadvantage and the word "Gypsy" is often used as a synonym for bad manners. Degradation is sometimes phrased in extremely racist ways like we have seen earlier from an extract of an interview with a student in Slovakia who reported a teacher in school: "Even if class goes okay, she says: 'It stinks like in a Gypsy village'". Two further illustrative examples can be drawn from the Romanian case study (Vincze 2010). During classroom observations, the term "Gypsy" was used by students to illustrate that something was considered poor and had a low social status. When talking about the situation in larger cities in India, one student made the comparison: "slums are

neighbourhoods where Gypsies live". The term was also used when pointing at bad behaviour. When two Romanian boys skipped class, another student said: "Those Gypsies ran away from class".

A comparison between the observed Central European communities shows that this segregation and stigmatisation of Roma clearly affects Roma students' identity formation, but also their attitudes and images of the surrounding majority society and how they picture their future adult life. To define and identify oneself as Roma generally imply a certain degree of loyalty towards the group. The sense of belonging can emerge from birth and kinship, and from a commitment to the community and its traditions and cultural inheritance. The presence or absence of interethnic relationships, the inclusive or exclusive character of the workplace, neighbourhood, or school, the peer relations, and the mutual separation and spatial segregation based on ethnicity can all constitute important elements in the formation and maintenance of Roma identity. The Roma identity is, however, also strongly affected by the relationship to majority society and existing public and media discourses. In general, both students and parents experience that they are categorized and associated with certain attributes based on a generalized, stereotypical schematic image of "Roma" which puts them in a disadvantaged position. A name, a way of speaking, appearances and physical markers, or a residential address associated with "Roma-ness" can give cause to various forms of prejudices and discrimination. In that way, being Roma is connoted with negative experiences of stigmatization, marginalization, and a salient disadvantaged social position. Generally, this reinforces the dividing line between the majority and Roma and undermines the integration and recognition of Roma, and their sense of belonging.

## **Western Europe**

There are historical differences among the ethnic minority groups in the studied Western European communities, both regarding group-specific factors (such as religion and migration history) and the relations with their respective national majorities. The countries in question have been the goal for diverse flows of immigration that differ in their historic, cultural, political, and economic backgrounds (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010). The immigrant flows can be divided in two main categories: post-colonial migration from former colonies of certain Western European countries and economic or labour-related migration. Germany has a long tradition of immigration and the largest migrant group consists of "guest workers" who arrived between the mid-1950s and the late 1970s from Southern Europe, Turkey, Morocco, and Tunisia (Ohliger 2008). Another significant group of immigrants arrived in the former East Germany from socialist countries, for instance, from Vietnam. The conducted German community study focuses on Turkish and Lebanese youth, the two largest groups of ethnic minority students in the studied communities in Berlin (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010). However, the population of the United Kingdom is ethnically diverse due to historical migration, foremost due to colonialism and post-war economic migration (Law et al. 2008). Three specific ethnic minority and migrant groups have been selected for the qualitative studies in the United Kingdom: the Gypsy/Roma/Traveller population, Caribbeans, and Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. The rationale behind the selection is that all three groups have been subject to different levels of political and cultural recognition, various forms of discrimination, and practices of restriction and exclusion. France has a long history of immigration due to the country's colonial past (Schiff 2008). One important immigrant flow originates from its former colonies and

protectorates in North Africa, such as Algeria, Morocco, and Tunisia. Another significant immigrant group is the Turks. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Turkish workers were recruited. In the 1980s Kurds and Christians living in Turkey also fled to France due to political repression. Therefore, the French qualitative inquiries focused on youth originating from Black Africa and the Muslim populations of Maghreb and Turkish backgrounds (Schiff 2010). Immigration is a more recent phenomenon in Sweden and Denmark, and coherent immigration and integration policies exist since the 1990s (Law et al. 2009). Denmark has a history of labour-related migration since the 1960s and 1970s, and later on of war refugees (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). The Danish community study was conducted in Copenhagen. Since the 1960s and onward the population in Copenhagen has become more ethnically diverse and the largest minority groups in the selected communities originate from the Middle East, republics of the former Yugoslavia, Pakistan, and Turkey. The Danish qualitative research focused on youth originating from Pakistan and Somalia. Sweden has become more ethnically diverse over the last decades due to labour-related migration and in increasing number of refugees (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). Currently, the most frequent national origins among the immigrant population are Iraq, Poland, Denmark and Somalia. The Swedish community study focused on a composite of migrant groups. The rationale behind this selection is the evident dividing line between the majority population and the immigrant population in general within the Swedish context.

All the observed Western communities are marked by considerable cleavages between "us" and "the others". Although the group-specific attributes (such as migration history, religion, culture, etc.) may differ among the studied communities, the rationales behind the contrasting categories are, to a large extent, based on the notion a division line between the (often white) majority population on one side, and the diverse immigrant population on the other. One example is Sweden, where "us" refers to ethnic Swedes and "the others" to the heterogeneous and diverse composite category of "immigrants" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). The term "immigrant" was coined in the 1960s as an administrative category, replacing the previously used term "foreigner". However, it did not take long before the term "immigrant" was associated with generalised stereotypical conceptions of "the others" and different kinds of social problems. During the last few decades a strong conception has emerged where the Swedish population is regarded as divided into two major groups with distinctive characteristics, "Swedes" and "immigrants", or basically "non-Swedes". One manifestation of this is that the children of immigrants are also considered "immigrants" – in spite of the fact that they are born in and have lived in Sweden their entire lives. This dividing line is present in the political as well as the public discourse, often in the shape of generalized stereotypical images. To be conceived of/categorised as an "immigrant" is often associated with difficulties in basically all of society's public arenas, for example, the labour market (unemployment and ethnic discrimination), housing (housing segregation and high concentration in socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods), and education (lower grades and a less common transition to higher education). More generally occurring manifestations of the significance of the division between "Swedes" and "immigrants" is found in social categorizations and subjective identifications expressed by first- and second-generation immigrant youth and their parents, as well as their majority peers. Youths from first- or second-generation immigrant background are often classified as "immigrants" or "non-Swedes"; moreover, it is often they who identify themselves as such.

Similar patterns are to be found in the other observed communities in Western Europe. In Denmark, ethnicity has a strong influential effect on how ethnic minority families position themselves within Danish society, and in general they picture themselves as different from ethnic Danes (Moldenhawer et al. 2010). In France the distinction between "us" and "the others" is clearly salient. However, due to the dominant French ideological model that opposes any form of differentiation based on ethnicity, references to social background and neighbourhoods are more explicit than references to ethnic origin (Schiff 2008). In the United Kingdom, the darker skin of the Caribbean and Pakistani minorities mark them as "the others" and they face discrimination and prejudice and racism from British whites (Swann and Law 2010). In a similar way, Turkish and Lebanese youth (especially with Muslim background) represent "the others" in the German context, and are subject to different forms of "othering" and discrimination (Ohliger 2010).

In general, the dividing lines between the majority population and the immigrants in the observed communities coincide with segregated housing along socio-economic and ethnic lines in the way that immigrants and ethnic minorities reside in low status, socially disadvantaged districts, and the majority population in more affluent districts. As a consequence, the youth from an ethnic minority background lack contact with their majority peers. Quoting students from an immigrant background in Germany: "You don't find Germans here! In our neighbourhood you find Turks and Arabs", or "Where should I meet Germans? Here are hardly any!". Other students from the observed Western European communities have expressed similar experiences. In the French case, the distinction between "us" and "the others" most of the time refers to residential categories (Schiff 2010). For instance, in one of the observed communities most students from an ethnic minority background live in socially disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods while the students from a majority French background to a large extent reside in better-off suburbs. The spatial separation gives cause to an "us", living in the "projects" in relation to the "others" living on the outside. In the studied Swedish community, immigrant students state that they share the common characteristic of being "non-Swedes" which gives cause to a sense of solidarity and understanding (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). In general, students and parents state that they feel secure and "at home" in an environment where they share the social living conditions and the experience of being the "non-majority" with the other residents. Quoting an immigrant student from Afghanistan: "Here in South Harbour [the observed community], it feels like home. You can speak your language. Don't have to be afraid of not fitting in." In many cases the students express a strong identification with their neighbourhoods, and also distinguish amongst themselves when referring to different neighbourhoods. One dividing line in general use is the previously mentioned spatial segregation between immigrants and ethnic minorities residing in low status, socially disadvantaged districts on the one hand, and the majority population in more affluent districts on the other. One illustrative example is a student with African origins in the Swedish sample: "My friends and I have a similar type of behaviour, way of speaking, with an accent, by using words from our native languages. It's quite different from how they [the 'Swedes'] speak in the city". This evident spatial division line reinforces the experiences of "us" and "the others", and adds a geographical dimension to the cognitive and emotional sense of belonging.

The interviewed students and parents describe experiences of direct and indirect effects of being "othered" when they are in contact with the surrounding majority society. For instance, it is principally

when they are in contact with the surrounding majority society that they feel that their ethnicity plays an important role, that they are not part of the "ethnic majority". Quoting a teacher interviewed in the Danish community study:

They find it a little bit difficult to relate to what they really are. But we [the teachers] keep saying that they're born and raised in Denmark, so in fact they're Danes, but not all of them have Danish citizenship, so you can't really say that they're Danes. So they have a problem of belonging [...] well, problem [...] they don't have a firm base in Denmark, so that's why they hold on to their ethnic minority group, they're Albanians, Turks, Lebanese, Arabs, or whatever they are. And they really hold on to that (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

And quoting a student with Eritrean origins in Sweden:

I feel like an Eritrean because I look like one. It's very obvious with my dark skin and dark eyes. If I meet someone in the street, they don't look at me as a Swede; they think I'm an African or an Eritrean. Therefore, I feel like an Eritrean (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010)

The interviews reveal an often painful awareness and concern regarding the existence of discriminatory structures in the surrounding society. Ethnic minority and immigrant youth, and their parents, consider their foreign-sounding names, their appearances, and how they speak as probable obstacles in the future during their initial attempts to enter the labour market. This is especially the case with students from a Muslim background and/or students originating from Africa, where a common feature is an expectation of negative differential treatment due to their religious and ethnic belonging. Quoting a Muslim student living in Germany: "Look at my hair, look at my skin! How could I be German? And on top of that, we're Muslim!". Another aspect of the geographic, social, and mental distance between majority and minority youths is that the observed students constantly compare themselves with ethnic majority students, or rather with an image of "majority-ness", since they, in general, lack personal contacts with majority peers. Majority students are constantly present in their utterances and reflections as some sort of a yardstick and the students compare their linguistic competence, behaviour, aspirations, and future prospects with this envisaged sense of "majority-ness". The students are undoubtedly affected by the often stereotypical representations of "immigrants", and also their neighbourhoods, presented by the media.

### **On the importance of the East-West divide**

There are additional historical, political, and social differences among the observed communities along the dividing line of Western and "Eastern" Europe (meaning the post-socialist world) within each of the two clusters. However, the comparison equally underlines the existence of important similarities and points at recurrent patterns and relevant themes regarding the larger environments' influence on identity formations among immigrant and ethnic minority youth in the observed communities. One central aspect is the manifest and general existence of a significant dividing line among immigrants, in the case of Western



Europe, and Roma, in the case of Central Europe, and the ethnic majorities. The cleavage between "us" and "the other" is present in basically all societal arenas and has a major influence on the identity formations of immigrant and/or minority youths and affects their relations to majority peers and the surrounding society, in addition to their self-images and aspirations for future working and educational careers.

The comparison among the observed communities shows that the identity formation of first- and second-generation immigrant youths, and Roma youths, respectively, is influenced by historical, social, cultural, and symbolic structures, as well as subjective mental structures. Their self-images and collective identification is constituted and shaped by the interplay of structures, institutions, and discourses of the outside world, and of their personal and significant others' factual experiences. Ethnicity, gender, age, religion, socio-economic background, and social status are important elements in their identity formations and this process includes ongoing negotiations on the meanings of the individual and collective identifications, and the social categorisations made by others. In this sense, identities are contextual, relational, and dynamic. Identity is a unceasing process of producing and reproducing the dividing lines between "us" and "the others", being simultaneously about belonging and dissociation, inclusion and exclusion, integration and separation. Being an "immigrant" or "Roma" is considered a stigma in many situations. A disadvantaged socio-economic background coincides with an ethnic minority or Roma affiliation and gives cause to a vulnerable social position at the bottom of the societal hierarchy.

One recurrent and highly important theme in the observed communities is the link between neighbourhoods and residential segregation, and the identity formation among first- and second-generation immigrant youth, and Roma youth, respectively. In general, they reside in socially deprived neighbourhoods marked by unemployment, low educational levels, and an absence of the majority population. In that sense, socio-economic and ethnic housing segregation can give cause to negative consequences such as the concentration of social problems, marginalisation, isolation, and a lack of interfaces with the surrounding majority society. In general, these social and symbolic structures and representations are incorporated by the youth and reinforce the experienced differences, disadvantageous position, and dividing lines between themselves and their majority peers. At the same time, the residential segregation can work as a protective shield from majority society. However, there is a painful awareness among youth in the socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods of the existing discriminatory structures and prejudices in the surrounding environment. They feel that they do not belong and that they are not a part of majority society.

## **The proximate environment**

According to our working definition, the proximate environment is one of the main factors, sources, and contexts of identity formation (interwoven with others, like the school environment) and includes: young people's immediate home/family arrangements and connected socio-economic status; the surrounding



neighbourhood into which these are embedded; home-related peer groups and street life; and also institutions and/or organised activities from the nearby residential sites and/or those focusing on the latter. On the basis of the country Community Studies we may affirm that, regardless of its contents, the configuration between the economic, social, and cultural capital of ethnic Roma of the "new" member states and that of second-generation immigrants from the "old" member states of the European Union – relative to their local context – generate patterns of identity formation within which tendencies of integration are mixed with those of separation. Strategising with (ethnic) identification might fulfil socio-political functions that are shared across country borders; however, the role of ethnicity in the matrix of residential urban identity is performed differently in different situations.

At its turn, the proximate environment is structured by the broader socio-economic and political regime. In this sense, the nature and dynamics of the proximate environments of our target groups from the Central European countries (or "new" member states of the European Union) – that is, Roma communities served by the selected schools – are affected by these countries' post-socialist and post-industrial condition. Most importantly, one needs to observe that while the socialist state and political economy was interested in the cultural assimilation of Roma, as well as in using their labour force, the post-socialist privatisation, marketisation, and re-appropriation of buildings and lands left the majority of Roma as long-term unemployed lacking any properties, and they were subjected to evictions and relocations to isolated, marginalised, and stigmatised sites.

In this subchapter, our leading question refers to the extent to which experiences and perceptions of the proximate environment as lived in and understood by students, parents, and teachers are relevant for people's ethnic identification. Or, differently put, we are interested to learn here about how ethnic classification functions and is reproduced through and due to people's proximate environments, how are the latter ethnicised or not, and used or unused as such, in discursively explaining the causes of differences and inequalities in school performances and future aspirations.

Extracting data from the country Community Studies, the aim of this subchapter is: (1.) to identify the major types of the proximate environments of school children under scrutiny, and – in their light – (2.) to suggest clusters of identity formation that might cross country borders, and last but not least (3.) to conceptualise on the relationship between the proximate environment and ethnic identification.

### **The proximate environments – patterns of residential segregation**

The country studies basically identify two major types of vicinities (ethnically homogeneous and ethnically mixed) when describing the Roma neighbourhoods and communities in Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic – however, using different terms for naming them – according to their ethnic composition. Referring to their socio-economic condition, the same studies make a distinction among Roma families living in different degrees of poverty or deprivation (depending on how many disadvantages they are cumulating), and those with a relatively better socio-economic condition. Juxtaposing these two classifications, they also observe that even if a poor neighbourhood is ethnically mixed, it is predominantly perceived as a place inhabited by ethnic Roma as far as "Roma identity" becomes synonymous with "poor" and with cumulative social problems, and vice versa.

The distinction proposed by the Hungarian analysts between ethnic ghettos and underclass ghettos might be completed by the classification noted in the Romanian report among ethnic colonies whose residents are voluntarily and proudly separating from the outer world (including majority population and/or other ethnic minority, and among them other Roma groups) and those whose tenants are involuntarily segregated while aspiring for integration into the majority society. Furthermore, the term proposed by the Czech analysts ("socially excluded localities") might be used to refer to ghettos as units of residential segregation produced as a result of social exclusion (which might or not coincide with ethnic marginalization), and not of self-assumed cultural separation. The documented Slovak cases also show how social housing or prefabricated accommodation units are usually left by non-Roma tenants and "the Roma 'categorization' of the neighbourhood increased".

Ghettos and colonies (ethnic or multiethnic) are not necessarily located on the geographical margins of the investigated urban (or nearby rural) settlements. However, even if they are in the inner city, and/or are dispersed in several peripheral districts, they are marked by separating architectural structures (like roads with high traffic, railways, factories) and/or by elements of nature (such as rivers, hills, or forests). The most deprived urban Roma ghettos are the ones settled near or on municipal waste sites or sewage water treatment plants in the case of which geographical isolation overlaps with social marginalisation, and subhuman living conditions become markers of an ethnicised stigma.

Analyses on immigrant communities from "old" European Union member states also use distinctions between social and ethnic ghettos and observe different patterns of social segregation: like the formation of working-class neighbourhoods in suburbs (for example, in France, with mentioning that there are in-country differences among cities regarding the extension of such socially deprived areas); or the polarisation between the immigrant-dense suburban areas and the affluent suburban districts in Stockholm; or the slow transformation of the working-class inner city into a predominantly immigrant neighbourhood (like in some Danish cases); or the constitution of the inner city's socially deprived areas parallel with the development of middle-class suburbs in the outskirts (like in the German case or – with a few exceptions – in the United Kingdom). In the case of these countries the appearance and enlargement of spaces of poverty in the inner city is a more usual pattern than it is in the new member states, where they are mostly (but, as said, not always) evolving on the peripheries of settlements. But in their case, too, the practice of directing immigrants to the public housing in socially disadvantaged suburban districts is also working. One cannot avoid observing that spatial patterns of social and ethnic differentiations have changed in time with the transformations of the countries' immigration and housing policies, and economic developments.

Regarding the relation between residential and school segregation, a major difference between the "Western" and "Central European" societies is that in the latter the two are much more often in a causal relation than in the former. Despite the fact that catchment areas are not compulsory in these countries anymore, "pupils from low-income families are much more bound to the given school than pupils from better-off families" (like in Slovakia), "Roma children predominate in the schools near socially excluded localities" (like in the Czech Republic), and the same happens in the studied Romanian case which also shows that "soft" school desegregation policy cannot compete with the hard effects of economic polarisation also reflected in housing trends. However, one should observe that the degree of

the impact of residential segregation on schooling also depends on changing educational policies, as some of the Hungarian cases prove: here, due to measures targeting Roma inclusion, "high prestige schools with practically no Roma or socially deprived students had to take children from the urban ghetto"; nevertheless, the effective results of these changes varied a lot from a location to another depending on the degree of local stakeholders' dedication to the principle of integrated education, and also on the resistance of Roma parents to send "their children to schools located farther away from their homes". Our "Western" cases prove that the formation of segregated schools is also determined by factors beyond residential segregation. For example, as the French report shows, "the high concentrations of these groups in certain schools is due as much to the differential educational choices and strategies of majority and minority families as it is to the effect of increased residential segregation". This is resonating with the German case, where analysts observe that "many of them (upper- and middle-class people) would not enrol their own children in a 'mixed' school. The reason behind: "they have relatively little confidence in the school system's capacity to deal with diversity".

