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Ethnic Differences in Education
in Hungary:
Community Study



The research leading to these results has been conducted under the auspices of the project EDUMIGROM: *Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe*, and has received funding from the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007-2013), under Grant Agreement SSH7-CT-2008-217384-EDUMIGROM.

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 in Budapest, Hungary.

ABOUT THE PAPER

The third phase of EDUMIGROM was dedicated to conducting qualitative research in selected schools in ethnically diverse communities. The investigation focused on how the school and the wider social environment influenced school performance, the formation of identity and future aspirations of adolescent youth in a multi-ethnic environment. The research aimed at describing and interpreting how differences of institutional settings, everyday life at schools, and the wider social environment play a role in practices and experiences of schooling in a multiethnic community. Each report provides the experiences of students, parents, the teachers as well as of the institutional stakeholders on the basis of personal in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with the most important actors of the educational process (students, their parents and the teachers) as well as participant observations within and outside the school. A total of nine community studies were prepared. Selected reports made available to the wider public may use pseudonyms or exclude sensitive information on the sites and schools selected for EDUMIGROM field research.

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INTRODUCTION

The present report discusses the results of the multifaceted, comprehensive qualitative research conducted on selected sites by the Hungarian team of the EDUMIGROM project. Its aim is to describe and interpret how differences in institutional settings, everyday life at schools and the wider social environment influence the practices and experiences of schooling in a multiethnic community. The investigation focused on the impacts of the school and the wider social environment on school performance, the formation of identity and future aspirations of adolescent youth in a multiethnic environment. The analysis discusses the above issues from the contrasting viewpoints of various actors of the educational process, presenting the experiences of students, parents, teachers and institutional stakeholders. The sites of the community study included four schools in two towns, selected with the aim of investigating the impact of various school environments on the cognitive, psychological and social development of adolescents.

Methods utilised in the study were compound and included personal in-depth interviews, focus group discussions with the most important actors of the educational process (students, their parents and the teachers) and participant observations within and outside the school.

The first two chapters of the report provide a detailed portrait of the sites of the research. The first chapter gives an overview of the economic and social history of the two towns, describes their present situation, the internal segmentation and tensions characterising the local society and tensions. It also presents a thorough description of the history and present of interethnic relations and the internal segmentation of the Roma community itself. This description includes the most important developments related to the Roma community in the past: when and how they came to the settlement, what were the most important moments in the life of the community and what are the roots of their present, mostly desperate, situation.

The second chapter is split into two parts. The first part provides an account of the methods applied during the research, considerations behind the selection of sites and persons involved in the community research. The second part of the chapter presents a closer look into the schools. It offers a detailed description of the local educational systems in the two towns and the selected schools in particular, and describes the most important episodes – reorganisations, rationalisation – that have essentially changed local education and had a significant effect on the selected schools' life.

The third chapter gives an insight into the everyday life at school, the personal relationships of students and their everyday activities in and outside the school. It analyses the major forces shaping the relationships of adolescents, and the role of background factors such as the socio-economic situation of parents, neighbourhood, gender and ethnicity. The chapter provides an account of how and where inter-ethnic relations or separation emerge, gives a sense of their significance and shows which are factors that shape separation/relations along ethnic lines within and outside the school. It shows how the school environment and, more specifically, the institutional arrangement supports or hinders relationships (and friendships) across ethnic lines. The chapter also discusses the extent to which teachers' attitudes and classroom routines shape interethnic relations in the school.

The fourth chapter provides an analysis of processes of 'minoritisation' from various angles. Thus it discusses mechanisms of 'othering' minority ethnic students, primarily in the school but also outside it where it is significant. It describes how 'ethnic minority' students feel about being 'othered' and gives an account of their experiences about differentiation (or discrimination) attributed to their ethnicity. The chapter approaches these processes from the viewpoint of all the involved actors: minority ethnic students on the first place, but also majority students, teachers and parents. The chapter describes how ethnic minority students experience being othered, and also reveals how majority students and teachers see the same situations and processes, trying to collide these perceptions against each other. The chapter provides an analysis of how school environment might affect differentiation along ethnic lines, and singles out school arrangements and practices that successfully act against such processes.