People voluntarily inhabiting colonies spatially separated from the rest of a settlement are not necessarily living in poverty. Vlah Roma communities from Hungary, Gábor Roma from Romania, Olah Roma from Czech Republic, or Vlachika or Sinti from Slovakia are maintaining functional relations with ethnic others through their income-generating trading practices, while sustaining their sense of distinctiveness and superiority as Gypsies who maintain authentic traditions. But ethnic colonies might also be spaces of poverty (and in this case they are not chosen voluntarily and should be named ghettos), especially if they are resulting from administrative measures (that relocate Roma families in the same neighbourhood after evicting them from their former homes where they could not pay their rent and/or utilities); or are formed as a result of a "voluntary" change of residence motivated by searching for new resources of income, looking for cheaper living arrangements, or following informal networks; and/or are created due to the fact that the non-Roma population leave the vicinities populated by "too many Roma".

Adults living in "Central European" ghettos (in the sense of segregated colonies of poverty) usually have attained only a low educational level (though better positioned colony tenants might also lack school education), often experience long-term unemployment or at least occupy vulnerable positions on the labour market (their working periods being followed by unemployment and/or by work in the informal economy and/or by work-related migration beyond the borders). The most secure elements of their income are different forms of welfare benefits for which they often perform public works. Due to the financial uncertainties that they struggle with, their rate of indebtedness is very high and they are unable to pay their rent and/ or utilities, due to which they are subjected to further evictions. Those in the Roma or ethnically mixed colonies who are doing relatively better have at least a few adult family members who have a more or less secure income, and an educational and job history that increases the chances of their further employment. However, even a relatively better position on the labour market means in this case only the occupation of poorly paid jobs that require a low-qualified work force.

Since the collapse of old industries and the strengthening of globalisation (due to which manufacturing moved to Asia), residential areas with a high concentration of public housing in the "old" European Union member states show higher poverty and unemployment rates than the countries' respective averages. As the Community studies show, the economic situation of very many immigrant

families (whose members previously were providing low-qualified labour) is heavily influenced by either unemployment or an employment situation that does not provide the necessary minimum income for a decent living, and many of them receive some form of financial welfare aid.

The country studies show some predominant patterns about housing conditions in the ghettos. Roma families, usually composed of numerous households (with at least three or four children), are living in one-room dwellings that never were connected to utilities such as running water, sewers, gas, or electricity, or often were disconnected from them due to non-payment. As pointed out earlier, these living quarters are overcrowded and have no spaces for privacy and intimacy. Besides these living conditions, the basic concern of ghetto dwellers (the structural source of their permanent insecurity) is the fact that they do not own their homes, so often lack permanent identity documents and related citizenship rights (this is especially so in Romania). Ghettos (but also the relatively better-positioned colonies) might be populated by several extended families due to which informal networks and kinship ties are overlapping.

The extent of households in the case of immigrant communities differs from one ethnic group to the other in the Western ghettos. Their spatial location changed and housing conditions improved during their histories in the host countries; however, they were always offered the sorts of social housing that were, by case, slum housing built to accommodate factory workers, or publicly subsidized low-income housing. Analysts observe that the ethnicised immigrant urban ghettos are reproducing the older social separation between middle-class residents and the working-class population. They are "favoured" by (the especially new) immigrants because they are in affordable districts due to their substandard developments and low prices, while the concentration of ethnic groups here is also facilitated by the phenomenon of chain migration.

These colonies and ghettos may function as spaces of solidarity or protection and sources of positive identity, or may be, on the contrary, like territories of conflicts or exploitation and the sources of negative self-perception (not only in the perception of outsiders, but also of the inhabitants). This depends on how they were constituted (do they have a longer collective history or not, cohabitation is spontaneous or forced, voluntary or involuntary?). But the consequences of living in the ghetto are also shaped by the degree to which kinship ties are juxtaposed with larger social networks, and/or the degree to which the boundaries among family, peer groups, school and workplace overlap. Eventually, the solidarity potential, or the conflicting nature, of the ghetto is also governed by the hierarchies of its internal order (due to which mutual dependencies might take the form of some dwellers abusing others). Some of our country studies are also referring to these aspects of pupils' life. In the studied Roma colonies from Romania:

[...] the mechanism of reciprocal assistance functioned in some cases and aspects, but it happened that under these conditions marked by several shortages, the competition for scarce resources, mutual suspicions, and the inability of jointly organizing [...] structured the order of cohabitation. Moreover, people living in encapsulated spaces might become dependent on and at the mercy of local informal leaders and entrepreneurs, who exploit their cheap labour force (Vincze 2010).

The Hungarian analysts highlighted that:

"[Romani-ness] as a subculture has also a political dimension: the neighbourhood is a protective shield against young people who are hostile to the Roma and identified with the skinheads. If they leave the settlement, they always go in groups since otherwise they would be more exposed to both physical attacks and verbal insults (Feischmidt, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

The ambivalence of feelings towards pupils' local identities is also pinpointed by the French study:

[...] they are at one and the same time the major source of a sense of belonging for young people who feel far removed from their parents' sense of community as well as from the dominant French identity. At the same time, the stigma attached to the image of the 'ghetto youth' combines all the processes of differentiation and exclusion that impede their prospects for social integration (Schiff 2010).

One of the Danish case studies emphasises that the neighbourhood provides a sense of belonging and security:

[...] minority ethnic students living in the Fraser area form an ethnic solidarity group on the basis of being "a Fraser", and not because of common religion, language, culture, or physical appearance. In this less divisive and non-racialised school environment, most students from the Fraser school frequently draw upon discourses of "us" inside school and Fraser area, and upon discourses of "us" and "them" outside Fraser area, and appear to find safety in their local community (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

In the majority of the studied cases from the colonies and ghettos, the social life of students and of their parents' consists of hanging around the home or in the immediate neighbourhood. Even if they state that they would like to integrate into the majority society and ethnicity does not matter in making friendships, they have few or no contacts with the outside world, these being reduced to schooling or labouring at the workplace and usually disappearing after leaving the latter. The few formal institutions serving the needs of children in these neighbourhoods in socialising, mostly centred on after-school programs and/or sports activities, are places where they predominantly meet peers belonging to similar socio-economic categories. Our country studies observe:

[...] while we have witnessed little separation along ethnic lines in schools, this seems more evident in life outside schools (Czech Republic).

ethnically mixed schools are important opportunity for friendship but there are various impediments from using this opportunity: lack of accessible organised after-school activities, requisite of payments, shortage of 'pocket money' to join more affluent classmates going out, and also necessity to commute and dependence on (not enough dense) public transport by commuting students (Slovakia).

[...] all the interviewed children expressed a strong will to socialize with the ethnic majority (but less with other groups of Roma) and to accept other life models than those that were predominant in their families and immediate communities. For them, the school definitely is a channel through which belonging to the outer world might be practiced, but – under the impact of different sorts of material constraint that their families are faced with and the recurring anti-Gypsy attitudes they encounter in the school or on the street – this path is under the risk of locking up and redirecting them back to encapsulation (Romania);

and in the case of Roma living in areas that are:

[...] geographically located far from the town, it is difficult for people to establish or nurture social contacts other than their few neighbours. Whereas there seems to be ways out of the ghetto, this social setting might be a dead-end street for both the adults and the children" (Hungary).

Regarding the leisure activities of students from a migrant background, the German Community Study notices that "[...] most students mention that they spend a large share of their spare time with their family", so "[...] the amount of spare time which is spent outside the family is rather limited", and moreover:

[...] the differences between leisure activities of Germans and students of Turkish, Arab, and Muslim origin seem to aggravate when entering adolescence [...] and these differences are regarded as somehow related to the core values of Turkish, Arab, or Muslim culture.

Cases observed in France also have shown that the fact that:

[...] minority students having a tendency to have more friends who are of the same ethnic origin is more often the consequence of the socio-ethnic composition of their neighbourhoods, their schools and their families' acquaintances, than a result of their membership in a structured ethnic community, or of pressures for them to remain with their "own kind" (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

In the United Kingdom minority

"[...] pupils reported socializing with pupils from a range of different ethnic backgrounds so on the surface ethnicity did not appear on the face of it to be a significant issue in pupils' everyday social experience"; nevertheless, "[...] an important part of identity for both Caribbean and Pakistani pupils and particularly for boys was bound up with allegiance to area" (Swann and Law 2010).

The Swedish study observes that "[...] ethnic boundaries are more apparent among boys compared to girls", so "[...] the group of boys originating from The Middle East and Africa socialize together in a relatively large group", while girls "[...] have wider friendship circles from an ethnical point of view compared to the boys". But the same study also notices that: "[...] the experience of 'not being Swedes'



is an important foundation for closer relations in the community, regardless of country of origin", and "[...] the students' utterances indicate an experience of segregation, and of living outside of the Swedish society" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). In some Danish cases, sharing the same school space is not followed by socializing in ethnically mixed groups outside the school: "[...] although the ethnic minority students at Belleview School feel that they are included in a common 'we' inside school, they do not stay together with majority peers outside school" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).

### **Patterns of identity formation from rejecting stigma to embracing pride**

The contexts rendered by people's family arrangements, socio-economic positions, and housing conditions, together with informal and formal networks provided in the vicinity, and the characteristics of the proximate environment, play a central role in the ways how people's identities are shaped. Most importantly, as citations from above proved, our analysts observed that identification with the neighbourhood can both reinforce and transcend ethnic boundaries.

The separation of ghettos from the outer world not only has socio-economic consequences (and these spaces are not simply locations on the geographical map), but it also bears particular cultural meanings (like stigma and/or pride associated with ethnicity). Consequently, it has an impact on people's self-perception and perception of others, functioning as an important element of their psycho-social maps.<sup>10</sup> The ghetto is a marginal spatial arrangement, which in the case of Roma and people from an immigrant background is about projecting ethnic identification into the classifications of spaces (for living, schooling, and working). Ghettos might be conceived as "Roma" or "immigrant" spaces, even if they have a multiethnic character and even if they are also inhabited by natives, as far as categories of "Roma" and "immigrant" are used as stigma. As a result, Roma or immigrant ethnicity is recognized or manifested as linked to an impoverished segregated space. The construction and maintenance of spatially marked boundaries does not only have the function to signal the distinctions between ethnic minority and majority. The meanings attached to the lifestyle of the community inhabiting a particular spatial area (especially by those expressing a desire of integration) do also have a social function to signal to the majority that the homogenising Roma/immigrant image is false. As noted earlier, the country studies observe that in many instances – in the strategies of identity formation – the internal differentiations among ethnic Roma are at least as important as, or even more significant than maintaining boundaries between the "majority" and Roma. Just to mention a few examples: "The first important intra-ethnic classification is the [...] distinction between Roma living concentrated in the 'socially excluded localities' and those Roma families and individuals, usually better off in socio-economic terms, and in many cases also educational status, who live scattered outside these areas, among and with the non-Roma population" (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010); "Romanianised Roma, expressing a strong will and also sense of belonging to the majority community, while explaining their failures in integration, maintain their sense of positive distinctiveness by distancing themselves from the Gábor Roma" (Vincze 2010).

10 By using the term psycho-social maps we are suggesting to go further than the traditional perspective of mental maps, and to understand (by following, for example, Arreola 1995) urban identity as a constructed idea that is tied to a real or imagined landscape, and not as a "mental map or a sense of space". In such a way one may describe how a city or a city neighbourhood might be associated with a specific ethnic group even if its population is ethnically diverse.



As the French report shows, internal differentiations are also reflected in “[...] stereotypes concerning the different ethnic groups: while Arab students are more readily portrayed as delinquents or terrorists, Black students are portrayed as lazy and uncivilized” (Schiff 2010). In the case of the United Kingdom, “[...] part of the differences in immigrant experiences between Caribbeans and Pakistanis could be viewed as religion” (Swann and Law 2010). The Swedish Community Study stresses the differences between the first and second generation of immigrants (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). Beyond internal differences, in some cases – as the German study demonstrates – differences within the community are neglected as being of minor importance: “[...] in reaction to the negative mainstream discourse about Islam, many students showed strong solidarity with their families by underlining that they agreed with their parents and by stressing that their commitment to certain rules was completely deliberate” (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

Roma groups voluntarily separating from the majority society (using the latter as an object to trade with) nurture a sense of positive identity exactly due to their ability of maintaining their (sense of) separation, autonomy, and self-sufficiency (this is illustrated, for example, by the case of Gábor Gypsies from Romania:

[...] in Gábor Roma families “otherness” is associated with pride – at least on the level of statements – and not frustration. This is about the pride in their mother tongue that also functions as a medium through which social and cultural norms are transmitted. Their wear (particular hat, long moustache for men, coloured silk skirt for women, coloured blouse with various patterns, pleated apron coloured as the skirt, and head scarf) makes them different not only from majority, but also from other Roma. They also guard their distinctiveness through specific marriage practices” (Vincze 2010).

Contrary to this, groups of Roma accepting life models associated with the majority society construct a confident self-image based on their conviction that they are different from Gypsies named by them – as seen earlier – as “traditional”, “uncivilised”, or “non-integrated” (this is highlighted by each country study referring to Roma from Central Europe, here to be sustained by a quote from the Slovak team: “[...] in the eyes of many non-Olah Roma, the Olah ones are the ‘bad’ ... or the ‘uncivilised’ ones who discredit Roma people at large in the eyes of the majority” (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

As the French Community Study shows, for adolescents from an immigrant background, traditional factors of social differentiation (such as parental income, occupation, or educational level) play a less important role than qualifying themselves according to their local urban or neighbourhood identities: “[...] urban identities function as an implicit mode of social, ethnic, generational, and even academic distinction. They synthesise all the various dimensions of their identity, while at the same time permitting a degree of mixture between various ethnic groups, since membership is acquired and not transmitted” (Schiff 2010). Moreover, students ending up in the least desirable schools and classes assert their ethnic identity as a means of compensating for their inferiority within the educational hierarchy. The British study distinguishes between the first and second generation of immigrants living in the United Kingdom as far as they cope with racism and embrace ethnic pride to a different degree: “[...] unlike

their parents who 'accepted' racism because it had not always been like that, the second generation of Caribbeans had always been plagued by the persistent reality of racism. Expressing their identities meant not just anger and resentment but a sense of pride and dignity in their ethnicity" (Swann and Law 2010). Being associated with terrorism in the last decade, Pakistanis have had a harder time with sustaining their ethnic dignity: "[...] being viewed as having an identity that is at odds with British cultural norms meant that Pakistani pupils felt more prone to stigmatisation". Among people from an immigrant background, the Danish team "found the strongest identification with ethnicity within the strategy of ethnic pride, less strong identification within the strategy of reflexive ethnicity, and the lowest identification within the strategy of downplaying ethnicity"(Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). The Swedish study also distinguishes between three models of identification: in the case of the first pattern that "[...] reveals a strong ethnic identification [...] a voluntary ethnic differentiation and segregation often occur to make a clear separation and distinction from the Swedish society"; "[...] the second pattern reveals a more open and distanced attitude toward ethnicity and the group belonging [...] which might reflect a more threatened identity"; while in some other cases "[...] the strive for integration can result in a tendency of pushing the issue of ethnic origin into the background" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010). Belonging to a particular neighbourhood and living on the edge both shape self-understanding and as such they affect – among others – aspirations regarding schooling and future plans. Due to financial reasons, Roma parents living in poverty send their children into nearby schools about which they get information through their kinship and informal networks, so the latter to an extent are reproducing their home environment. This is not the case of the better-off Roma and those aiming at being integrated. Acknowledging their possibilities, parents consider that their children would not be able to handle other types of schools but ones with lower levels of expectancies and competition, and most importantly with a higher degree of openness towards disadvantaged groups. Also, as a result of these processes, schools serving neighbourhoods of Roma colonies – even if not having a predominantly Roma student body – are subjected to ethnic stigmatisation; however, some schools from Hungary successfully countervailed this by consciously attaining at mixing. In the West European countries many minority students also make their choices for schools according to their spatial proximity condition. In France: "[...] they simply end up in their program because of a predetermined set of constraints like grades, proximity of the school, record of undisciplined behaviour, knowledge of others who have gone to the school" (Schiff 2010); or in the United Kingdom: "[...] in the case of the Pakistani community, among some other factors, the distance/transport from home to school was influencing the choice for schools" (Swann and Law 2010); while in Denmark: "[...] as 90 per cent of the students attending the local school are of another ethnic background than Danish, this indicates that more parents with an ethnic Danish background chose to find a school for their kids outside Fraser" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). Generally speaking, in these contexts, people's life strategies are dominated by the practice of living in the present (as a cultural reaction to the socio-economic conditions of poverty and deprivation). This operates in a way that the treatment of the relation between time and money that cannot be imagined and affording the long-term investment in school education is reprioritised by concentrating on solving the immediate challenges of each and every day (among which assuring children's school attendance on a regular basis is only one demand, usually subordinated to other emergencies). Under these conditions – as it has already been

pointed out – children start economic activities early (helping with household activities and child-care in the case of girls and earning money outside home in the case of boys). Cooperation on working out the everyday material urgencies of the families affects children's self-perception, enforcing them to mature earlier and, related to this, to gain a sense of independence and the satisfaction of participating in processes of mutual assistance, which might be perceived by them as elements of a proudly assumed ethnic minority identity.

### **Associations between the proximate environment and ethnic identification**

Given conditions of the proximate environment (as manifestations of macro-structural factors at the local level), its formal and informal networks (as micro-spaces of social relationships), and the ways all these are experienced and understood (as cultural configurations), are important building blocks of personal and collective identities. They constitute people's social personhood that embodies – among others – one's sense of belonging to and/or detachment from his or her immediate environment (including family and housing arrangements, socio-economic conditions, informal networks, and related lifestyles and modes of thinking).

On the other hand, dealing with peoples' proximate milieu while analysing identity formation is also important because this is one of the sites (composed by different actors, processes, and factors) where the consequences of structural and institutional discrimination are directly felt, getting inscribed deeply and invisibly into personal and collective identities.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the types of peoples' closest environment that acquire meaning relative to other kinds of milieus existing in the broader social context – regardless of their concrete local contents – generate particular clusters of identity formation, which – making abstraction of their particular meanings – are shared across country borders. Locations of marginality (geographically isolated housing arrangements, socio-economic conditions of deep poverty, family and kinship enclaves) universally produce hybrid identity strategies and identity models, in which the tendency of integration is mingled with that of separation, and positive self-perception is mixed with negative elements. Our research proved that – depending on the resources of the extended families and informal networks as suppliers of self-confidence and related pride – marginalised people perceive themselves as minorities lacking something in front of the majority embodying "normality", so their identity strategies are more or less reactive (a situation that characterises all powerless groups). To different degrees, they practice a threefold identity strategy. In the case of Roma, this includes separation from other types of Roma communities than theirs (as embodiments of negative identities), integration into the majority society (as the container of a desired life or at least as an instrument that provides resources for living), and the maintenance of a separate, positive self, providing the sense of a particular body related to and bridging different life worlds.