The fifth chapter discusses issues of performance, attendance and expectations regarding educational career and factors affecting students' achievements and attitudes towards school and

education. The chapter looks into the intersecting influences of gender, family background, social status, ethnic identification through the lenses of all the involved actors: students, parents and teachers. It investigates factors outside the school that may play a role in motivations and educational success, such as the socio-economic background of the family, with special emphasis on the educational level of the parents, the living conditions at home, how parents relate to schooling and more generally to education, and personal contacts and friendships of students outside the school. The chapter also examines factors that might influence motivations and advancement within the school by showing the same thing – how the school environment supports personal advancement – from the angles of students and teachers alike. Moreover, this part takes a closer look at the advancement of "minority ethnic" students through the lens of teachers, presenting various explanations of the reasons of the generally low performance of minority ethnic students as seen by the teachers, which are then contrasted with students' and parents' accounts.

Strongly linked to the previous chapter, the sixth chapter discusses identities and identity strategies sustained and practiced within the studied Roma communities. The major question this chapter intends to answer is how Roma students relate to their ethnic belonging and how they see their current and future position in society. The chapter provides an insight into varieties of 'ethnic' identification with respect to "Romaness", and gives an account of the complexity of factors that might shape identities. It also discusses various feelings students attach to being Roma, and the factors that, after all, decide whether ethnicity becomes a source of pride or shame, a thing that can be viewed positively or something that is better to hide. The chapter also surveys the role of the family, peers, the school and other actors and the influence of the wider social environment in shaping identity strategies. Finally, the chapter speaks about future aspirations, perceptions of adult life by adolescents, and the effects of ethnic belonging in visions about the future.

Relations of employment/unemployment strongly correlate with the educational level of parents, and are determined by the characteristics of the site of the investigation as well as by the consequences of the regime change. Before 1989, just like today, uncompleted primary education or the accomplishment of the obligatory eight grades were enough, at best, for taking a job as a trained worker. Such jobs were available in socialist factories, providing, at least, permanent employment for many workers. People had a chance, although not in great numbers, to obtain higher education degree, too, and thus acquire a better status in the labour market (as a skilled worker). There were Roma people in our sample, too, who were able to "prove themselves" during Socialism (e.g. as a miner in the emergency unit). As a result of the collapse of local industries and, especially, the end of mining, and later the bankruptcy of the new (mostly foreign) enterprises appearing on both sites of the investigation, members of many families repeatedly lost their employment. Since both sites are primarily industrial areas, gardening and raising livestock, or collecting mushrooms and other crops in the case of the most marginalised people, represent viable ways to make a living only for few families.

1. THE SITES OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH: THE COMMUNITIES

The Hungarian team has selected two communities as sites for the community research. One of them – Chemtown – is situated in the North East of Hungary, the other – Coaltown – is to be found in the South-West of the country. Both are middle-sized towns, with relatively high proportion of Roma population.

1.1. Social history and the transition to the present¹

The two cities have a number of characteristics in common. They are approximately of the same size, Coaltown having 27 thousand and Chemtown having 30 thousand inhabitants. Both towns were

¹ This subchapter uses much of the information collected in Messing and Molnár (2010).

established in the 1950s and extensively experienced forced industrialisation in the period between the 1950s and the 1970s, which, however, helped in maintaining relatively high employment owing to the lavish industries that eventually became unsustainable under conditions of market economy. Consequently, both towns have lost their role as important actors of heavy industry due to the fact that their industries collapsed or seriously shrank after 1989.

Chemtown was brought into being by the administrative unification of two villages in 1947. The extensive forced expansion of the town's industry had been initiated by the foundation of the chemical fertiliser factory and an allied power-plant in the 1950s, which was followed by the expansion of the traditional local mining industry and its related plants. In parallel with industrial expansion, an extending construction industry responded to the increased housing needs of the multiplying population. People migrated here from the poorer agricultural parts of the country, which resulted in an immense population boom. The newly settled groups consisted of mostly young unskilled or low-skilled workers, many of whom were Roma. Between the years 1955 and 1960, the size of the population was doubled to become 11,000. The population reached its peak in the mid 1980s when it became 37,000. Transition hit the town hard: the closing of the mines and related plants and the reduction of the capacities of the chemical plant and the related power plant due to technological modernisation made a significant number of people – primarily but not exclusively poorly qualified workers – unemployed. The largest employer, the chemical fertiliser, was privatised in the early 1990s, and the new owner cut the number of employees by half (dismissing at least 3,000 employees). The population of Chemtown today is less than 31,000.

Coaltown has gone through a similar industrialisation process, though two considerable differences have to be pointed out: one refers to the social history and the roots of interethnic relations, and the other has to do with the gradual nature of economic transition after 1989. Coaltown has been a traditional coal-mining town; mining and its related industries determined its economy for over a century. The area is especially rich in high quality, though dangerously exploitable, coal mine fields. The first coal mines were opened as early as the end of the 19th century, but large volume exploitation started only in the 1950s. In the 'golden age', between 1960 and the 1980s, mines alone provided job opportunities for over 6,000 people, attracting a large population of both unskilled and skilled workers. The local population, especially miners, forming the vast majority of working age population, lived at relatively high standards, thanks to the high wages provided for dangerous and unhealthy work. Due to economic restructuring, mines, where exploitation was less profitable, had to restrict their capacities and eventually close down. Still, the shrink of the industry was gradual and took two decades. The region had to cope with several waves of layoffs, however, mines were still employing over 2,000 people in the beginning of the 1990s. The unstoppable downturn has caused hardly curable wounds in the economy and society of the town as well as in its local identity that had been based on coal mining from the beginning. However, disintegration has been slow and gradual, giving the locals approximately twenty years to adapt, which is a great difference compared with the situation in Chemtown and other urban regions of 'socialist industries'. The change in the size of the population also reflects this continuous transition: 5,800 inhabitants lived in Coaltown in 1949, an early year of state socialism, which grew to over 27,000 by 1980 and decreased by 10% by 2000. Considering these changes, it is obvious that there were important changes not only in the size but also in the professional composition of the population: the original population was dominated by skilled and highly skilled miners and farmers was replaced by masses of low skilled and unskilled workers and a few highly skilled industrial professionals during the state socialist period. Today the composition of the population may be characterised by a lower than average educational level and a large number of pensioners and economically inactive people.

There are important differences in the past and the present situations of the two examined towns. Economic expansion in Coaltown during the state socialist regime rested on an industry that had its historical roots and was, moreover, an identifying element for the town even before the Second World War. Thus, despite the fact that industrialisation in Coaltown was a forced intervention, progression was rooted in an organic setting. By contrast, Chemtown's industrial expansion was developed solely

on the tables of the socialist engineers and leaders, lacking any historical antecedents. The other important difference between the two local societies is that the growth of the population in Coaltown was periodical, in accordance with the development of mining and the opening of new mineshafts. The gradual decrease of the population also was parallel to the gradual decline in the industry. The last mine closed at Coaltown in 2000, 11 years after the political transition. Until then it provided work and a decent living for many people. By contrast, in Chemtown, the collapse of the 'socialist' industry was rapid, and a few years after 1989 most of the formerly employed physical workers lost their jobs.

Another difference between the two towns is that the decline of the mines and the related industries did not go along with restructuring economical changes in Coaltown: no new industries were born, at all. Chemtown, on the other hand, made several, though not very successful, attempts to attract new industries.

A further difference closely related to the above mentioned one is that, due to its mono-industrial economy, Coaltown's population is more homogeneous. Here, mining was the most important branch of industry throughout the last century, and thus there are less internal differences in the population: most of the people were somehow attached to the mines themselves or through family members. At the same time, obviously there is an internal hierarchy among miners, in terms of education, position and wage. Still, the physical presence of 'bosses' in the dangerous mineshafts induced a very strong feeling of solidarity among miners that diminishes strong hierarchies. By contrast, in Chemtown chemical industry has not only been a new branch of industry, without rootedness in the local economy and society, but also stimulated strong hierarchies: managers and top engineers of the chemical plant were in direct contact with employees on the lower levels of the company. Also, Chemtown's economy is more varied, with a significant hierarchy among the various branches of local industry (the chemical plant being at the top, followed by the power plant, and finally mines and service industries occupying the bottom). These hierarchies are well represented in the local society, which is more diverse in terms of social status and educational background than Coaltown's, and the sense of solidarity is much less present here.