Threefold identity strategies characterise immigrant groups as well. The Danish and Swedish

11 As anthropologists emphasise (for example, Lawrence-Zunigas and Low 2003), while analysing the material and spatial aspects of culture, one might address the issue of embodied space. On the base of this idea, we are suggesting here that to the extent to which the territory of living is imagined through negative meanings like poverty, violence, isolation, etc., as linked to particular ethnic groups, and features of embodied subjectivities (such as skin colour) are transformed into identities.

studies make a distinction among the strategy of strong identification with ethnicity (that, however, does not emphasise a clear separation from the mainstream society), the strategy of ethnic pride (linked to a positive approach to cultural diversity, perceiving ethnic background as an advantage and sustaining voluntarily separation), and the strategy of downplaying ethnicity (mostly played out in the case of a threatened identity, and characterised by a distanced attitude towards ethnic belonging and promotion of mixed immigrant identities). But they also observe that, for example, striving for "Swedishness" is a general trend as an attempt for social mobilisation and a higher social status.

In the case of post-colonial minorities from France, their "[...] social integration and exclusion is intricately linked with residential inequalities and with the existence of neighbourhoods which are often regarded as quasi-ghettos, even though they are in fact ethnically very diverse" (Schiff 2010). The separation along ethnic lines in the studied cases from Germany was "[...] aggravated by culture-related lifestyles based on different values, tastes, and affinities," but it also was sustained by pragmatic concerns (like the fact that "[...] students of Turkish, Arab, or Muslim background who live in a community with many peers of similar background where it is quite easy to make friends who will understand each other without words do not seem to feel any need to get into closer contact with German peers"), or by moral arguments related to sexuality ("students from Muslim backgrounds [...] are perceived by the majority as representing outdated attitudes or as being the result of oppression, [...] so they prefer the convenient way of spending their time with people who share similar thoughts and accept them just the way they are") (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

Our parents and students theoretically sustained the importance of school education: in the case of those choosing voluntary separation, this was about taking up an ill-favoured, but necessary socio-economic instrument, while for those opting for a stronger integration into the majority society, it was also a moral/cultural choice. Anyway, for both categories, attitudes towards school and its role in identity formation (for example, the self-understanding according to which "we" are those Roma or Muslims who express "our" will of integration by frequenting school) were re-enforcing positions assumed in front of their immediate environments. So in people's identity configurations, the perception of school was always relative to that of home: by expressing opinions about school, one formulated views about whom he or she was at home and vice versa. Moreover, as far as experiences of home (by case, being the proximate environment of deprivation) were the "real" elements of one's identity that prescribed what one really might achieve due to his or her conditions, ideas about school embodied its "imagined" building blocks (as something desired and achievable or unreachable, or as something necessary but unrealistic or feasible).

The larger the discrepancies between the proximate home environment and the outer world – and the sharper the boundaries between what is thought as a private/personal and as a public sphere –, the stronger the inward ethnic identification of minorities become. One might suppose this to the extent that, as a group, Roma do not have a history of cultural autonomy (as traditional national minorities from the "new" European Union member states have); however, they do possess a well-developed sense of accommodating to the outside world, and Roma communities are practicing their ethnic identification both in the front of the latter and among themselves. As far as Roma ethnic identity is not learned at school or from textbooks (however, to different extent in different countries, this is an evolving tendency), questioned about this, people tend affirming that it is not important in one's choices (however,

observing their practices, it is definitely a factor that affects their options in many domains of life). On the base of this, one may conclude that this type of ethnic identification is more pragmatic or practical than narrative or reflective, while being developed – as it happens in the case of any other type of identity – situationally, as a strategy of self-positioning in the context of reacting to challenges inscribed into different sorts of relationships.

Non-reflection on students' cultural or ethnic differences also characterises post-colonial minority youth. At its turn, in the French context this is fuelled by reasons like the shared values of republican neutrality and colour-blindness on the side of the teachers. As a result, the French school culture (for which references to ethnicity remain taboo) clashes with students' lived experiences, whose lives at home and outside the schools are marked by ethnically stigmatised social distinctions (Schiff 2010). In one of the studied Danish cases, "[...] ethnicity is downplayed as a signifier among majority and minority students inside school, but is still a marker of division outside school", and "[...] the lower the students are on the social ladder, the stronger is the role of ethnicity as a self-explanatory 'ideological construct' that they use for rationalising their case of existence" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). In the studied German cases the research team observed that "[...] students with Turkish or Arab background are mostly joining groups which are ethnically mixed, only sometimes they could be seen in groups which are either exclusively Turkish or exclusively Arab", but very few students of Turkish background joined distinctive "German" groups (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010).

Beyond the proposed directions on which the rich empirical materials offered by our country community studies might be compared, at the end of this sub-chapter we would like to stress the theoretical potential of addressing the relationship between the proximate environment and (ethnic) identification. In this sense one should think further about this volume as a possible contribution to the interdisciplinary perspective called "the spatial turn", which tackles how the social constructions of space are interwoven with how space and geography are involved in the construction of social relations. For this perspective helps us to recognise that "where things happen is critical to knowing how and why [they] happen" (Arias and Warf 2009), or it makes us conscious about the role of territoriality in the constitution of cultural practices (Derek and Urry 1990). Furthermore, we would like to appreciate that our work also promises to understand how, in the case of Roma of Central Europe and of people from an immigrant background from the Western half of the continent, the "ethnic landscape" (Appadurai 1996) is imagined both as territorial (as linked to a particular space with specific meanings) and as transnational (as linked to images/constructions of "ethnic groups" such as "Roma", "Muslim", or "Caribbean").

## **The school environment**

First of all, we wish to repeatedly emphasise the diversity of the schools in our sample, with regard to their type (primary versus secondary), generational profile, ethnic composition, social composition, and the physical location of the facilities in different residential and neighbourhood contexts. The limited

space of this essay does not allow us to describe all such variations in detail; however, the diversity of collected data provides us the opportunity to grasp common patterns affecting the formation of ethnic identity in the school environment. The following sub-sections consider three main themes: (1.) how educational institutions react to the ethnic diversity within schools; (2.) what we learn about the problems of discrimination, racism, and ethnically driven conflicts within the schools; and (3.) what types of ethnic belonging we encounter and the typical contexts for their relevance. In addition, we also address the issue of ethnic minority teachers, the role of the school's atmosphere and reputation, and finally, the interplay between gender and ethnicity.

### **Modes of (non)recognition of students' ethnicity in the schools**

The investigated schools developed different "cultures" in their approaches to students' ethnicity, that is, they recognise the relevance of ethnic background and its role in school life differently. We can divide their approach into three general modes:

1. Segregating schools actively divide children on the basis of their ethnicity, yet not as an open strategy. Ethnic division – visible in the composition of classes or based on the segregation into different buildings in case of big facilities – is legitimised as the result of the impersonal and objective mechanism that sets up classes according to the academic achievements of students. These schools usually follow the ethnic divisions inherent in their social context and try to conform to what they assume is also the parents' will, who for different reasons, do not seek to change teaching methods to help their children overcome social disadvantages. We encountered segregating schools in Central European post-socialist countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia), where, because of a nationalised educational system, the heritage of previous schooling practices, as well as a slowly changing educational culture, affects the entire schooling system, not only individual schools. As segregating schools reproduce, objectify, and institutionalise ethnic boundaries, they also contribute to the praxis of imagining ethnic divisions within society (by teachers, students, and parents) and through this they also shape the identities of their students. But separation in the schools often hinders ethnically framed tensions or conflicts. It is not only the question of anticipated problems but also a result of experienced events.<sup>12</sup>
2. Colour-blind schools promote (at least discursively) a republican civic principle with limited recognition of ethno-cultural differences, which are conceived as having their own realm outside the public (civic) space and institutions. The republican tradition is especially strong in the French educational system, but we encounter this approach also in the case of other countries – for example, in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Denmark, although these countries have not developed comparable republican school cultures. An colour-blind approach brings

12 For example, in the Czech Republic and Hungary, after the integration of two recently ethnically segregated schools, majority and minority children have been re-segregated, this time within the school, due to tensions where parents also played an important role.



some unintended negative consequences. First, it may serve as an alibi for the reluctance to provide support for students with minority backgrounds. Further, if ethnic differences play a role in the daily reality of families' lives and represent a source of disadvantage, then schools are partly out of touch with the reality of trying to help pupils from underprivileged ethnic minority families. Moreover, the positive recognition of ethnic minority cultures would serve as an important step in the process of inclusion through supporting a better image of minorities (Taylor 1992). Finally, a colour-blind strategy may encounter serious practical difficulties and, in the end, teachers de facto must take ethnicity into consideration.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, a colour-blind approach seems to be suitable in the case of highly motivated and successful minority students who do not need additional support as well as for those who follow the strategy of striving for integration. Regarding the positive potential of the colour-blind strategy, the French team noted the fact that it helps to cultivate the notion of success as the result of personal virtue, an attribute that does not rely upon ethnicity. Thus, it may partially mitigate the appropriation of minority identities. It is worth noting that some students recognise the official school strategy of indifference to the specific minority cultures. But the recognition of the republican tradition is sometimes disputed, due to certain religious (particularly Muslim) traditions and practices which were originally developed in a cultural context where the division between the public and the private spheres has a different pattern. This "structural" setting actualises some cultural tensions because it challenges the self-identity of adolescents, which conceive of their religiosity as a private matter but with inevitable (and unintended) public manifestations.

3. Ethnically-sensitive schools recognise ethnicity as one of the factors influencing students' lives both outside and inside institutional walls. They manifest their sensitivity in various ways. Practically, it provides the basis for multicultural education or any forms of support aimed at minority students. For instance, in the United Kingdom, the researched schools alleged that this approach is very desirable and one of the facilities declared its aims "to help students to understand the interdependence of individuals, groups, nations and the local environment, and to both comprehend and celebrate the multicultural nature of Northcity society" (Swann and Law 2010). Nevertheless, schools vary considerably in just how much support they offer students. Schools that are open to "ethnic discourse" but do not provide any systematic support in the form of specific programmes (multicultural education, more language classes) represent one pole. On the other hand, some could be labelled "community schools", as they conceive of themselves in this manner and they build their educational policy by referring to the disadvantages of respective ethnic minority groups. For example, one of the Czech schools was established in the spirit of promoting the education of Roma children, which is in sharp contrast with other schools in the town, where Roma children

13 For example, teachers in one Parisian school accommodated their teaching to the religious practices of some of their students; specifically, they avoided organising testing during Muslim holidays. In general, however, they still support the overall colour-blind republican culture.



are there in high numbers but schools are reluctant to support their Roma identity or to try and develop it in a non-stigmatising and positive way. However, positive support of ethnic minority identity among some minority students – especially when conducted as an "ethnic awakening" project – also has unintended consequences. It can confuse those who are rather integrated or try to be integrated and/or do not use ethnic categorisation as the core of their self-identity. This issue proved to be relevant in at least in the case of Roma respondents in one Hungarian school and also in the aforementioned Czech school. Students from the United Kingdom also declared negative stances toward ethnicised forms of support which could be perceived negatively:

Yes, you think you are going to achieve something but then they come along and say, "we think you need help", and it puts you down. Yes, it puts you down and you are like, "so I am not doing that well", and you think you are doing really well and you know you are going to do well and then they just go and put you down (Focus group discussion).

One of the basic differences between countries resides in the level of the variety of ethnic groups within the schooling systems. In the Western European countries (France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and the United Kingdom), the ethnic diversity in the schools is much broader than in the Central European communities (in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, and Slovakia), for higher levels of immigration account for the high number of students from underprivileged ethnic groups in Western Europe. There are substantial numbers of newcomers in the Czech Republic, but the growth of the proportion of ethnic minority students in the education system takes place very slowly. Despite this, modes of (non)recognition of ethnicity in the school environment described above *are found in all of the countries more or less simultaneously*. However, in France, the general tendency toward the second mode is legitimated and enforced by official educational policy, while segregating school practices operate more often in the Central European than in the Western European countries.

Modes of (non)recognition exercised by schools are one of the ways in which to approach the question of identity formation in the educational environment. Although we are able to generalise with regard to the three modes of recognition, we found that the actual results could be diverse or even contradictory. This underscores the fact that we cannot isolate and analyse the impact of the school environment as such because of the intersectional character of identity formation with the broader milieu (for example, the educational system, different civic cultures, and their notion of the ethnic division of society, etc., as highlighted in the first section of this essay), and with the family environment and strategies (for example, different forms of individual and collective self-reflection, status and other characteristics such as cultural backgrounds, etc., as discussed in the second section on the proximate contexts of adolescent identity formation).

## The reputation of schools and their atmosphere

Schools can have a negative impact on self-image through their low public reputation, which is inevitably transmitted to students, regardless of their actual school performance and the social status of their respective families. According to our interviews with teachers, students, and parents, a school's reputation is connected with the following:

- the educational programmes provided by the school;
- the social status and ethnicity of the students;
- the school's history and its prestige in the past;
- the prestige of the neighbourhood of the school; and
- the prestige of the neighbourhood of the students.

In particular, the last two factors can be exaggerated by the broader public that may lack actual experience with the respective schools. For example, we learned that one French school has a good reputation because it is situated in a good neighbourhood in a good quarter of the city, and furthermore, it retains a sense of prestige rooted in educational programmes that no longer exist. But the reputation of a particular school does not seem to be a primary factor underlying pupils' feelings of comfort/discomfort and satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the school environment. When students express their sentiments to the school and to the teachers, it is not determined by the formal/objective characteristics such as the composition of the teaching staff and their qualifications or the shape of the building (or any other aesthetic factors) and its infrastructure. By far, the most important circumstance is the atmosphere, and above all, the atmosphere in the class, which is formed through the relationships in the peer group and between students and their teachers, as well as with non-pedagogical staff that is an important part of the educational process (assistants, psychological consultants, etc.). What we may regard as positive is the fact that schools can temper their public reputation by creating a better internal atmosphere. In general, schools with a significant proportion of students from ethnic minority backgrounds usually have a negative public reputation. But the impact of this upon shaping students' identity can be countered when schools seek to build up a good, relaxed atmosphere and a cohesive classroom setting. The following citations were provided by two French adolescents who positively evaluated their school:

Well, the atmosphere at high school isn't heavy. It's friendly, it's open. Yes, it's good. It's better when there aren't too many students. Because then teachers know our trajectories, they know our difficulties, and they can help us (second-generation Algerian girl).

What I like about teachers in this school is that they don't put you aside, and they take the time to explain things. When I don't understand, I ask, and they take the time. It's not like junior high school where you're set aside, I mean I was in math and all, because I really don't get it. I like teachers here (second-generation Turkish girl).

However, it requires the will of the school personnel to foster a friendly atmosphere, which can be demanding and require considerable extra work. We found several types of activities targeted at improving class atmosphere, including:

- providing lessons outside of class time for students making slow progress;
- working to establish mutual trust based on communication with students and their families; and
- organising social life in school with activities that are not exclusively oriented towards academic issues.

Thus, some schools (or at least a part of their teaching staff) take over functions that are beyond their primary role as mediators of an academic curriculum.

Schools were generally conceived as a typical "majority institution", especially for underprivileged families living in localities where the same ethnic minority group (or groups with similar social characteristics) is concentrated and everyday life is usually locked in with the neighbourhood and family ties. The potential for disaffection is strong, as the school system is rather hierarchical ("good" and "bad" schools; different schooling programmes with different prestige) and achievement oriented (evaluating and marking), with students from underprivileged ethnic groups typically overrepresented at the bottom of the educational system. When students feel that they are not treated and judged exclusively on the basis of their performance – including the hierarchy between programs and classes (or between different schools) – they more often conceive the school as a place providing support and help for solving problems different from those that are exclusively school oriented.<sup>14</sup>

The schools attended by many underprivileged children but without developed strategies regarding how to support mutual trust showed a tendency to put a one-dimensional emphasis predominantly on following rules and/or on students' school achievement – thus promoting a competitive rather than a cooperative environment. As a consequence, they tended to reflect more tension in teacher-student relationships as well as an unfavourable milieu for preventing ethnically framed conflicts between students.

### **Teachers with ethnic minority identity**

The rate of teachers (including also assistants) with ethnic minority backgrounds was usually between 10–15 per cent, but we also encountered schools, or classes or programmes within these schools, with a significantly higher proportion (30–50 per cent) or, conversely, schools without such personnel at all (Hungary). In general, lower proportions were found in the Central European countries, while in Western European countries, the proportion of teachers from ethnic minorities was higher.<sup>15</sup>

14 This strategy and its impact upon the process of shaping self-identity is mostly relevant in the case of pupils from families where nurturing from parents is missing, either because of their work overload or as a consequence of the overall family deprivation.

15 It is more often the case for those minority groups who have lived in the country or in the locality for some generations. A similar effect applies in the case of source countries of immigration, which are simultaneously brain-drained (although some of these countries are primarily provided by developmental aid based on brain-gain). Both circumstances contribute to

A number of the teachers from ethnic minorities consider their job a mission to help children from the most disadvantaged families and/or a question of ethnic solidarity. Others take advantage of policies supporting the employment of ethnic minority group members in the schooling system. But, regardless of their motivations, ethnic minority teachers or other qualified non-pedagogical personnel do provide positive examples of upward social mobility for children from underprivileged families. The following citation from a focus group discussion in the Hungarian research shows that it is recognised also by teachers who reflect on the abovementioned low numbers of those in Central European countries as well.

Teacher 1: If they were surrounded by more people of Roma origin who have already achieved something in their lives and therefore could be role models for them, then that would be a motivating force for them. They get lost somewhere in the system because we should note that there are Roma college or university graduates but they disappear. However, their guidance would be important.

Teacher 2: I tend to disagree with you a little bit. There's K. (teacher's assistant) who demonstrates by personal example what could be achieved through education.

Teacher 1: He's the exception.

The positive role of these teachers and their contribution toward helping to reduce the potential mechanisms of alienation between schools and minority children is not always straightforward, however. We must take into consideration the interplay between ethnicity and class distinctions. Most students at our schools come from families that are not only marginalized ethnically but also (very) poor, which is not usually the case for their professional, educated co-ethnic teachers. In our research, we found that students sometimes conceived of them as "turncoats", with different habits, which would not always be evident – to the uninformed outsider, they simply appear to share the same ethnic group membership and solidarity. At the same time, some teachers from ethnic groups also make these distances important:

Interviewer: Being of the same origin as students is an advantage, a disadvantage?

Teacher 1: I think that competence has no colour, no origin. I would even go further. These stories about racism have never been my preoccupation, frankly. Some might find it strange, but I just live with it. As I said I used to be at the head of a workshop crew, so I managed men with a certain level, with a good collaboration.

Interviewer: And do students talk about this with you?

Teacher 1: No, no. As I say, the communication I have with students is purely professional. I maintain a certain distance. I am very close to my students, but always in the trade. Ninety per cent of our communication concerns their future and the profession. If they find me in class, in the lunch room, or outside, we talk about life jokingly, but not in depth (sub-Saharan African migrant teacher, France).

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constituting a group of educated people with ethnic minority background.

We did not deeply explore these strategies to maintain distance but we may – besides the question of authority over pupils – also take into consideration the role of self-respect, prestige, and related strategies seeking to "escape from ethnicity" as the citation indicates.

### **Levels of ethnic group belonging**

Our research has demonstrated that the school environment provides opportunities for the emergence of different levels of ethnic group belonging. To limit the question of "ethnic" identity only to the "usual" categories (for example, Turks, Pakistanis, that is, those based on nation-state categories) is often too narrow an approach. A more nuanced approach reveals the complexity in the strategies of actors when they utilise ethnic group memberships, identities, and categorisations.

We found that different levels of group belonging could be analytically categorised, moving from the broader to the more specific in the following hierarchical fashion:

identity of ethnic otherness > broader ethnic categories >  
specific ethnic group categories > sub-ethnic categorisation

The identity of ethnic otherness would be characterised as a perception of being different from the mainstream core. It is a broader category of "we" and has the potential to involve all ethnic out-groups due to their shared position in society, including low symbolic status. It is generated through negative public stereotypes that categorise minority youth as problematic (because of poor school performance, bad behaviour, inadaptability, as well as dangerous and violent tendencies). As an example, we turn to a case noted by the French team while mapping life in a school where minority pupils from an ethnically mixed neighbourhood prevail. School trips to the city centre, outside the usual surroundings, provided the opportunity to activate otherness through the reactions of "common French" as well as through indirect provocation by the voluntary manifestation of "tough boy" images on the part of some pupils (Schiff 2010). In contrast, this broader layer of self-identity does not manifest in the case of the Central European countries, as Roma are the only relevant ethnic minority group in these educational systems. The identity of ethnic otherness also has a potential impact upon shaping the second type of belonging, as described below.

The broader ethnic categorisation is based on regional, racial, and religious categories which are usually mixed, because, for example, being from the Maghreb would usually mean being Arab and Muslim. This categorisation is quite important in school life because students utilise them when establishing peer groups as well as when explaining intra-school ethnic cleavages. Teachers also apply these categories when describing youth and life in the schools. We encountered the following broader categories: sub-Saharan, Maghrebian (specific to the French case), Caribbean (especially in the United Kingdom and France), Blacks, Arabs, Whites, and Muslims. Religious differences appear to be the most significant, probably due to two circumstances. First, religion usually claims to constitute a community of believers and thus overlaps more particular ethno-national belongings (here, we invoke the "transnational" concept of the Ummah, which includes the entire "Muslim world"). Second, different cultural practices stemming from the religious background concern music tastes, dressing, food habits, sexual life, and after-school

activities etc., which are important in the life of students from the point of view of their grouping.<sup>16</sup> In particular, it is Muslim identity that seems to be the most inclusive, having the potential to integrate a broad diversity of regional and racial categories.

The specific ethnic group categorisation is based on ethno-national categories (Roma, Somali, Turks, etc.), which could be further decomposed into sub-ethnic categorisation. For example, as mentioned earlier, Roma ethnic identity could be decomposed into sub-categories of Vlach Roma, Slovak Roma, old Czech Roma, etc. The Central European teams encountered this division as a common pattern, especially as a strategy for defending one's dignity in the face of the overall negative public image of the Roma ethnic group. Sub-categorisation provides the opportunity to divide Roma into "bad" and "good" subgroups and thus distancing oneself from the "bad ones" who are "different Roma than we are, and who ruin our reputation" (Vincze 2010).

### **Racism, xenophobia, and discrimination**

We might expect that ethnically driven distinctions are one of the basic factors shaping interpersonal interactions, relations, and the overall class and school atmosphere, especially in the context of the overall pattern when groupings in schools follow ethnic lines. But in most of the investigated schools, regardless of their "ethnic setting", solely racial or ethnic tensions appear to be exceptional phenomena, not a common visible part of everyday life in schools. The explanation of this relative invisibility of clear ethnic tensions can be partially addressed through the following two sets of circumstances.

First, as it was pointed out, we investigated many schools where ethnic minority students dominate or are dominated in specific classes or/and educational programs. These "school ghettos", attended by children from families sharing an ethnic minority background and very often living in the same (or similar type of) neighbourhood, prevent ethnic tensions – their students much less often feel directly (in a face-to-face manner) exposed to negative experiences based upon their ethnicity. This occurs mainly in larger cities where many middle-class and better-situated majority students have the opportunity to choose different schools if they or their parents are dissatisfied with a particular facility. This phenomenon generates not only ethnic ghettoisation of schools (usually described as "white flight") but also (social) class ghettoisation. Majority students from poor families or studying in a specific programme have limited opportunities to leave their schools and thus more often stay with their ethnic minority peers, with whom they share social class status, and in some cases, also the neighbourhood. These class similarities may also play a role in the relative invisibility of the ethnic tensions in specific environments of "minority schools". Ethnic minority students attending "majority schools" are more often exposed to stigma-generating situations because of their relatively lower social position with regard to their classmates. But we must be careful in delineating such a sharp distinction between these two settings. Many segregated schools in Western Europe also provide the opportunity to encounter the ethnic others, because they have, in fact, a multiethnic character. Thus, we need to add another clarification for the relative insignificance of ethnic-based tensions.

16 For example, some Muslim students in Germany and France expressed their otherness on this ground, as their peers regard their habits in the sphere of intimacy and sexuality as being non-modern.

Second, ethnically-based conflicts appear as directly observable phenomena only exceptionally. Moreover, conflicts are mostly related to different types of social distinctions, such as school performance, lifestyle, and place of residence. Hence, it is impossible to use a mechanical causal interpretation for ethnic tensions in the school system that links any particular ethnicity with discrimination, racism, conflicts, etc. To conclude, the existence of racism and discrimination in schools – whether among students or between students and teachers – is a complex and ambiguous phenomenon, which may be easily misinterpreted in both manners: exaggerated as well as underestimated. In any case, to interpret tensions and negative experiences in schools through the lens of ethnic identity was rather rare among students.

The most frequent visible forms of ethnically-based conflict take on the character of verbal attacks. But more or less aggressive insults, offensive comments, or ethnically-coloured jokes are not, on the part of students, automatically interpreted as a manifestation of racism. They are basically described in two ways: as more or less innocent jokes or as instruments for insulting the other person, that is, as the means serving in conflicts that are not primarily ethnically driven. In both cases, racism and ethnic conflicts produce cultural forms, including discursive repertoires, which could be instrumentally used in different contexts. But they are understandable and efficient as jokes or insults only in connection with their original function as ethnically-coloured insults (such as “Muslim terrorist”). Thus, they still remain potentially powerful to generate tensions and are not as innocent as pupils usually claim. “I don't feel good here. They're always making fun. It's a class of immature kids. They're always talking. Yeah, there's racism. It's jokes, but sometimes it really annoys me. My girlfriend, she calls me a dirty Black and I don't like it” (second-generation Malian boy, France).

Beyond the “unspoken agreement” among students regarding the character of verbal insults and teasing, they are viewed as a real problem by teachers, who usually do not tolerate them – even in those cases when pupils (including victims) provide the same reasoning. Here, we can address the fact that some teachers see the interethnic relations between pupils in a more critical manner than their students.

I don't like those little jokes, those little remarks, they are like sparks. Some teachers just let it go if students are having those disputes. Then it disturbs the class, it degenerates and sometimes it can lead to fights. I tell them they shouldn't become too familiar: “You're friends, and there you're laughing. After a while those kinds of jokes, that humour becomes tiring, and then maybe you will be in conflict with each other” (teacher, North African migrant, France).

The ambivalent character of this phenomenon signals that racial insults among students are easily and therefore more often utilised by those who are not of majority origin and would be conceived rather as victims, not as the source of racial discourse due to their disadvantaged position (and some majority teachers are quick to stress this apparent paradox). For example, the Slovak Community Study mentions that:

[...] all pupils agreed that it's big difference, if Roma pupils verbally attack non-Roma pupils and vice-versa. In the case where a Roma pupil is a victim, then everybody speak about racism. In the case where a non-Roma is a victim, all pretend, nothing



happened. According to them, to call them "negro" is the same as if they called them "gadjo" (Roma word for white people) (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

Majority students are more suspected of playing the "ethnic game" seriously, and within the frame of anti-racism, they could be more easily blamed for intolerable behaviour. It seems that they would have to share a relatively good relationship with their non-majority peers, if they wanted to use the negatively-coloured ethnic vocabulary in a non-serious way. Although it may sound strange, noticing the offensive vocabulary could also be the sign of cohesiveness (as only good friends should use it without harm) or it may be just as well the opposite case.

Interviewer: But doesn't it get bad sometimes?

Person1: No. Not between us, the guys from the cité, it never gets bad between us. It's especially those who come from the country, they're not used to it. So among themselves they get nasty. They want to act like us, but then they can't take it like us. They say we're the worst, but we understand when we're joking. In fact, the class is divided in two. There are those who want to have fun, and those who are strict with themselves. It's like they're afraid to have fun (second-generation Algerian boy, France).

We found that teachers' discriminatory or racist practices relate to a great extent to the overall school atmosphere. If the atmosphere is relaxed and friendly, the students themselves tend to express non-critical attitudes towards their teachers. In schools with a tense atmosphere, teachers' behaviour is more often interpreted as racist. In any case, *open* racism on the part of teachers toward students is very rare, although some teachers may have negative stereotypes of ethnic minorities. This is not surprising since discrimination and racism are not acceptable – at least in the public sphere – in any of the countries where we conducted research. What is more interesting is the strategy of blaming teachers for racist or discriminatory practices on the part of students, who make use of it as an instrument against the teachers' authority:

One boy was naughty so I gave him some extra work and he told me I was a racist. When I asked him to tell me why and what he thinks racism means, he wasn't able to say that, he was just trying. They hear that at home, on TV, and it's kind of a swear word (teacher, Czech Republic).

These "ethnic games" are not mentioned by the students but almost exclusively cited by teachers, who consider them very frustrating as they cannot be easily resolved by "objective" counter-arguments and they also attack their moral integrity. Nevertheless, such a strategy rarely has any serious consequences, because students know that the teachers are familiar with their motives (and teachers know that students know, etc.).

Finally, the conflicts inside classrooms are often based on the cleavages between those who conform to school and/or teachers and those who are in opposition to an institution where pupils from underprivileged ethnic minorities usually occupy non-prestigious positions. Some of the pupils rebelling against official school culture purposely use the norms of street subculture norms, roles, and images that

are associated with poor ("coloured") neighbourhoods. While the public (including teachers) sees this subculture as too oppositional – and therefore undesirable – some pupils find it rather attractive and useful as a source of group and personal pride. Because the street subcultures are ethnically coloured in neighbourhoods with a high proportion of ethnic minority groups, ethnicity may be invoked as the part of an "identity game", through which pupils can establish their own position in peer groups and also express their relationship with the school.

### **The interplay between gender and ethnicity**

There are three areas where the interplay between gender and ethnicity results in less favourable conditions for girls than for boys.

- The "ghetto identity", that is, being "dangerous", represents some power and thus provides some positive meaning, although it is generally perceived as a counterculture. The potential positive value manifests itself more frequently for boys than for girls, not least because it is, in the first place, a macho subculture and it does not cultivate the image of "rough girls". Put differently, girls are not provided with the same opportunity to adopt an ethnically-coloured street culture identity that re-evaluates and turns negative images upside down. On the contrary, it is not valid for some relatively new youth subcultures typical for white girls and boys such as "Emos" and "Goths".
- Girls who come from families with strong religious beliefs, especially those belonging to Muslim communities, are more restricted in some activities organised by schools compared to boys (or girls from other ethnic groups) if they attend ethnically mixed schools. For example, they usually do not participate in swimming lessons or long school fieldtrips. They are also more limited in their contacts with boys as it would be considered improper behaviour. Their more limited contact with peers is the main reason these girls usually form cohesive and rather closed groups. In this respect, we can see that internal cleavages based on different (gendered) obligations to religion and culture may also exist within communities. It seems that some minority girls – particularly those from groups and families with strong religious traditions, i.e., Muslims – are more obliged to follow previous family patterns when they are choosing educational careers.<sup>17</sup>
- The third area where gender and ethnic identity may significantly resonate with one another is with regard to the gender of teachers. In some countries of origin, where the gender order has a clear patriarchal structure (e.g., Pakistan, non-urban, rural areas of Turkey, etc.), men have a significantly higher status and authority (at

<sup>17</sup> But it is not only the question of religious traditions that impose specific gender roles. For example, some Czech Roma girls are – according to their teachers' interviews – discouraged by their families to seek educational careers, which is not so often the case for boys.

least in the public space) than women. In some cases teachers – especially women – suggested that their male colleagues sometimes assert authority more successfully. But it does not seem to be a regular problem that negatively affects everyday school life and education. It usually arises in interactions with "tough boys", and not with girls or "ordinary students". Moreover, we have to bear in mind that the same pattern holds for non-minority pupils. What we want to point out here is the possibility that this situation occurs more often in the case of ethnic minority students, as their cultural background would legitimate not following the authority of female teachers. At the same time, the problematic situation of teaching students of non-European or Roma origin is easily framed in this way and thus could be exaggerated. At any rate, the gendered question of authority has been mentioned by our teachers and it cannot be ignored.

In sum, we found that schools are not perceived as a typical discriminatory institution or place where the ethnicity of children determines their success (of lack thereof) and their future. The feelings of inferiority or injustice are more often generated by the outside world (through media, police, labour market, local/state authorities, etc.). Considered within the context of the whole society, schools are a relatively peaceful environment. At the very least, they do not openly reproduce the prevailing negative attitudes throughout the rest of majority society toward marginalised ethnic groups. Further, they successfully promote the idea (or ideology) of individual effort as the main source of good educational achievement. Injustice in education is generally interpreted as the failure of individual teachers who do not follow the objective criteria and not as the failure of the educational system as such. But schools, as the place where children's ethnic identity is shaped, do not help to level their marginalised position and do not prevent them from acquiring minority identities. In this respect, some school environments actually contribute to this process if they are not adjusting or even willing to tackle the challenge of minority pupils' education (i.e., the case of segregating schools or colour-blind schools). School environments resonate with the cultural and class background of their pupils because some groups are more predisposed to be handled as problematic – especially children from Muslim families with strong religious traditions and children from marginalised Roma families.

The Central European countries are less prepared to tackle ethnic diversity in their schools as their universalistic civic culture has been cultivated for a much shorter period of time. At the same time, the investigated Western European countries face greater numbers and diversity of ethno-cultural groups, and they thus experience more demanding conditions when searching for good strategies. Despite the differences among countries and schools, the results are very similar when we take into consideration the reproduction of marginalised statuses that are bounded with minority identities.

## Identity models

In this section, we explore the more durable patterns of identity formation among the target populations, among the students and their families alike. In particular, we focus on the ethnic, religious, and national self-identifications of our respondents. First, we touch upon the issue of ethnic (ethno-religious, ethno-national) awareness as such – the urge, need, or inclination to express feelings of minority belonging in the context of the wider social-cultural milieu. It is the major – and most extensive – part of this section, and it develops a basic grid of identity models that have appeared in our findings: we call the models separated, aggregated, and amalgamated identities. Related to this is the question of "othering", which – as we will see – mostly takes the form of "self-othering" vis-à-vis the predominant national patterns of behaviour.<sup>18</sup> It will lead us to the question of whether and under what circumstances ethnic self-identification serves as a source of pride or stigmatisation for minority youths. And finally, the question of identity development in the context of family relations will be discussed. In our field research, we have encountered some important differences in articulating ethnic (and religious) sensitivity between respondents in the Western European countries and the Central European countries. The former are predominantly second- or third-generation immigrants in the countries studied, while the latter are students of Roma origin. In the following text, we will not always specify this difference in the character of the target groups, yet it should be kept in mind continuously by the reader.

### **Ethnic awareness: separated, aggregated, and amalgamated identities**

The Community Studies show that, in general, students in the "old" European Union member states manifest stronger ethnic awareness than respondents (and students especially) from the "new" member states. This is apparent in all the Community Studies (with the notable exception of Denmark), although there also are differences – among old member states and among new member states alike – not only in the intensity of ethnic self-perception, but also in the forms through which such self-understanding is expressed in actual situations, contexts, or relations. A particularly strong self-perception in distinct racial terms has been encountered among British Caribbean youth: even children from mixed race partnerships "never identified themselves, for instance, as being both White and Black", and "all mixed race pupils within this study identified themselves as Black" (Swann and Law 2010). Yet the British case demonstrates a strong ethnic awareness also in cases in which the colour of skin is not the distinctive feature of an ethnic belonging, namely, in the case of Gypsy-Travellers. Their sense of ethnic uniqueness is based on an adherence to a traditional way of life (mobility, attitude to children, dress, etc.), which by and large is not shared by other population(s) in the country, making the Gypsy-Travellers a socially distinct group. We will return to this topic below.

It is symptomatic that a majority of Czech and Slovak Roma youth report that they are, first of all, Czechs or Slovaks, while "[...] the absence of a statement like 'I am a German' is quite obvious when we have a look at the various ways to describe identity" (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010) in the German

<sup>18</sup> We will only make a short observation on "othering" related to the identity issue, since "othering" is the central topic of one of the previous chapters of this study.

case. Moreover, other country studies indicate that the stronger the feeling of ethnic uniqueness and the stronger the urge to present oneself as, first of all, a member of an ethnic minority, the less inclination we can find from the respondents to make references to the state-national environment of their current lives. This model of self-identification we call separated identities. It signifies the expressed separation of an ("original") ethnic belonging from the (current and formal) state-national belonging, along with giving preference to the former. Of course, there are differences within the country samples alone. The Pakistani students in the sample in the United Kingdom, for instance, are generally more inclined to exhibit their Britishness, even though this is typically in relative terms or situational contexts. That is, they characteristically express their British affiliation in relating themselves to other ethnic minorities, especially Caribbean groups (Swann and Law 2010).

Young respondents in the Czech sample – as the country Community Study points out – “have by and large shown no straightforward relationship to their assumed ethnic identity. Instead, ethnic or ethnically coloured self-identifications emerged in the interviews and focus groups in rather scattered, fragmented, elusive, sometimes metaphorical, and frequently inconsistent ways, or by proxy”. (Marada et al. 2010) As a rule, they have not made sharp distinctions between (their) Roma ethnicity and the state-national belonging. As the reader will be reminded repeatedly throughout this section, they do not deny Roma (self)-identifications. Rather, they tend to present it as unimportant for their lives, blending it with their self-perceptions as Czechs and occasionally emphasising the latter: “I’m Roma, but I have lived here since my childhood so my experience is normal, like Czechs have. [...] I think it’s the same [to be Roma or to be Czech]”. The same interviewed student also shows an unprompted distance to what he otherwise accepts as part of his identity, however reluctantly. When he is asked to say what distinguishes the Roma from the majority of Czechs, he refers to “his own” ethnic group as “them”: “They (Roma) are good at rhythmic things [...] dancing, singing” (Marada et al. 2010). And also the Slovak report states repeatedly:

[The] majority of interviewed Roma parents and pupils does not consider ethnic belonging to be [an] important (positive) resource in their lives. They do not need to follow ethnic traditions, and moreover, they are not aware of such traditions. [...] Several boys and girls have been very reluctant to pick up some distinct Roma characteristics. They do not seem comfortable to be close to a distinct ethnic group. Their need to be approached individually was important (Kusá, Kostlán, and Rusnáková 2010).

In this respect – a more relaxed attitude to an ethnic minority background and an openness to a “new” national self-identification – the Danish and French findings appear to parallel the Czech or Slovak ones to a greater extent than among minority youths in Germany, the United Kingdom, or Sweden. Yet even the somehow analogical cases of Denmark and France require further qualification, and this will shed more light on the differences in prevailing patterns of ethnic awareness between Western and Central European countries in our sample. It is perhaps better seen in the two Community Studies for Denmark and France: even when young second- or third-generation immigrants in Western European countries are less determinate with respect to their ethno-national feelings, they still tend to make a sharper distinction between collective belonging to the ethno-national “home” of their parents

or grandparents, and the "host" countries in which they were born. In other words, our Danish and French younger respondents have manifested a stronger sense of the ethno-national distinction (but not separation as in the above sense) than in the Central European cases. They just have been more inclined to explicitly identify with the national community of the home country, either as an appreciation of the environment (rights, opportunities, etc.) or in more symbolic terms (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010, Schiff 2010).