An important similarity between the two sites is the fact that both are located close to, (are approximately 30 kilometres from) regional centres with significant economic and cultural power. Highly qualified and low-skilled workers in both towns commute daily to their workplaces in the nearby regional centre.

1.2. The present: Socio-economic composition of the local populations

Due to the decline of the local industries and the generally low educational level of the population, unemployment and poverty are the most serious social problems in both towns. In the years after the millennium, both towns have experienced a massive rise in the number of the unemployed, increasing the rate of unemployment well above the national average. Clearly, the towns have been unable to generate job opportunities for the masses of both unskilled and skilled workers.

1.2.1. Employment situation

Today the largest employer in Chemtown is the chemical plant which, despite the gradual dismissal of two thirds of its former employees, still provides employment to 1,500-2,000 workers. The other major employer in the town is the local government and public service sector, where primarily highly qualified staff finds employment (in management and administration, schools, kindergartens, elderly homes and hospitals). Furthermore, a few hundred people work in commercial units (such as shops and supermarkets) and there are two textile factories, each of which employs over 100 workers. A significant number of people have found employment in the nearby city, a regional centre, where multinational companies have settled recently. Commuting is an opportunity for the lowest and highest segment of the labour market: it is valuable for the highly educated professionals, who have better chances to find a good job in a large town, and it is an exclusive (though expensive) option for low

skilled blue-collar workers, who may find employment on the primary labour market mostly in assembly plants of multinational companies. Locally, the sole employment possibility for the majority of low skilled and unskilled workers is public (communal) work.

Many of the long term unemployed – and most of the Roma among them – live on various parallel income sources that together add up to a minimum or not even a minimum subsistence for a family: they receive social benefits, child care allowances and most of them participate in the black or grey market, i.e. are unreported employed in badly paid day-work in the construction industry or in agriculture.

The situation is somewhat different in Coaltown. Due to the later and gradual dismissal of employees from the mines and the more conscious and protective local policies, many of those who worked in the mines or related companies managed to entitle for early age- and disability pensions or a special provision provided solely for miners ('miners health damage benefit'). These allowances are much more advantageous in material terms than social benefit. As a consequence, half of the working-age population, approximately 9,000 inhabitants, are economically inactive in this town, still, the general level of income and welfare does not reflect this high ratio of permanent unemployment and economic inactivity. Major employers in and around the town include small and medium sized factories in the light industry and machinery, many of which specialised in employing health damaged people (former miners), the public service sector (municipality, education, health and elderly care) and commercial units. Similarly to Chemtown, the long term unemployed, many of whom are low educated Roma, are irregularly employed in public work programs. Those who do not find a job locally, commute daily to the nearby regional centre city (20 km) – highly qualified people find better opportunities here, while those representing the lowest level of the labour market are employed in the factory of a multinational company. What is special about Coaltown's labour market is the fact that there is an extensive labour emigration: many people find a job only far away from the town, which necessitates weekly or monthly commuting, still others – especially former miners and other skilled workers – find employment abroad, in European countries (Spain, Germany and the UK are the most frequently mentioned destinations).

In accordance with national policies, long term unemployed, among them most of the Roma in both towns, have been engaged in public work since 2009 when a law on the issue came into force.² This scheme – welfare allowances combined with employment in public work programs³ – involved approximately 800 people in Coaltown and over 1,000 in Chemtown in 2009, a significant proportion of whom were Roma. Naturally, unemployment is worse among the low skilled and unskilled workers, and the Roma in particular. It is not only their generally low level of education alone but also extensive discrimination that hinders their employment. Labour market discrimination seemed to be especially wide-spread in Chemtown where, for example, an employee of the Labour Market Service Centre admitted that it was very typical for companies looking for employees to openly declare their ethnic preferences concerning their future employees: practically meaning they would not employ Roma. In Coaltown, however, such open discriminatory experiences were not observed in the research.