The former ("appreciative") mode of attachment to the "new" national home has been especially prevalent among young Danish respondents who "all [...] strongly insist on being part of the majority society with equal rights and to some degree equal opportunities". Thus, although "most [Danish] students acknowledge that they are and also perceive themselves as an ethnic minority [...], the prevalent pattern is that the students are considerably more included in the Danish society" (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010). A typical expression of such inclusion is then captured in the following statement of an interviewed minority student: "Well, I would say that it's better [living in Denmark] than in other countries, because even though it's not like our country, you still have rights to do all sorts of things. One has equally many rights as the 'real' Danes. It's better – it's good" (Emphasis added).

The latter ("symbolic") mode of expressing attachment to the dominant national community, while at the same time retaining a strong sense of ethnic difference, is to be found in numerous expressions of French students, especially of North African origin:

I just live with it in fact! No, I'm just fine as I am, I'm proud of my origins... If someone asks me about my origins, I just say I'm Algerian... But otherwise I was born in France. I'm Franco-Algerian. I'm of French nationality, but I'm Algerian. I think it's balanced (Second-generation Algerian).

No, I never told myself that (it would be easier to be something else). I'm proud to be Moroccan, I'm proud to be me. If I work, if I do this and this and that, I'll succeed. Even when I'll have French citizenship, I'll stay Moroccan (First-generation Moroccan).

I'm French, but also Algerian. Well, I have a French side, which is more important than the Algerian one. But I do have Algerian origins, so it's not a problem (Mixed parentage). (Schiff 2010)

It is difficult to generalise when a subjective feeling of collective belonging is at issue. Yet the reluctance to declare Roma identity as primary or equal to the national one was already apparent from the (previous) survey data, especially among Czech respondents. The students interviewed in the Central European countries did not deny their Roma self-perceptions outright, but they still often presented them as blurred by or subsidiary to their national self-identifications. Thus while the "non-separationist" model of mixed ethnic-national identity among the Western respondents tended to take the form of an aggregate (as seen from previous quotations), the prevalent Central European model more readily takes the form of an amalgam. And this not only applies to the Czech or Slovak cases. Prototypical expressions of this kind have also been encountered among other Central European respondents: "I am a Romanianised Roma. We have no traditions. Our family only speaks Romanian" (Vincze 2010).



The comparative perspective on ethnic awareness among the researched youth thus indicates a culturally established and socially reproduced habit of (self-)ethnicisation to a greater extent for the Western European than for the Central European societies. In the Western European countries in our sample, young respondents, by and large, took ethno-national distinctions for granted in their explicit responses and reactions. They more readily identified themselves with a particular ethnic (minority) community, although they did not always see this as the dominant reference point of their collective belonging. And they were more pronounced in identifying the cultural differences between various ethnic, ethno-religious, or ethno-national communities. This may well be the result of a longer historical experience of these (Western European) societies with a multiethnic environment, especially as supported by the pervasive ethno-multicultural discourse of the past few decades. This is a legacy that the Central European Roma (and not only Roma, but the population at large) have missed to a greater extent than ethnic minorities in Western Europe.

Whatever the source of this rift between Western and Central European respondents, we should not immediately jump to the conclusion that ethnicity is basically unimportant or even unknown among young people in the Central European states. Certainly, this is not the case for the Roma students we interviewed, either individually or in focus groups. They also feel a sense of ethnic distinctiveness, but – as indicated above – they are, on average, more hesitant to explicitly refer to their ethnic background as a primary source of their collective identity and sense of belonging. Such reluctance correlates with the more widely (than among their Western European minority counterparts) encountered unwillingness or inability of Roma children (especially in the Czech Republic and Slovakia) to reflect upon a specifically Roma ethnic culture or other distinctive “ethnic features”. The universalistic ethos (“all people are the same” – and not: “after all the same”, but simply: “are the same”) finds its presence among the reactions of Central European Roma youths to a larger extent than among reactions of youths from ethnic minorities in Western Europe. When asked about her ethnicity (Roma or Czech), one Czech student who we identified as Roma told us: “I do not know... there is no difference for me. A man is a man, no difference”. And such a reluctance to decide was significantly more frequent among Central European Roma than among Western European respondents. Again, the immigrant and ethnic minority youth interviewed in the Western European countries in our sample did not deny the universalistic ethos; they just tended to put a noticeably stronger accent on their ethnic self-identifications and sense of ethnically defined collective belonging. (See above for examples of citations.)

Having said this about the difference in the degree and forms of ethnic awareness (or rather, articulated sensitivity) between young Western and Central European respondents, we also should point out two interesting (and potentially important) observations. First, while the Western European respondents speak more freely about their ethnic minority belonging, they also tend to stress more often that ethnicity is employed in everyday relations as a source of jokes and teasing. Analysts from the United Kingdom speak about “a defiant and subversive form of ritualized banter [...] between Pakistani and Caribbean pupils”, which finds its expression in descriptions of interethnic everyday relations like the following: “Yeah, we are just having a laugh, and they will say, ‘Oh, you Black shit’, and then you’ll say, ‘Oh, shut up, you Pakistani’”. And the researchers stress that, “the repeated emphasis was on the fact that it was not to be taken seriously, ‘everyone knows it is a joke’” (Swann and Law 2010). The



Central European respondents, however, tend to downplay the importance of possible ethnic differences in everyday relations, yet in the moments when they do speak about interethnic relations, they are more open about and oriented to more serious sides of interethnic conflicts among peers or with the non-Roma population in general than just teasing: "There's a skinhead in our class [...] Well, we have beaten him several times because he was saying all this nonsense about smelly Gypsies [...] he was not addressing us in particular, but was saying things like that" (Hungarian Roma student), or "Everyone watches us (Roma girls and boys) when we get on the tram. It's embarrassing" (Czech Roma girl).

Second, it seems that for the young Western European people in our sample, ethnicity (or/and the religion often tied to it) represents a ready-made opportunity structure for an exalted self-identity expression ("showing off") to a greater extent than for their Central European counterparts. They much more readily introduce their ethnic belonging as a source of personal pride, as seen from the previous citations or as it has been observed among the Gypsy-Travellers by the research team in the United Kingdom, to introduce two examples from the country Community Studies. To the extent to which this is the case, among Western European respondents in particular, we can infer that this has to do with: (1.) the above-mentioned stronger sense of ethnic distinction (uniqueness); (2.) the greater ability to identify distinctive cultural traits (defining signs) of ethnic belonging; and (3.) the individualising attitude to such belonging (cultural performance of ethnic belonging as a free choice rather than the result of social control and pressure), as explicitly observed by the German research team (see below in this section). To make a general observation: these attributes of one's relationship to ethnicity (source of pride, sense of uniqueness, identification of ethnicity with certain cultural habits, and culturally-performed ethnicity as a free choice) distinguish – despite all the nuances and internal differences – Western European minority youth from their minority peers in Central Europe. Put simply, while the former are more willing to exhibit their ethnic belonging and grant it a subjective importance, the latter are more inclined to blur it and deem it unimportant.

### **Ethnic identity, ethnic culture, and 'self-othering'**

The above mentioned case of British Gypsy-Travellers points to a crucial factor at work in the observed differences in the strength of ethnic self-identification. As already suggested, it is a regular pattern that the intensity of ethnic self-understanding positively correlates with the articulate sense of a distinct ethnic culture, especially in cases of separated identities. This pattern is, for example, succinctly captured in a respondent's statement presented by the German Community Study: "Although I am a German citizen I don't regard myself really German. My passport is German but our culture doesn't fit" (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010). Strict statements of cultural separation like this are rarely found among young Central European Roma respondents, while the ideal typical cases of aggregated identities (more frequent among the French and Danish respondents than among others) correspond to a more situational mode of expression of ethnic distinctiveness: "I feel French when I'm in school, when I work. When Algeria qualified [for the World Cup, probably – note added], I was Algerian 100 per cent". Another example from the French Community Study may seem paradoxical, but it also spells the situationally conditioned ethno-national self-perception: "In France we feel more Moroccan and in the home village we feel French" (Schiff 2010). It comes as no surprise that respondents able and willing to identify specific cultural markers for what

they perceive as their own ethnic group are also generally more inclined to point out alienation from and distance to what they see as characteristic life strategies or behavioural modes of their peers representing the settled host or culturally dominant societies. And, besides Gypsy-Travellers, such an inclination is particularly salient if one's ethnicity is at the same time perceived in religious terms, which is especially the case for Muslim respondents in the Western European countries involved in this project. The Swedish Community Study recognises this pattern in one of the three models of self-perception appearing among their respondents, exemplified by the following quotation of "a girl of second-generation immigrant background from Iran (who) emphasises that her Iranian roots are very important to her and that cultural and religious activities with other Iranians are a natural part of her social life. Her experience is that the Iranian traditional values differ from the ones that characterise Swedish society". As she puts it: "When I am among Swedes it is like they expect me to be Swedish. [...] It is like they do not want us to be there. But I do not want to adapt the "Swedish behaviour" to be accepted. I do not want to forget where I come from" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010).

Since we have specifically focused on and interviewed respondents from an ethnic minority background, we have not recorded firsthand the signs of "othering" from the majority – although we have encountered this indirectly in some of our observations or among the scattered expressions of our respondents, like the one just quoted.

If the young Roma respondents say they are proud of being Roma, as in the Slovak case, they as a rule do not link this feeling to a particular cultural trait or way of life. Rather, they "at the same time say that ethnicity is not important to them". According to our findings, for a large part of the Roma youth in the Central European countries (and the Czech Republic is a paradigmatic case here), if they become socialised into an environment understood as a distinct ethno-cultural world, this happens to a lesser extent and later in life than in the case of their Western European minority peers. Ethno-cultural self-understanding certainly is not completely absent among Roma youth in the Central European countries. In our interviews and focus groups, however, it was typically expressed either by hesitantly pointing out a particular single trait rather than a distinct set of cultural values ("Roma are good at rhythmic things... dancing, singing") or in the form of vague anticipations ("it will be expected from me to behave like Roma as I grow older"). Yet, as the following paragraphs demonstrate, there is a notable exception from this to be found in all Central European countries.

We have observed among the immigrant minority youth in the Western European countries as well as among the Roma youth in the Central European countries that their ethnically conscious relationship to the majority populations affects and is affected by the intra-minority relations. While in the former case this takes the form of occasional quarrels among different immigrant groups or individuals about who is less or more adaptable to the Western European conditions (see the second essay in this volume on "othering" for more on this), in the latter case, intra-ethnic distinctions often become a salient issue of Roma self-reflections and self-perceptions. We specifically refer to the particular ethno-cultural status of the Vlach Roma (in Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia) or the Gábor Roma (in Romania). These two sub-ethnic groups are considered different from other Roma, as we will see in the next part of this section. They alone present themselves as the true carriers of a Roma culture, which in their eyes makes them different not only from the majority population but also – and especially – from other

Roma. Although, as the Romanian Community Study shows, the Gábor Roma in Romania also manifest inclinations to adapt what they perceive as the Romanian (majority) way of life, they at the same time are more prone to stress their ethno-cultural distinctiveness among other Roma and they also find themselves under stronger pressure from their parents to retain "the true Gypsy culture and way of life" than other Roma respondents. The following observation from the Romanian Community Study points out the exceptional ethno-cultural status of Gábor Roma quite succinctly:

The problem of what and who is worth following is a matter of constant thinking both for pupils and for their parents. From this point of view, the norms of Gábor communities do not make room for doubts. However, as we have seen, when young individuals are exposed to outer stimuli, they choose eventually models given by the outer world and not by their family. For the Gábor-Gypsy families from Forest district the model of extended family, keeping traditions, and distance from the majority population represent the foundation of identity strategies. They try to keep distance not only from other ethnic groups but also from other Roma groups. Ethnic identity for them is very self-conscious; they call themselves Gábor Gypsy and not simply Roma. During interviews and discussions, no one used the term Roma. Instead, they use the term Gypsy. Their identity model built on their own particular traditions cannot accommodate outer systems of norms used by majority society. Therefore, education does not occupy a prominent place in their lives. (Vincze 2010)

The position of Vlach Roma in the other Central European countries is very similar. What is important is that the differences between Roma and Gábor (Vlach) Roma are especially assumed and perceived by and within the Roma communities alone and much less so from the outside by the non-Roma majority populations. As the Czech Community Study stresses:

[...] this distinction [between Vlach Roma and other Roma] is largely invisible and unknown to the non-Roma population, but it plays an important role among Roma themselves [...] it is especially the Olah Roma community that keeps a methodical distance to other Roma (e.g., preventing intermarriage, etc.), conceiving themselves as the real Roma people (by respecting the Roma King, for example) – thus adding another layer to the intra-ethnic identity distinctions in terms of ethnic authenticity (Marada et al. 2010).

It often is in relation to Gábor or Vlach Roma that other Roma respondents stress their affinity to the majority and tend to downplay ethno-cultural distinctions between themselves and non-Roma Czechs, Hungarians, Romanians, and Slovaks, respectively.<sup>19</sup> And it is in this context that their heightened sensitivity to "othering" (from signs of distance received by the non-Roma population) can be better understood.

The above discussed differing trends in attitudes to ethnic background among respondents in the Western European and the Central European countries seem to correlate with the values attached to

19 We will return to this issue in the following part of this section.

particular ethnic representations. In general, and not surprisingly, interviewed students in the Western European countries (who were more ready to accept their distinct ethnic affiliation as an important fact of their lives) also more frequently and intensively presented their ethnic origin as a source of pride – including those who, in their words, sought a fuller integration into the host society. On the other side were the students who tended to downplay the importance of ethnic affiliation for their lives and life prospects (especially in the Central European communities); when they got to reflecting on ethnic differences, they were frequently inclined to adopt a negative image of their (Roma) ethnic group – although often with reservations. The cases of expressing Roma identity as a source of pride were quite rare in each of the Central European countries where our research was conducted.

There were two regularities apparent in the Roma respondents' ethnic self-evaluation: (1.) reservations towards and against generalisations in matters of ethnic-based differences (individual qualities and achievements are what matters); and (2.) identifying the source of a negative image of Roma ethnicity as a whole in specific lifestyles of certain Roma ethnic subgroups (like, for example, Gábor and Vlach Roma). The internal divisions among Roma were a salient issue in many interviews and focus groups conducted in these Central European countries, and perception of these divisions among our respondents significantly shaped their attitudes towards their own ethnic background. As already discussed in the preceding sections, while respondents affiliated with the Vlach or Gábor branches of Roma communities often presented themselves as the true carriers of the traditional Roma culture and heritage (and therefore of Roma ethnicity as such), the other respondents identified as Roma kept, by and large, at a distance from both Vlach and Gábor Roma groups and (to the extent described above) also to Roma ethnicity:

We're normal, but the Vlach Gypsies are different from us. They relate to everything differently, they talk differently, they're conceited. [...] They cannot have fun without fighting and making a big row. They act as if they were kings. We aren't like that, we know how to have fun and to party, we can talk to any people, and we don't care whether the person's Hungarian or not (Hungarian Roma student, Romania).

The Czech Community Study provides a more general observation pointing in the same direction:

This [interethnic distinction] bears moral implications for the Roma actors themselves. In the eyes of many non-Vlach Roma, the Vlach ones are the "bad" (sometimes related to organised crime, and getting undeservedly rich this way) or the "uncivilised" ones who discredit Roma people at large in the eyes of the majority. Then also some teachers and teaching assistants tend to take this distinction for granted, or they at least incorporate it into their expectations towards pupils from Olah Roma families. And they may feel reassured in this by the relatively frequent tensions and quarrels between non-Olah and Olah Roma kids in schools (Marada et al. 2010).

Here is a typical excerpt from an interview with a Czech Roma female student, which illustrates not only the status of Vlach Roma among other Roma, but also some more general features of the model of amalgamated identities:

Interviewer: Do you have more friends among Roma or non-Roma children?

Person 1: I think it's the same.

Interviewer: And do you see any differences among Roma?

Person 1: Like some of them are worse and some aren't?

Interviewer: In what respect, worse?

Person 1: Like in how they behave, they behave more badly than others.

Interviewer: And do you distinguish among some Roma groups, kids used to say Vlachs...

Person 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: Can you distinguish that, do you recognise them?

Person 1: Yeah.

Interviewer: According to their behaviour?

Person 1: According to their behaviour, by how they speak, dress, and things like this.

Interviewer: And among the Vlachs, do you have any friends?

Person 1: Not that.

Interviewer: In what ways are the Roma different than other people?

Person 1: In nothing.

Interviewer: Some say they're musically gifted.

Person 1: They are.

Interviewer: Anything else?

Person 1: Perhaps maybe in dancing and stuff like that.

## Ethnicity and patterns of family relations<sup>20</sup>

Among immigrant families (in the "old" European Union member states) we have observed the following pattern: students who express a strong adherence to their "original" ethno-cultural (religious, national, and racial) belonging tend to explicitly portray their parents as models for their future personal developments to a correspondingly greater extent. Here is the typical expression of this kind, coming from a Kurdish boy from a first-generation immigrant background, whose family practices Islam and now is settled in Sweden: "I want to go the same way as my parents, become religious when I get older. My father was not very religious at my age but now he is. It almost happens automatically when you get older". In our identity models scheme, we attach expressions like this to the model of separated identities, and we would hardly find such strong statements on the desire to follow parents' worlds and ways of life in the two other model types. By no means, however, is this to say that respondents whose declared positions do not fall under the category of separated identities feel less respect for their parents. As a rule, they appreciate their hard work, efforts and care, sometimes express pity for their lives and failures, but they do not explicitly hold them as strict models for their own lives.

Although the previous quotation also indicates a certain sense of inevitability in one's life-course, even most of those respondents who want to observe their original ethnic-religious values and ways of life say this is their own free choice, not enforced by their families. Or, as the German study suggests, this may well be a strategy of protecting their families and ethno-religious communities from the reputation of being too oppressive towards their own members, restricting their life choices and forcing them to follow a particular ('their own') ethno-religious tradition. At the same time, however, many young respondents (especially those of Muslim origin) who expressed their intention to follow their parents' ways of life and who stay firmly embedded in their (parents') ethno-religious traditional world support this position by referring to these traditions as strongly family oriented. And this, in the views of many of them, makes their "original" social-cultural milieu different from the wider environment of host societies (Strassburger, Ucan, and Mannitz 2010). In general – and we also can find this to a higher extent than among other researched minorities like the Gypsy-Travellers in the United Kingdom and the Gábor and Vlach Roma in Central Europe – a strongly declared adherence to family values pertains to the model of separated identities, and it is a frequently given criterion of the rift felt between one's own ethno-cultural world and the world of the (westernised or individualised) majority.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, those young people who show a stronger willingness or desire to become culturally and socially integrated into the host societies and somehow loosen their "original" ethnic ties are

20 Here we only focus upon one particular type of regularity observed among our respondents, which is directly related to the question of identity models. The role of the family environment – as well as the roles of school, neighbourhood, and larger national and international environment – is discussed in general and in detail in other sections of this essay.

21 As other sections of this essay clearly indicate, a notable difference in this respect is to be found especially between Muslim young men and women who feel that social control and pressure to conform to traditional ethno-religious norm and values is more strongly applied to Muslim women than Muslim men. The Swedish Community Study, for example, observes that "[...]among the girls the most common view is an experience of a closer belonging to those with the same family characteristics, values, and rules from home. They may not necessarily originate from the same country. However, the girls express that those who share the Muslim religious affiliation often have similar home situations in how parents raise them. Among the boys the ethnic origin seems to be of more importance in relating to peers [...]" (Kallstenius and Sonmark 2010).

also less prone to present their own parents as life-models, as they are more hesitant to acknowledge that they have any role- and/or identity-models to follow. The tendency of these respondents to avoid pointing out a definite role- or identity-model in general is one reason we cannot speak about a generational revolt against parents in the immigrant families in this latter case. Another reason is that we have no evidence that parents of these respondents would object to the efforts of their children to "acting white" for being integrated. In fact, the parents may well support their children in this respect or even strive for the same, that is, for a deeper social and also cultural integration into the host societies. One of the most common paths toward fuller integration is seen in obtaining a better education than that of their parents: "My parents advise me to study at some good secondary school. But they say it is my decision" (Czech Roma female respondent). And it is among the immigrant communities in the Western European countries that visions of a more general social-cultural integration complement their picture of the future:

For us as adults, there aren't a lot of possibilities because we came here as adults. But I think that our children have possibilities. Our children will not be like us. Our children will be different. And in a way that's good capital to the Danish society; that they become a part of society. I mean they have a more Danish mentality and culture than us. So they have options and will become a resource for society (Afghan father, Denmark).

Yet even the respondents open to social-cultural integration often express their will to stay close to their families and relatives in the future. But this intention is less driven (legitimised in the interviews and focus group discussions) by an explicit will to remain faithful to "their original" ethno-religious traditions and more by the fear of failure in the attempts at a fuller integration and by the need to still have a safe social recourse at disposal. While these respondents express their will to be more independent of their original families as well as their ethno-religious communities and traditions, they see it as realistic that this environment may well remain with them as the only social source of ontological security. Those who seek a fuller integration into the host societies may not introduce their parents as role- and/or identity-models, yet they, by and large, show *respect* to their parents' "original" ethno-religious or ethno-national cultures. The general observation of the Danish research team is typical in this respect:

Although most of the ethnic minority students are born in Denmark, they also talk about their parents' birthplace with passion and feelings of belonging. They are however [...] culturally integrated in the sense of being able to operate with some sort of double and ethnic mixed identities. When they describe, how they differ from ethnic Danish students, they emphasize how certain kinds of difference, e.g., linguistic barriers, does not change the fact of their experiences that they are also part of the Danish society (Moldenhawer, Kallehave, and Hansen 2010).



## Identity strategies

As the reader is already aware, our research took place in both the western and the eastern parts of Europe, in countries differing in their historical past, social organisation, and school systems, among students attending various types of schools selected for the purposes of investigation, while the ethnic minority youths in the centre of the research also come from a wide variety of national/ethnic backgrounds. Therefore, our analysis is focused on certain shared characteristics or common features that, in connection with minority identity, delineate potential models of strategies concerning the future. The discussion that follows thus examines the ways in which the future visions of students reflect their present situation, the responses they give to stereotyping threats, stigmatising opinions, and discriminative practices that have more or less become conscious by adolescence, and the reactions and strategies they formulate in the face of such effects playing a decisive role in the formation of their personalities and sense of being different. In short, it is about their future expectations and aspirations.

### Visions and strategies concerning the future

Beyond cross-country comparisons, the rich empirical material accumulated during our research enables the specification of some basic types as far as the conditions and attitudes related to the future expectations of adolescents are concerned. Considering the key dimensions relevant for our research, the main criteria in determining these basic types include the maintenance, as opposed to the trivialisation or negligence, of ethnic difference, on the one hand, and the involuntary or subconscious, in contrast with the voluntary or conscious, assumption of ethnic belonging, on the other. Along these two axes, the resulting typology forms a two-by-two diagram in which four basic types can be placed as shown in the following matrix:

#### *Significance of ethnicity in future visions*

-	Maintenance of difference	Trivialisation of difference
Involuntary/ subconscious	Ghetto life	Underclass
Voluntary/Conscious	Ethnic pride	Integrationism/ Cosmopolitanism

In naming the individual types, the most characteristic "outputs" or perspectives provided by specific configurations were taken into account to facilitate categorisation by reference to certain key phrases known from the professional literature. In reality though, each type contains a variety of subtypes that may reveal to a smaller or greater extent the characteristic output of the type in question, functioning as an "ordering principle" of the type and its scholarly perception, while the broad category remains over too general and occasionally a little far-fetched when particular manifestations are considered. In order to underline their key features without losing a sense of diversity and particularity, the types are illustrated by quotes drawn from the interviews with ethnic minority students of our international sample.

In the following, each type regarding the effects of ethnicity, depending on its power and significance in the particular context as well as its ascribed or self-ascribed nature, is described in detail, by reference to the background factors and their observed results.

### *'Ghetto life'*

When the life of a person is determined by the forced separation from majority society, and ethnicity as a permanent marker plays a major role in his or her social exclusion, he or she will most probably envision a future in which "ghetto life" continues unchanged, as virtually no opportunities to break out appear on the horizon.

This type delineates from the responses of students living in rather poor, segregated neighbourhoods ("socially excluded localities"). They usually come from extended families living nearby and have many siblings. The parents tend to be undereducated and occupy weak positions in the labour market, often being more or less permanently unemployed.

It is partly because of socially deprived situation that religion and culture do not play an important role in the (self-) identification of these people. Occasionally, language is significant, mostly as a marker of intra-group distinctions, that is, used to differentiate among the people forcefully grouped together in the ghetto. The same applies for local schools: while minority students represent the majority there, no efforts are made to thematise ethno-cultural differences.

The characteristic social determinations and cultural configurations suggest that this category is filled, first of all, by Roma from post-socialist countries.

Given the general destitution of the area, the district schools where these children belong are usually of a poor quality, which, together with the lack of any realistic perspectives held by the students, predetermine low school performance and provide strongly limited opportunities for further education. Students, if at all, continue their studies in nearby vocational schools, typically enforcing strong gender distinctions. Thus girls may be trained as hairdressers, shop assistants, or kitchen employees, while boys may become mechanics or painters. Such a kind of education ensures that these people will, at best, remain in low-paid blue-collar jobs for their entire lives. "If you are Roma and you are a bit brown, you can hardly find a job", said one of the Roma respondents in the Czech sample expressing the lack of opportunities in education and employment. When, in turn, ethno-racial discrimination has less of a grasp on individual expectations, the future seems to be unpredictable, impossible to control by will: "If I finish school and find a job then it will be good enough. It might be better, or might be worse... One can't really plan for the future", said a Hungarian Roma teenager.

The miserable circumstances in the ghettos can, in themselves, explain why those born there relinquish any hopes for a better future. Nonetheless, the generally experienced hostility on the part of the larger society and the psychological effects of (the fear from) discrimination and racism, should not be neglected. Thus even if, at an early age, the children of the ghettos, like their age-group in general, freely entertain hopes for a full adult life, they soon understand how futile such daydreaming proves to be. The loss is made even greater by understanding that their fate is tied to that of their community and, vice versa, they are not only unable to change their own lives but also the future of the community. The acknowledgment of this sad state of affairs is expressed by a 15-year-old Roma girl from the Romanian

sample who, describing the life in the ghetto, explains how she was giving up on her future ambitions and adopted to the actual circumstances:

[I wanted to] finish school. Law or medicine [...] We live in the landfill. Recycled material, copper, aluminium, beer cans [...] they're giving a better price, 20–30 leis per day. It's what you can do more or less. I think by having children in the house, you only get problems and trouble. If one day there will be shortages, how to give them what they need? But you do tomorrow the same as you do today, as the wheel turns [...] I'd better marry one of your [i.e., white] race [...] When I was little, I wanted to be a doctor. I wanted to change my house, human vision, discrimination against Gypsies. I thought if I had a high position, I could help the poor. If I had a place where to stay, where to work, I would do better [...] Of course, you have three options: to steal, beg, or prostitute yourself.

Given the perceived lack of future opportunities and/or realistic perspectives, a kind of resigned passivity and lack of future ambitions characterize these students. Such defeatism originates in the strong stereotypes held against the group, grounded in the visible signs of ethnic difference, which become interiorised as auto-stereotypes that function as self-fulfilling prophecies. In other words, these children tend to view themselves with the eyes of the majority and conclude that, since they would fail at whatever they try to do, they had better not even try. "I think non-Roma are different because they want to achieve some goals. Roma do not [...] they are often lazy, without goals", explained a Czech Roma.

By means of compensation, ghetto communities often seek to heighten their self-esteem by devaluing other groups of a similar social standing and/or ethnic background. Thus in case they cherish any particular sense of difference as a collective trait, this is usually based on inter-group stereotypes and only rarely express any feelings of ethnic pride. It is worth reiterating here the words of the Hungarian Roma boy quoted above: "We're normal, but the Vlach Gypsies are different from us. They relate to everything differently, they talk differently, they're conceited. [...] They cannot have fun without fighting and making a big row. They act as if they were kings" (Vincze 2010).

The other source of self-differentiation is represented by the frequent conflicts with society. Ghetto communities have very scarce interethnic relations and even less connections with the majority. This state of affairs is clearly signalled by the physical distance referring to residential or other type of (e.g., educational) segregation. Such coercive means of holding a community together result in a kind of weakened self-determination that fails to produce positive self-esteem.

As a consequence of all these factors, ghetto youths usually come to the conclusion that, given the lack of opportunities to initiate any changes, they had better stay in the neighbourhood that they are familiar with, and continue with the way of life experienced in their families. They want to follow the marital rules and gender roles in the career choices to which their families are accustomed. Thus such visions of the future, again, reinforce community ties: "we hold together more", "Gypsies are more attached to one-another [...] they do not look down on one another", said a Hungarian Roma.

Even though the resulting group cohesion is a product of mostly negative conditions, it may become suitable to function as a supportive network and, particularly owing to family traditions, as a

source of orientation for the individual, which points to the potential development of ethnic pride. In other words, by way of making a virtue of necessity, the possibility of positive identity appears on the horizon.

### *'Ethnic (or religious) pride'*

When, in turn, separation from the majority society occurs on a voluntary basis, the perspective of a relatively enclosed community correlates with ethnic/religious consciousness and differences on such a basis are filled with (mostly) positive contents.

Students in this group, just like those belonging to the previous category, come from segregated neighbourhoods, though not necessarily, or even typically, characterized by bad housing conditions. Rather, the residents of such ethnic or religious colonies are voluntarily and proudly separating from the outside world. "I'm proud to be Roma [...] they like traditions, we like traditions, Romanians do not have so many traditions", as a Roma girl from Romania has put it.

However, besides scarce examples of relatively wealthy and self-conscious Roma (like the Gábor Gypsies living in Romania), Roma are less represented in this group than in the previous one. In turn, this category is filled especially by Muslims living in urban neighbourhoods, together with other people of similar origin and religious background. Such places are characterized by a particularly strong sense of solidarity and group cohesion that is manifested in a variety of forms starting from family businesses, through peer networks, to broader, mostly religion-based communities. National, ethnic, or religious origins and cultural background are often seen as having a greater significance than citizenship; however, it is important that people belonging to this category are much less vulnerable and defenceless than those living in ethnic ghettos.

As for family patterns, a great number of children are also frequently in this category but – as opposed to the case of "ghetto" inhabitants where family planning is often less conscious – high fertility here tends to express accommodation to ethno-cultural or religious norms. The family also represents an important economic unit as well a social, cultural, and emotional resource. It may function as the basis of family enterprises (run by the immediate or nuclear family), or provide a supportive network (formed by the more extended family). The parents – characteristically first- or second-generation immigrants or recently urbanized Roma who have managed to attain higher social standing and better material circumstances – often serve as models for their children in their career choices, further education, and lifestyle. It is also typical that these parents encourage their children to fully exploit their opportunities in order to create better lives for themselves, underlining the value of education that they might not have been able to attain or utilize effectively (in case the degree obtained in the country of origin was not accepted in the host country).

Children born into such circumstances usually attend schools dominated by the social majority yet sensitive to ethnicity and cultural difference, or, if available, schools run by the minority. Education has great significance as the source of individual success and upward mobility in families as well as in students' minds, and any means, notably positive discrimination, are seen as providing important opportunities to that end. Further education is generally realized at the instigation of, and according to the patterns provided by, the parents, in conformation to their high expectations interiorised by their children. "The government says that there are many advantages for Roma. The advantages are the

scholarships for Roma. I don't know yet if I want to go to university... I need my parents and friends help to do that", claimed a Roma boy from Romania.

The proud assumption of ethnic or religious identity often involves active connections with the country of origin. The resulting positive ethnic identity is heightened when the multicultural environment in the host country allows for complex attachments. "I live in Denmark and I'm happy for it [...] but I'm also still happy for where I come from [...] I like religion, I believe in Islam [she is wearing a headscarf] and the culture we have at home", said a Palestinian girl from Lebanon living in Denmark and describing her multiple ties. Ethnic traditions are also seen as protective: "A girl from Comoros has a lot of prohibitions. When you're young, you ask yourself why all these rules, but when you really think about it, it's good for us, it preserves us, it keeps us from doing a lot of stupid things. Our customs are great", as a Comorian girl living in France put it. The importance of religious belonging often overcomes the significance of national and ethnic ties in terms of providing orientation in life as well as in the formation of community, as a Moroccan boy explains from the French sample:

[...] for us, the Muslim community, religion plays a very important role [...] If he simply respects religion, it means that between the ages of 10 and 12 he will know the way to the mosque. So if he knows the way, there won't be any problem. Just with his lessons at the mosque, leaving the national education aside, we'll see that that child will be well-educated compared to a child who doesn't even know about religion [...] My friends are Muslim like me, an Algerian, a Tunisian, a Mauritanian, it's mixed. That's why I say the country doesn't count.

Group cohesion, the conscious adoption of traditions, the determining power of religion, and related cultural practices – all these factors affect future employment, the establishment of a family, forms of marriage (e.g., the acceptance of arranged marriage), the number of children, or in short, the conception and realization of the "good way of life". As a Turkish boy, living in Germany affirmed: "It's important to know the Koran very well to educate our children in the right way. It's important to marry within the same religion". Although ethno-national background may also be important in determining future aspirations, the cohesive power of religion seems to be especially strong: "When I get married, it's very important that she has a Kurdish background and my parents want that as well. Then we will share everything, religion, culture [...] I don't want to break that chain [...] I want to live like my parents do and it's important to have a Kurdish wife", said a Kurdish boy from Sweden. Or: "I would never ever marry someone who isn't Muslim. Never in the world", affirmed a Moroccan student living in France.

The ideological background mediated mainly by the family is accompanied by its practical value in providing a security network: "I'm not afraid that I might be unemployed since my father has a big company. But I would prefer to be independent and to have some qualification", said a Turkish boy from Germany. "I often help my father in the butcher business. All our family helps him. And he gives work to all of us", reported a Turkish-German boy. Apart from the family, the broader community can provide the same sense of security: "Sometimes when I meet other Moroccans, I feel protected in some way even though I don't really know the person", said a Moroccan student living in Denmark.

Well-established and strong ethnic communities are likely to develop local identities that, while based on ethnicity and religion, express detachment from the country of origin and relatively stronger links with the community and place of residence in the host country. This is often the case with second-generation immigrants. Illustrative examples are provided by Turkish students from Kreuzberg in Berlin: "In Turkey I'm a foreigner. They don't regard me as an ordinary Turkish boy like themselves but as someone from Germany. Therefore they regard me as rich and special." Or: "My parents will definitely return to Turkey when I'm grown up and have my own family. But I will stay here. I feel bored in Turkey. Here in Kreuzberg is my home." Or: "I never felt discriminated against and I never was called a 'Scheiß-Türke' or something like this. Here in Kreuzberg I was always part of a majority and not of a minority." Occasionally, the perspective of living abroad, alone, is regarded as temporary, for instance, when someone wants to attain professional expertise in order to serve his or her people upon returning to the country of origin: "I want to be admitted to places reserved for Roma [...] I want to become a lawyer [...] or Romani language professor. I would like to be a professor", said a Roma boy from Romania. Apart from the moral choice affected by the neediness of one's people, the sheer love for the place of birth, and hence positive identity and ethnic pride, may also determine, in itself, future ambitions to return back home one day: "When you think of how it's like in Morocco – summer all year long – I sometimes think to myself: I want to go back." "We are proud to be Berber, we are proud to be Moroccan", exclaimed a Moroccan student living in Denmark who, after finishing business high school and working a couple of years as a policewoman, plans to go back to Morocco and open a business of her own, like a store or restaurant there.

It is worth noting that volunteering is not the same as consciousness regarding the adoption of group identity. What is more, in interpreting the former attribute characterizing the minorities in this category, the moment of coercion should not be dismissed. This is basically because of the fact that power as such always represents an important element in the formation of social groups. Thus, even though (the chance of) a self-conscious assumption of group identity provides far more autonomy and opportunities than the situation characterized by virtual enclosure in an ethnic ghetto, coercion, that is, the curtailing of individual freedom is not at all absent in this case, either. The workings of power and the effects of coercion can be detected in two main forms or manifestations in the case of the category labelled "ethnic pride" after its most important "product": as an antecedent and as an ever-present element of group construction.

While the maintenance of distance from other groups and particularly from the majority represents a strong aspiration, both at the level of individuals and of the community, it may look back on a past full of coercion and characterized by a lack of opportunities. However, when for some reason, due to legislative and policy changes and/or economic and social transformations affecting the group in a positive way, the group in question has become more established and accepted since, it may have attained a kind of positive self-consciousness. What is regarded as "ethnic pride" in this context is a historically forged phenomenon, a kind of reaction to previous exclusion and, at the same time, a motor of emancipation, while having little to do with immanent group characteristics.

Nevertheless, it can be affirmed that members of groups organized around some traditional (religious or ethnic) core values are especially prone to develop a sense of pride and hold together as a



community on that basis. Thus voluntary choice is an important element of ethnic/religious belonging in such cases, inasmuch as membership can be regarded as principally based on self-ascription, while the classifying attempts coming from outside, especially from the social majority, are mitigated or neglected. However, the resulting group cohesion necessarily entails the development of intra-group hierarchies, structures of power and dominance, and even the use of internal policing to keep members within the community and discipline them according to its norms. In this sense, as far as communities as structured groups are concerned, the moment of coercion seems to be irreducible in any case.

### *'Underclass'*

When forced separation from the majority society occurs primarily on social grounds, ethnicity and cultural identity are pushed to the background in comparison to the importance of social and residential marginalisation. Without sharing the assumption that people living in such circumstances are lacking culture or their culture is characterised by lack,<sup>22</sup> it can be acknowledged that, due to certain administrative and policy measures, as well as affected by social pressures and cultural projections, these kinds of marginalised collectivities are driven virtually below the social hierarchy and are thus seen as forming an "underclass".

Given the strong marginalisation, entailing struggle for scarce resources in a social space that is characterized, to a great extent, by the extra-legal status of its inhabitants, group cohesion is usually weak in communities belonging to this category. Nevertheless, an "underclass background" is characterised by some level of integration: the mixed residential areas, with several kinds of minorities and marginalized segments of the majority society living together, develop some kind of internal structure and mechanisms of competition and cooperation.

This type of excluded localities are typically urban neighbourhoods, in the outskirts of cities or in deprived inner city districts, that are stigmatised just like ethnic ghettos, though not by reference to ethnic stereotypes but based on assumptions about, and aversion from, poverty, low social status, destitute residential areas, and marginal lifestyles. Examples of this situation can be found, primarily, in the French, British and, to a lesser degree, Danish and Swedish samples, collected in urban areas with a high rate of immigrants. Some mixed Roma and non-Roma neighbourhoods in deteriorated and economically collapsed Central European cities, where the common denominator of inhabitants is deep poverty and social exclusion, also fit this paradigm.