In both towns, but more pointedly in Chemtown it is very common for low skilled people to gain some additional income from unreported or black labour. 'Entrepreneurs' (or more precisely agents of entrepreneurs) come and collect unemployed people for daily work in construction or in agriculture. This form of employment is extremely disadvantageous in terms of income, security and predictability. The income that can be generated doing this type of work is well below any officially set minimum (6–20 Euro/day), and the conditions are also below any standards: the 'entrepreneurs' hire the workforce

2 The Hungarian Parliament adopted a legal modification enabling the program called 'Path to Work', which connects social provisions with public or communal work. According to the new paradigm, the long term unemployed are obliged to participate in public work programs at least for 3 month in a year if they want to get entitled for social welfare benefit.

3 Our calculation based on the data of Public Employment Service shows, however, that a significant number of the long-term unemployed (approximately every fifth of them) have got out of any social welfare assistance schemes by now, and thus these people and their families are totally excluded from any social security provisions.

without telling them where and what type of work they will do, they promise a daily pay that is often only partially paid or not paid at all, they promise additional services (food, accommodation, cigarettes) which are later forgotten about. Such work, at the same time, is the most laborious and 'dirty' physical work (work that can not be done by machines), often lasting for 12-14 hours a day. It is needless to say that those hired on these jobs do not get entitlement for health and social security provisions, or for pension or any social welfare allowances. Only those – unfortunately many – take such jobs who have no other chance in making the most essential income but by accepting such 'offers'. This workforce is constituted by the crowd inhabiting ethnic urban ghettos.

The direct consequence of the previously described processes is that poverty is a very serious problem in both towns serving as the sites of our research. The most vulnerable groups are families with low educated parents and more than three children, the elderly living alone, and one-parent families with children. The first group includes the majority of the Roma in both localities. Besides the above described economic and historical factors – high unemployment due to the decline of former industrial units, inability of economic adaptation, generally low educational level of working age population – there are further additional issues that lead to extensive poverty in both towns. A significant proportion of the inhabitants, especially the lower-middle-class families and the elderly, live in storey blocks with central heating that is extremely wasteful and also expensive. In wintertime families might pay over half of the household income on heating. As a consequence of these multiple processes, two worrisome phenomena are prevalent in both towns: one is the extremely large extent of indebtedness of families in the lower segments of the local society, while the other relates to local migration: many families who could not afford living in urban homes have moved out to weekend cottages in the surrounding hills, which typically do not have transportation access and lack public utilities (water, sewage, heating etc.). Subsistence costs in these houses are very low, but those having moved here have very difficult access to work, school, health care, shopping –i.e. to any communal service. This phenomenon, unfortunately, concerns many families with school aged children as well.

The extensive indebtedness of the population is a social phenomenon that has very serious effects on the disintegration of the local society. The lower-middle-class families are indebted to official financial service providers, which involves some security, but the poorest part of the population, for whom, due to their lack of income and valuable property, such services are unavailable, often turn to private money-lenders who provide credit on usurious interest (50-100% per month!), and who do not keep from intimidating their 'clients' and force them to pay the multiplied instalments. Naturally, such debts very often run out of control and push families into total deprivation, many of whom have no other choice but to flee from the town.

1.2.2. Housing

Both towns are geographically highly segmented. The geographical arrangements mirror social status differences of the local population. The landscape in both towns is dominated by prefab housing-blocks, but there is a family housing area erected in the 1980s and 1990s, and an elite part with high value houses situated in a separate part in both towns. Each of the studied urban areas have an inner city slum that is constituted by low quality social rentals accommodating socially deprived families, and there are also peripheral ethnic ghettos in both towns, though their sizes differ significantly: in Chemtown this is a large colony, while in Coaltown it includes only a few houses.