It is mainly because of their deprived situation that families in this category tend to be quite complex, with a variety of possible formations: mixed families, single parents, parents living in polygamous relationships, adoptive parents, relatives taking care of the children, etc. The chaotic background of children virtually predestines them to low school performance and strongly limited perspectives on further education. This problem is only intensified by the schools where the rate of minorities is much higher than the national average, while efforts of thematising cultural or ethnic difference are absent or ineffective.

Adolescents are often at a loss as how to identify themselves – but not because of multiple

22 Consider the thesis of the "culture of poverty" developed by Oscar Lewis (1959) as a typical feature of urban slum dwellers.



attachments, as in the case of those categorised under the label of “ethnic pride” – but rather precisely due to multiple exclusion and the lack of positive ties. “When the Danes look at me, they see a perker [a racial slur]. When the perkers look at me, this was more when I was younger, they would call me a Dane [...] It has a big influence on how I’m looked upon and what expectation I have to live up to. Most people look at me like I’m something else than I am”, complained a Somali boy. While self-identity remains blurred, interethnic differences easily become stereotyped, grounded on prejudices expressing hostility, ignorance, and social distance. The image of Black boys was described by our respondent – a girl from a mixed ethnic background in the United Kingdom – as follows: “He sells drugs, he uses knives and guns, he’s not a very nice person, be scared of that person, you will get your phone stolen, he’s a woman beater, he’s a man slag, he cheats on his girlfriends. That is the typical Black guy.” A Black girl, in turn, is typically viewed like this: “‘She’s a bitch, she’s right hard, she’ll bang you, don’t mess with her.’ Do you know what I mean? Do you know how many times that has happened to me? It’s unbelievable”. The same respondent also described the image of Asians: “He’s a suicide bomber, he’s from the Taliban”,

Yet, to some extent, interethnic relationships do exist within the local communities, involving the suspension of prejudices:

It’s not that girls say they won’t go out with us because we are Malian or whatever, it’s because some girls have their tastes. There are girls that we call “Black guys’ chicks”, for example, because they only go out with blacks, and there are girls who don’t and only go out with Arabs, that’s all. It’s the same with guys, there are “Black chicks’ guys” and “Arab chicks’ guys” only. And there it is. It’s not racism, it’s a question of taste. After that, it’s true that Saint Denis is a city where there are only people who hate girls who like Blacks. Because there are girls who say they prefer Blacks to Arabs. They say it’s because blacks are more tender and all that, and that Arabs are violent and all. Then people go on and say: “Yeah, you like blacks because this and that”. It’s true that sometimes you hear “dirty Nigger”, “dirty Arab”, but that’s just making fun, it’s just teasing, because we get along. It’s just humour. It’s the way people laugh together in Saint Denis. It’s precisely in Saint Denis [...] I don’t know if you’ve noticed [...] but in each neighbourhood there’s a Black and an Arab who hang out together (a Malian boy describing the nuances of interethnic connections in a French “banlieue”).

The future vision of students in this group reveals, in general, that, as opposed to ethnicity, social standing is much more determining in their lives. However, given the awareness of the lack of opportunities in education and employment, they show similarities with ghetto inhabitants, including occasional ambitions, fuelled by specific personality traits, to break out from their situation. Our Kurdish interviewees in Denmark have provided some illustrative examples:

Education is important to me because I do not want to end up as most of the other Kurds. I have tried to work in my father’s shop, they work twelve hours a day. It’s hard. I do not want to end up like them. It’s not because I have anything against it – they don’t have any other possibilities, but when one then gets the chance to get

an education, why not then go for it? You know Kurds, if you have an education as a Kurd, then the other Kurds also look upon you in a different way than if you only have a pizzeria – “Okay, he’s smart that guy, he wants to do something”.

I have to earn a living for the rest of my life and I don’t want to do it by working in a supermarket. So education is more [...] you have to get one.

I don’t want to work in a supermarket [later on in life]. I can do that now, whilst I’m in elementary school or in high school, when I still don’t have an education. But why do it if I can get an education instead? I want to be something.

It’s my life. I have to live it so I have to be the one to make the decisions. If they [her parents] have something to say, they can say it. But if I don’t like what they think, it’s my choice.

Thus, while future visions allow for some ambitions towards emancipation, these are strongly limited by the awareness of stigmatisation, exclusion, and discrimination based on visible traits, like skin colour. An Eritrean girl from Sweden quoted earlier makes it clear how being inescapably “othered” affects her entire life-strategy:

I feel like an Eritrean because I look like one. It’s very obvious with my dark skin and dark eyes. If I meet someone in the street, they don’t look at me as a Swede; they think I’m an African or an Eritrean. Therefore, I feel like an Eritrean. [...] I want to move to another country because I don’t think my opportunities are that many here. For instance, my brother is an educated machine engineer but has no job and has to work in the subway. The same with my father. When I look at my family, I see how it works here.

The lack of opportunities and the background reasons, that is, poverty and stigmatised ethnicity together, experienced as a source of shame and embarrassment, lead to stereotype threats, low self-esteem, and self-hatred. “Sometimes, I think that the others are afraid of Roma people.” And: “Czech people sometimes slander them [Roma people]. It is because all of those [Czechs] think they [Roma people] are the same and do the same things, that they steal, that they’re criminals”, voiced our Roma respondents from selected Central European countries.

When it is feasible, moving away to somewhere else, like a better place within the same country, is considered: “Of course, I will have a better job and live in a different area. In a big house, where the Swedes live. I would never let my children grow up in this area. I know how the atmosphere can be here”, said a Kurdish boy from Sweden as he accounted for his future plans. Occasionally, emigration to a third country is also regarded as an option, as revealed by some of our Roma respondents, as well as the Ethiopian girl who, feeling comfortable in South Harbour where almost everyone has an ethnic minority background and where she often meets relatives when visiting with her family, intends to move to another European country in the long run and establish a family there: “I want to choose a partner myself, based on personality. I think my family here would understand and accept after a while. But my relatives in Ethiopia would be very concerned. They think that white people are bad people [...]”. Importantly, neither

the girl, nor her family feel like joining any Ethiopian cultural or religious activities when visiting relatives in South Harbour. The same girl also entertains fantasies about returning to the country of origin that she does not even know: "I have seen so much in Sweden, I want to get to know another part of the world. But I don't know yet, maybe Ethiopia." Finally, the perspective of cosmopolitanism may also appear on the horizon, although such ambitions are not as articulated as in the case of our fourth category (described below). Instead of principles and personal convictions, the desire to do away with national or ethnic origins arises from some kind of disillusionment, and actual experiences and practical considerations play a greater role in such a decision than principles derived from some post-modern ideologies. As a Tunisian girl living in France admitted:

Personally, I'm not too inspired by my origins. Some call me a corrupt girl [...] I may have Maghrebian origins, but I'm more often with Blacks or people of colour than with Arabs [...] When I came back from Tunisia, at the beginning I was really into religion. And now I've put that aside, because I noticed that if you get into religion too young you don't live a life.

In sum, as for the identities of the members in this group, they are usually mixed or hybrid, and effectively situational, and what is more, reactive in character, and generally negative as a source of self-esteem. As a consequence, the future visions of students in this category are full of uncertainties and anxieties, though – mainly owing to their young age – some way out is also envisioned. However, breaking out is mainly thought of being realized by fleeing from actual circumstances and, instead of clear-cut and viable plans, such ambitions seem to add up to no more than sheer escapism.

#### *'Acting white' for integration / 'Cosmopolitanism'*

The fourth category of our respondents is represented by students whose lives are not determined either by poverty or by ethnicity because earlier generations of their families already managed to break out from ethnic ghettos or slums. They usually come from well-off middle-class families and neighbourhoods, and their parents have a better education than of those in the three other groups. These conditions obviously do not preclude the possibility of cherishing ethno-cultural traditions and commitment to one's own ethnic group. However, certain contextual features as well as personal characteristics may induce, instead, a wish to integrate into the social majority or, alternatively, to get rid of any ethnic or national ties and belong, instead, to some more abstract, supranational community. The two alternatives, of course, are quite different, but nevertheless, turning away from one's own ethnic community, accompanied by the desire to melt into another, usually larger one are common features, just like the basic sociological characteristics shared by those belonging in this group.

The typical candidates to be classified in this category are second-generation immigrants coming from families that had a relatively high social status in the country of origin, and are able to manage more or less independently in the new place, without the need to heavily rely on ethnic networks. The other kind of members of this group are represented by the descendants of Roma parents who have managed themselves to obtain a better social standing and greater respect, yet they are afraid such achievements are unstable and a lot depends on conformity to majority values.

The parents in such families, as a rule, while having good education and/or business experiences, are able to attain only a low social status (in the host country, in the case of immigrants, or among the majority, in the case of Roma), yet they remain positive about the value of education. For instance:

S.'s father studied philosophy in Lebanon, however, his degree was not validated in Germany. Thus he had to take a variety of menial jobs, like painting, construction work, and employment in factories. S. plans to stay in Germany where she already has a lot of friends and where she wants to become successful. She accepts it as her new home, without forgetting about her real homeland, Palestine. Emotionally, she does not care about her German citizenship; instead, she is concerned if Germans would accept her as one of them.

The goals of children, often set by the parents, involve further education in demanding professions characterising the host country (to become, for example, a pilot, IT specialist, lawyer, or doctor) and having a decent family. "I would just like to have a normal life, where you have a job and a home and feel good. [Goals?] I think the ideal family, as it is completely ordinary, maybe two children, to be completely normal", said an Afghan student from Denmark.

Children born in such families attend majority-dominated schools that do not select among students based on ethnicity. Thus, when distinctions are made, these are not affected by institutional practices but exercised by peers. The attitudes of concerned institutions thus reflect the aspirations of the members in the fourth category, standing in the trivialization of ethnic differences and the neglect of religious background, or the outright rejection of any attachments whatsoever. Severing any ties, in turn, may be motivated by a desire for conformity as well as informed by a kind of modernist, European way of thinking.

The future plans of children also suggest that they have turned away from their original community that, for that matter, may be completely virtual in case they were already born in the country of immigration or if the family has already given up its roots. The refusal of traditions typically arises from pragmatic considerations: "I don't want to live in South Harbour in the future. I want to find an area with many Swedes. It's important that my children learn the Swedish language well, and people speaking good Swedish are really lacking in South Harbour," explained an Ethiopian girl whose family has immigrated to Sweden. Talking about his marriage plans, a Turkish-German boy said: "She should know German, otherwise she can't support our children in an appropriate manner". However, the rejection of ethnicity as an overly significant marker may be grounded in principles, too. A student who would like to become a psychoanalyst and travel and live in different countries expressed his thoughts as follows:

Pride isn't really my thing. I mean, I see a lot of people who make claims about their country: "I represent this, I represent that", while the guy doesn't even have papers from his country. He's got French papers and all. Frankly, it's not something I take to heart. I feel neither French, nor Moroccan, nor American. For me, representing a country without having a good reason to do so is stupid. A president, if he represents a country OK, he's a president, it's normal. But a guy who goes once a year to his

country and who says he represents it, it's stupid. They just do that to make trouble and to look down on others, to give themselves some pseudo-superiority.

The downplaying of ethnicity helps in breaking down walls and establishing group solidarity based on other values, more responsive to actual personal experiences and needs. For instance, a teenager, who wants to continue his studies in a high school and then a business school because he plans to open a café of his own one day, said:

It [i.e., ethnic background] doesn't matter because we're still like brothers. One's from Iran, the other's from Palestine, and the sixth's from Afghanistan. It doesn't matter because we aren't in those places now [...] You can always have a prejudice against someone but then if he's nice to you, if he's your friend, then you skip the prejudice. That is, if you get to know people then prejudices disappear. Most of my friends are of different nationalities.

Anti-prejudiced attitude and a great deal of reflection concerning such social problems are characteristic traits of students in this group. As our Swedish respondent coming from Ethiopia explained talking about prejudices against white people held in Ethiopia: "I think it has to do with the colonisation [...] even if it was a long time ago. Those prejudices stay. I will live differently than my parents. I can focus more on my individuality, what I strive for. They have never done that, they have always put the family first."

A heightened sense of individual autonomy, on the one hand, and the adoption of majority values, characterising every walk of future life (from the continuation of studies to plans regarding employment and expectations related to having a partner and establishing a family), on the other hand, seem to be typical in this category. These characteristics, just like the great number of interethnic relationships (in which ethnicity itself remains insignificant), suggest a great deal of openness on the part of these students. Yet it is important to keep in mind that their choices are often constrained by certain conditions they are unable to change anyway, thus the most rational choice seems to be adapting to them instead. These determining conditions curtailing individual autonomy range from the availability of educational and employment careers favouring the adoption of a majority lifestyle (and the unfeasibility of other professional careers characterizing the economic niches of the minority in question), to expressions of social hostility, like xenophobia, racism and discrimination, which drastically influence the lives of minority people. What is important here is that striving for being integrated and, although to a much lesser extent, even cosmopolitanism, do not represent at all the perspectives to be freely realised. What is more, these perspectives are often unreachable or prove to be illusory due to the stigmatisation of minorities. As a consequence, the plans of the adolescents in our fourth category, even though reflecting a great deal of pragmatism, may be doomed to remain fictional.

By constructing a typology of identity strategies we wanted to demonstrate that adolescents' vision about their future life is deeply embedded into their present situation: family background, location, families' relation toward traditions, religion, peer relations within and outside school, and possibilities concerning further education – all these factors influence future plans in terms of identity strategies. Some situations, however, can be characterized by other determining factors as far as the identity strategies are

concerned that remain outside our typology. Some of these suggest that future life is determined not so much by the conditions of the given country and location where the study was carried out, but by special external facts.

Reading interviews with students from a migrant background, we have encountered, for instance, life histories where the parents were war refugees. This personal experience can provoke emotions and commitments to a combatant behaviour to defend the "motherland", even by means of guns. Another, recurrent situation is when the parental family has a live connection with the country of origin, for example, when they have property, a house, close family members, etc., there. In such cases, identity strategies do not necessarily relate to the country where the student lives at present but reveal, instead, a stronger attachment to the country of "origin", even if the student was born in the diaspora. Yet in other cases, instead of anticipating and envisaging a future life, we have seen a kind of anxiety, fear, defeatism, or lack of planning on the part of students. Such hopelessness and a desperate state of mind can be explained probably by the immediate effects of actual threats and events like the appearance of neo-fascist extreme right organizations, the reinforcement of intolerant attitudes and discourses, or other menacing experiences arising from the internal political situation.

## Conclusions

Since our main concern is the role of school and education in the construction of ethnic minority identity and identity strategies, we have to overview our results in this respect as well. Ultimately, what we want to know is how (the sense of) discrimination, exclusion, and marginalisation are affected by educational policies, considering the actual implementation of such policies in particular settings. The underlying idea of this inquiry is that – rather than simply a product of particular cultural traditions – minority identity is formed by multiple social forces, among which school and education occupy a prominent place.

As we have seen, where integrated education has been realized and the atmosphere is tolerant and diversity-conscious, that is, open towards the problem of minority identities – as opposed to repressing such issues as it happens in a segregated and competitive environment – there are far less conflicts, and peers with different origins and backgrounds are more readily accepted. Such a situation favours the development of ethnic pride and the formation of student identities that allow planning for the future and generate a belief in the chance and of, and point in, meeting expectations.

Likewise, where separation is voluntary, that is, when students and their families opt for special treatment due to religious or ethnic difference, positive identity becomes viable and ideas about a prosperous future are attainable. Nevertheless, the question as to the long-term acceptance and tolerant attitude of host societies remains open: as German, Danish, or French examples suggest, ambivalent or explicitly negative anticipations are perceived by ethnic minority people across Europe.

As we have seen, schools do not operate in a vacuum, and thus the contents and methods of education are not simply developed according to the attitudes of the management, on the one hand,



and the needs of parents and students, on the other hand. Instead, the parameters of education are perceptibly related to the dominant discourses and ideologies and the public opinion of the given society that, in turn, reflects the broader social, political, and economic contexts. Thus the differing historical trajectories and cultural traditions in the participating countries, determining the arena of majority and minority relations, are highly relevant for our analysis. As already demonstrated in "Ethnic and Social Differences in Education in a Comparative Perspective" that summarised the results of the questionnaire-based surveys of the EDUMIGROM research project, the traditional a priori distinction of East and West proves to be inadequate; instead, we have distinguished post-colonial, economic migration, and post-socialist countries, each category having historically developed characteristic relations with their visible minorities, either historically present or having appeared recently to pose challenges in terms of accepting religious, linguistic, lifestyle, cultural, etc., differences. Divergences are well reflected in the rights and provisions minorities are entitled to in individual countries and country clusters (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010).

As part of public welfare services, schools represent a particularly effective means of socialisation in forming students' knowledge and sensitivity through mediated values and attitudes, and as a result of the composition of the student body, either promoting the coexistence of majorities and minorities or their differentiation and separation. For instance, the republican French ethos, prevailing at schools and prioritising citizenship rights over everything else, clearly affects all visible minority adolescents of this country, including those following Muslim religious traditions. We have also seen how schools in Central European states, where ideas of equality and inclusion are reluctantly assumed yet not interiorised, produce – with the mediation of the management, the staff, and the larger and proximate environments – Roma youths who regard themselves as second-rate citizens already by the time they are teenagers. By contrast, observations in countries of post-colonial and economic migration where schools reinforce separation suggest that students of Muslim faith representing, first of all, religious minorities, may benefit from such policies in terms of self-respect, while the same measures prove to be ineffective in instigating social acceptance by the majority.

Thus, as part of the elements of ethnic and religious identity, the influence of educational policies sometimes reinforce and at other times mitigate, displace, or override the aspirations of minorities regarding their position in society and shaping their relations with the majority. This suggests that the "normative" function of schools is also noteworthy, consisting in undermining or, to the contrary, intensifying (and often distorting) the significance of ethnic or religious differences and divisions. Such effects are typically exercised in the framework constituted by majority norms in general (i.e., mediated by other mainstream institutions as well), and realised either in conformation with, or contradiction to, family and community influences. Importantly, indoctrination according to majority norms may occur by negative means as well: when the school intensifies ethnic distinctions but fills "othered" categories with negative contents (i.e., by practicing discrimination and selection), ethnicity is heightened, even though students may try to free themselves from its consequences. Thus schools, as locations for socialisation and the formation of identities, represent sites for comparison where, besides country-specific characteristics and typical developments manifested by clusters of countries constituted for the purposes of this research, other, more general rules can also be examined, giving insight into – the often complex and contradictory – processes of integration and "minoritisation".



Despite the many differences in identity strategies among and within countries and among and within the many investigated ethnic minority groups, an overwhelming indication in our findings is minority adolescents' strivings for a "normal" life. This phenomenon is unanimously present in our empirical material, discernable from all the interviews and represented in every group of identity strategies constructed for the purposes of analysis. In other words, students in any of the samples wish to have an independent life, separate from their parents, in their own home, establishing their own family, able to control the number of their children and – regardless of gender – having a paid job to make a decent living. This is what they regard as the "modern" way of life considered "normal" in Europe. This is what appears as the dominant pattern or model, even though some of our highly committed (primarily Muslim) respondents may accept arranged or polygamous marriage, strict education according to religious doctrines, and intend to pass down such traditions to their own descendants. In general, strategies of survival demanded in Europe appear to be conceived of as based on some notion of modernity that is associated with – if not secularisation or cosmopolitanism, as suggested by traditional approaches – the fundamental value of autonomy. Considering it as a consensual value that may constitute the minimum standard of (mutual and self-) respect, a broad sense of autonomy, including cultural, social, and economic aspects, appears as an important key to the success of European integration.<sup>23</sup>

The question arises whether contemporary politics in general, and educational policies in particular, promote or inhibit the feasibility of social integration, by undermining categorical ethnic difference and enabling multiple attachments as necessary elements of a "normal life"? The discursive framework underlying political endeavours is ambiguous and ambivalent in this respect. On the one hand, a kind of "happy" though increasingly disillusioned and fading multicultural talk, advertising the values of diversity and present to a greater or lesser degree all across Europe, influences the explicit and formally accepted political norms at the European level. Thus, member states of the European Union, including the recent members from Central and Eastern Europe, have introduced the prohibition of discrimination based on race or ethnicity at least at the level of legislation, and have made steps towards social inclusion and the equalisation of opportunities. On the other hand, discursive traces of (anti-) immigration and (anti-) Roma policies, revealing growing xenophobia, have also surfaced over the past decade, frustrating attempts at integration as well as the free assumption of cultural identities.

General principles and tendencies in nation-states affect educational systems, too; thus previous efforts to institutionalise the principles of multiculturalism seem to have thwarted in this field as well. With the growth of hostility against and aversion to minorities, and the perception of differences between Muslims and Christians, Roma and non-Roma increasingly, as essential and ultimate, schools have been transformed into sites of ethnic and religious conflict and/or suppression of identities. The charge of "being incapable of integrating", well-known from 20th-century history, has become notorious, appearing in more and more places, like Germany or France, and – having more continuity here – intensifying in Central Europe.

23 This idea implies that, as opposed to the political and economic interests of the nation state or of supra-national formations, the aspirations and opportunities of smaller entities – social groups formed along ethnicity, religion, lifestyle, or simply social history, often discriminated against and not accepted, and potentially cross-cutting country borders – should be the basis of interpreting autonomy. Such an understanding entails the acknowledgment of cosmopolitanism and multiple attachments, while securing necessary guarantees at the national and supranational levels. For a challenging discussion of models of European integration, see Erik O. Eriksen (2007).

The sharpening of differences as a result of the contemporary political climate and institutional mechanisms, provokes a sense of solidarity in minority groups and ambitions to separate from, or occasionally even aggressively confront, representatives of majority societies. While first-generation immigrants generally made efforts towards linguistic and cultural adaptation, trying to become "invisible" and "melt into" host societies, the visual representation of cultural difference, like wearing the veil or manifesting other symbolic signs of otherness, becomes a common aspiration among second- and third-generation immigrants. By the same token, the Roma of Central Europe also show a tendency towards voluntary separation, seen, for instance, in the spread of a characteristic subculture, inspired by American rap and other ethnically-marked outfits, looks, tastes, music, etc. Besides the increase of self-esteem, the rise of minority self-consciousness has other, more directly political positive aspects, as ethnic or religious identities give way to a heightened sense of cultural and political autonomy, effectively instigating the articulation of claims and self-organization to implement them.

In majority societies, however, the increased self-consciousness of minorities and their attempts to maintain differences (coupled with the fact that in selected countries their rate of growth within the population has reached or crossed a critical threshold in the eyes of social majorities, thus implying the endangerment of their own survival) have alarming echoes, resulting in increased fears and xenophobia. The reinvigoration of nationalisms and the reinforcement of anti-minority voices and political forces mark a conservative turn both in the East and the West, which has become the starting point of mistrust in, and dismantling the results of, desegregationist policies. Events like the appearance of aggressively intolerant parties and movements, or political steps made towards the reinterpretation of citizenship along strict ethnic lines<sup>24</sup> suggest that the present climate is not at all favourable for minorities. Thus, it is not only the resurgence of right-wing extremism but also the changing official attitude of state agencies and international political bodies – occasionally seemingly promoting the integration of minorities (as in the case of certain prescriptions of immigration and naturalization policies, or measures favouring the public employment of Roma) – that contribute to the challenges faced by minorities. Policies, in turn, are often implemented by brutal police actions (for instance, the expulsion of Romanian Roma from France), or official reactions attract public attention for other reasons (for example, for being associated with particularly severe world events, like 9/11), contributing to often radical changes in public discourse. As taboos are lifted because politicians and other media personalities, including scholars, release the ghosts of the past from the bottles of social consensus, previously suppressed terms and concepts (like "Gypsy criminality") and relatively new constructions (like "Arab terrorism") – instrumental in making undue generalisations, blaming the victim, denoting scapegoats, and mobilising against vulnerable social groups – become parts of everyday discourse. Media responses, so apt to exaggerate dimensions and distort proportions thus altering the significance of facts, further intensify social conflicts and divisions in making assumptions consequential and, hence, real.

Does this mean that, with the slackening of multiculturalist values and the reinvigoration of more militant perspectives and ambitions regarding the constitution of societies as political and cultural communities, former conceptions of identity, reflecting processes of a substantial decolonisation that,

24 See, for example, the new citizenship act in Slovakia or the act regulating dual citizenship in Hungary, as well as attempts to create a common European basis for policies to suppress immigration.

at the level of individual identities, manifested in the celebration of commixture, diversity, and relative freedom<sup>25</sup> have become displaced and outmoded? Have essentialist conceptions of identity and difference, in fact, become more realistic and up-to-date for better describing the contemporary state of affairs? Although tempting, such a conclusion would be unacceptable and false. While simplistic and superficial accounts of typical conflicts and processes taking place in our world may have become fashionable well beyond their merits,<sup>26</sup> readily overshadowing the assets of more sensitive and complex analyses, there is no reason to throw out the latter. The glittering surface of seemingly self-explanatory claims and arguments hide inconsistent theories informed by ill-considered principles (based on assumptions regarding the primacy of ethno-racial belonging resulting in unchangeable cultural differences that give way to unsolvable conflicts), far less attractive than the values of equality and human rights nourishing somewhat heavier accounts of society. Thus, although essentialist notions of identity should be revisited in order to explain some contemporary political processes, the multiplicity of the aspects, levels, and foci of analysis, just like the perspectives determined by progressive social values, should nevertheless not be abandoned.

But how does theory translate into practice? Today's social reality, as we have seen, is not shaped according to very progressive social values. Integration, as a political goal and a viable objective, is being challenged in many ways. Thus, the question whether inclusive policies can be maintained at the level of schools remains to be answered. As evidenced by the EDUMIGROM research (and quantitatively shown in "Ethnic and Social Differences in Education in a Comparative Perspective" ), integrated education, as long as it is coupled with multiculturalist principles, diversity-conscious sensibilities, and a readiness to reflect upon (the consequences of) differences, results in better school achievement, improving perspectives of further education, and generating more positive future visions for ethnic minority students (Szalai, Messing, and Neményi 2010). However, it is unsure whether the achievements attained so far can be protected and further developed, or problems originating in the political climate and intensified by the present economic crisis will thwart the efforts and dismantle the results of recent decades, so that the next few years will witness attempts to find other, less friendly or even explicitly anti-migration and anti-minority solutions to problems of diversity in the field of education as well.

25 For conceptualising societies from the indicated multiculturalist perspective, see the once extensively cited works of Fanon (1963), Bhabha (1993), Gilroy (1993), and Hall (1996).

26 See, for instance, the sudden popularity of Samuel B. Huntington's thesis of cultural conflict after 9/11 (Huntington 1996).

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## **CLOSING REMARKS**

**Júlia Szalai**



Arriving at the closing section of this study, one is inclined to draw a rather gloomy conclusion: taken in one, the three large essays of this volume paint a picture about the lives, opportunities, and future perspectives of ethnic minority adolescents in Europe that is contoured by extensive risks and experiences of "othering", frequent endangerment of identity development, and the powerful institutionalisation of curtailed notions and practices of inclusionary citizenship. Whether looked at through the lens of institutional structures in education, or through the lessons drawn from their accumulated life experiences, young people from second-generation migrant and Roma backgrounds share a common fate of being marked with labels carrying dubious associations and implications for coming from "other" settings than most people – the majorities – around them.

The term "other" refers to a vaguely defined compound of cultural traits, appearances, modes of parlance, behaviours, tastes, and orientations – in sum, it embodies constellations that mainstream societies denote as "ethnic difference". True, "othering" is not confined to ethnicity alone: we know very well that notions of significant difference – meant as deviation from the prevailing social norms – are bound also to a range of other groupings either on the ground of their socio-economic and class positions (e.g., the powerful label of the "underclass"), or because of the manifestations of particular sexual traits (e.g., the stigma attached to homosexuality), or due to peculiar health statuses and bodily characteristics (e.g., the terms around disability and/or mental/physical deficiency). Nevertheless, ethnic "othering" stands out for at least two reasons: because of its inescapable collective content, and also because of its unavoidable implications for being destined to fulfil social roles and positions that, apart from rare exceptions, are usually valued less than the comparable roles and positions met by people from the mainstream.

As the discussions showed, ethnic "othering" is an all-encompassing phenomenon in the nine investigated countries, though its social functions and implications vary to a great extent. At one end of the scale, the distinctions that are expressed this way remain confined to the terrain of cultural (at times: also religious) diversity which does not necessarily imply social, economic, and political devaluation of the involved individuals and communities. Although "othering" always carries the risk of being turned into stigmatisation and social marginalisation, the societies in question make strong efforts to observe the boundaries of distinction and invest into countervailing it by provisions, services, and established conditions driven by the notions of equal citizenship and social inclusion. In our sample, it is the Nordic countries (Denmark and Sweden) that best demonstrate the indicated ambiguities and societal efforts to overcome them.

At the other end of the scale, "othering" becomes deeply institutionalised and serves as a "self-explanatory" principle for constructing and maintaining sharp divides in the social structures as well as differential rules in access to provisions, services, and opportunities. This is the case in the post-socialist societies of Central Europe where "othered" Roma are kept apart from the majorities in education, on the labour market, and also in the paths that drive access to welfare, housing, or health care. In these societies, ethnic "othering" is often used as the ultimate argument for justifying the bifurcation of citizenship and for creating visible ghettos of social exclusion that keep ethnic minority people away even from attempting to strive for integration on equal grounds. The mainstream needs for ethnic segregation are rooted in massive uncertainties and lasting frustrations of large groups of the majority who fear the

loss of their fragile advantages and who gain assertions for socio-cultural superiority by pointing to the disadvantages and downgraded positions of an entire collective which is identified in stigmatised ways of "othering" like "the Gypsies".

It is needless to say: there are substantial differences as much in the forms as in the immediate and longer-term implications of "othering" at these two ends and also in-between. Nevertheless, it seems important to emphasise the shared traits and also the commonality of the dangers that they entail, for "othering", even in its milder forms, becomes a condition that tends to attract inequalities of all kinds. Furthermore, distinctions made on the foundations of "obvious otherness" provide a fertile soil for turning class differences and the related social, economic, and political conflicts into the manifestations and struggles of hierarchically-valued cultures that appear to be constructed and continuously reproduced along the lines of ever-lasting traditions and biologically-conditioned inheritance. Through such transformations, ethnic "otherness" becomes a mighty metaphor for maintaining the status quo – that is, for justifying the arrangements of majority-ruled power and the "natural" deprivation and subordination of all those who are considered the "others".

The discussions in this volume also showed the mightiness of "othering" from another perspective. It has become clear through the analysis of interviews with students and their parents that being "othered" becomes an important constituent of the self and a significant point of departure for adolescent identity development. As it turned out, ethnic minority youth perceives the world around through the lens of "difference". Whether accepting and internalising the derogatory contents that are assigned to "otherness" or entering a personal struggle to overcome them, whether giving up early aspirations for betterment or utilising "otherness" as a drive for attaining outstanding achievement, whether expressing desires for the safety of ethnic enclosure or striving for full-fledged integration into the majority – the point of reference always remains the deeply ingrained experience of inescapable "otherness".

Due to the lack of comparable information about the development of adolescent identity among those from majority backgrounds, we cannot establish whether the all-encompassing awareness of "otherness" gives rise to peculiar patterns of identity formation that also maintain "difference" on the deepest personal level, or it is just a variant of the frames of reference that are substituted by similarly powerful constructs (also with relativistic contents) in the case of majority youth. However, one is inclined to assume that being continuously reminded of the differences hinders healthy self-reliance and tends to weaken trust in the just and equitable working of society and its institutions.

At the same time, our analysis also showed that awareness of "being different" can provide also the foundation of new forms of social cohesion and solidarity. In this sense, the potential disadvantages that are associated with ethnic distinctions can be transformed into clear advantages and lasting sources of togetherness. It might well be a case of "sour grapes", but the more ethnic minority adolescents experience forceful separation and exclusion, the more they express dispositions that refer to the unique strength of the bonds and the rich potentials of cooperation that the shared fate of refusal and exclusion has brought about in their immediate communities.

Beyond the interplay and mutual determinations between experiences of being "othered" and the elaboration of reflexive responses as parts of adolescent identity formation, the discussions in the three essays revealed the tough conditions that the socio-economic and power structures in the nine investigated societies have created by institutionalising "othering" and the accompanying manifestations

of ethnic discrimination. The most prevalent occurrences of institutionalised discrimination appear in the varied formations of residential segregation on ethno-social grounds. While ethnic minority families obviously often live in commingling with majority households, it is still justifiable to state in the light of our field experiences that wherever ethnic minority people represent a substantial part of an urban community, one tends to find them in spontaneously or deliberately designated segments that are often set up "just for them". The rise of such separated ethnic enclaves often follows from the particular welfare provisions that are distributed on the grounds of positive discrimination in order to assist the settlement of newcomers; on other occasions, it is the invisible intra-ethnic networks that help the recurrent waves of immigrants to accommodate upon arrival; yet on other occasions, it is the evolution of urban slums that attracts people with scarce resources to find accommodation in cheap and affordable areas; and finally, it is most often the intense flight of better-off families from the majority that leaves ethnic minority people behind, stuck amidst a multitude of pressing conditions and scarcities.

At any rate, separated urban areas inhabited dominantly or exclusively by ethnic minority people have become self-containing arrangements that embody the intersection of poverty and ethnic marginalisation in all our societies. As the wide array of parental histories shows, families tend to remain confined to the given conditions, and thus the intergenerational reproduction of marginalised positions appears to be self-sustaining. Breaking through the walls of the emerging ghetto necessitates a good deal of social and financial capital, and requires also a network of contacts and support. It is thus no surprise that there are only a few families in such communities that actually succeed in moving geographically outward and socially upward; at best, the rest can hope for some outstanding individual performance – and this is exactly that parents of adolescents expect from their children and that the most dedicated young ethnic minority students consider the primary goal for their adult lives.

The hopes and strivings for breaking away from the captivation of ethnic "otherness" and the accompanying socio-economic downgrading provide the context where education enters the stage with prominence. After all, ethnic minority youths and their parents are equally aware that successful advancement in schooling is the one and only chance for leaving behind one's marginalised conditions and aspiring for meaningful integration into society-at-large. However, schools that principally should serve this goal demonstrate a catch-22 for the most part. Affiliated with the communities where ethnic minority people make up a substantial part, public schools that "othered" students attend tend to be as equally segregated as the surrounding neighbourhoods. As schools serving the immediate locality, they mostly provide education for children living in their proximity, or if their set-up makes them open for a broader community, it is often the recurrent processes of "white flight" that turn them into designated "minority" institutions. As such, these schools hardly can escape the usual concomitants of declining quality in teaching, high turnover of the teaching staff, a sinking reputation, and a self-sustaining flight of all those – both from the majority and the ethnic minorities – who have the energy and the contacts to search for other, better schools for their children. This way, local schools serving ethnic minority youth are captured by the very processes and forces that they should assist in overcoming. The inescapable marginalisation of the schools implies an inescapable marginalisation of their students as well: this way, local educational institutions of the ethnic minority communities become potent mediators of social and cultural disadvantages and, instead of countervailing them, contribute to the deepening of the fault-lines

that maintains the distinctions between "ordinary" young people and their "othered" peers.

True, local school policies aiming at true diversity in their student bodies and teaching staff can make an important difference. Our findings show that dedicated local leadership at schools and in the municipal administration can assist ethnic minority students to catch up with – often even outperform – their majority peers; furthermore, innovative teachers can demonstrate remarkable achievements in assisting their students in successful advancement while they also contribute to strengthen their self-reliance and self-esteem. However, these attempts usually remain isolated and ultimately prove ineffective against the strong counter-currents of ethnic marginalisation and inclinations for social exclusion. At best, the heroic attempts of local school personnel and the supporting civil organisations behind them are enough to engage in the start of a struggle for recognition on behalf of the communities that they serve and represent. However, their capacities are too limited to turn the wheel around by allowing for a gradual diffusion of the values and practices that they embody, and thereby expanding the local struggle for recognition to initiations of genuine reforms. Due to their inbuilt limitations, such promising local initiatives usually remain admirable exceptions that work against the mainstream currents but that are actually confined to being captured by their very exceptional traits: after all, they end up in isolation and as such, face increasing pressures to adapt to what is considered the general "norm".

The scarce examples of schools that follow the principles of multicultural inclusion orient one's attention toward larger-scale associations that forge the schooling of ethnic minority youths. The associations in question are well known from educational sociology. After Bourdieu it is commonplace to state that the fundamental functions of education in distributing knowledge and, together with it, providing justification for the prevailing social, economic, cultural, and political inequalities, bind the schools to the foundations of the structure of the given society. It follows that nowhere can schools be very different in their structures from the structures of the society that they serve. If the ethnic implications of these strong associations are considered, one resignedly can establish that the poor-quality education of ethnic minority youths is a "natural" concomitant of their "othered", discriminated, and downgraded standing in the society that they are part of. Consequently, schools as agents of representing diversity and equal opportunities against the main currents of socio-ethnic distinctions are destined to become marginalised in their grand attempts. Hence, the solutions lay outside the realm of education. It is the coordinated policies toward (re)establishing the foundations of multiculturalism as much on the level of political representation as in the day-to-day relations within the communities that might provide the framework and the conditions for schools to attain the still widely-held goals of equal opportunity, equity, and colour-blind inclusion in education.

However, such a (re)turn to multiculturalism and the praising of diversity requires conditions and structures that place majority/minority relations on utterly changed foundations and that provide new safeguards against the emergence of ethnic hierarchies and the accompanying widespread practices of "othering" and discrimination. It will be the task in the final phase of the EDUMIGROM project to scrutinise the potentials for such reforms amidst the varied constellations of interethnic relations and the diverse materialisation of inequalities in recognition and redistribution that the historically-forged welfare regimes of our nine countries entail. In the light of the discussed historical differences among them, it can be said on firm grounds that even the best reforms will be strongly confined to remain within

the prevailing structures and practices, and thus one hardly can hope for the all-round breakthrough that suddenly opens a new epoch in interethnic relations everywhere. Our goals are and will be more modest than this: by utilising the strength of comparisons, we aim for calling public attention and action to the need for deconstructing the systems and routines that penalise certain groups simply because of their different origins. And as one can conclude from our inquiries, the need for mobilisation for interethnic equality and equity has become apparent as much as for ethnic minorities as for the majorities: after all, it is the working of the established democratic order within and between the nation-states that is at stake.

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