Housing opportunities in both towns are shaped by the very fact that construction industry had to keep up with increased housing needs followed by the extremely rapid growth of the population in both towns. Consequently, housing in both towns is dominated by prefab housing blocks that are so characteristic of the construction industry of the 1960s and 70s in the region. These houses provide homes for the vast majority of households: most typically middle-class- and lower-middle-class families, the elderly, young singles and couples live here. The upper-middle-class families live in family homes built during the 1980s and 1990s. These areas constitute a geographically separate district in both towns, and are well separated from the other parts of the city. The wealthiest in the town (approximately 50-

100 families) occupy a separate area with only a couple of streets, characterised by luxurious and huge houses that represent the wealth of their owners.

People belonging to the poorest segment of local society, a large part of which is Roma, live in inner city slums. In both towns there is a part of the inner city that hosts social rentals and became an ethnic and social slum after the transition. It is interesting and also logical that, formerly, these parts of the city had high prestige, the houses here were among the first 'modern' homes of the pioneer workers in the 1950s, at the dawn of the modern city. By the end of the 1990s these districts considerably decayed, due to the fact that the flats became social rentals. ⁴ The municipalities also contributed actively to the decay of the inner city slums: in both towns flats in these houses were assigned to economically deprived, mostly Roma, families. In Coaltown this was a result of the liquidation of the former Roma colony, in Chemtown it was due the process of Roma families being ousted from the labour market and becoming households in need. (For a more detailed description, see the next part of this chapter.)

In Chemtown, furthermore, a large ethnic and social ghetto on the periphery of the town evolved on the basis of the former mining colony. It hosts approximately 50–100 households. ⁵ This colony is inhabited by the most deprived people, among whom Roma are highly represented. Houses in this colony are privately owned, but as to their value, it is a telling fact that the Municipality offered these houses for purchase by those living in them for 0 forints. All of the homes are very small (one-room, except for a few that have a second room) and do not meet the minimum requirements for residence due to their low internal altitude, their humid walls and lack of minimum infrastructure. Officially, these houses could not have been used as residence of families. We may safely call them shanty houses, most of which do not have a separate kitchen, and have neither any sewerage, nor a toilet, or any running water inside. Toilets are outside, on the other side of the street (path), and water is available from public pumps/wells on the street. Due to the lack of surfaced streets and garbage collection, this area is hardly approachable and especially neglected. These houses serve as homes for families often with 3–4 children, but we also met a family with 9 kids living in such a home.

There is a similar 'colony' on the periphery of Coaltown, somewhat different in its size and also regarding the type of houses: here the houses are wooden barracks, erected for temporary use for (mostly political) prisoners who were compelled to work in the mines during the 1950s and 1960s. Most of the barracks were destroyed since, but a few (3–5) remained. Each of the barracks have five or six units that serve as temporary homes for those in immediate need, in fact, for those few (mainly, though not exclusively, Roma) families who were excluded from all other services on account of alcoholism and/or aggressive behaviour.

As mentioned in the former subchapter, an important process with regard to housing problems in both sites is the migration of the poorest ones to week-end cottages on the nearby hillside. Most of them are lone adults or couples, but – according to social workers – there is an increasing number of families, especially with young children, choosing this option to solve their subsistence crisis.

The catchment area of schools selected for the community study includes, at least partially, the inner city slum and housing blocks hosting lower-middle-class and middle-class families in both towns.

1.2.3. Interethnic relations

A significant difference between the two communities serving as sites of our research concerns their history of inter-ethnic relations. Although there have been smaller groups of Roma living in the region historically, Chemtown and the entire region have traditionally been a territory inhabited dominantly by

⁴ In Coaltown the Municipality bought the privately owned flats in these blocks for good money, in order to provide an escape for the middle class "white" elderly who stranded there.

⁵ This is our rough estimation, as nobody in the Municipality could answer the question regarding the size of this peripheral ghetto and the number of households/people concerned.

the ethnic majority. Various subgroups of Roma have moved here in significant numbers only after the Second World War, during the era of extensive industrialisation. In contrast, Coaltown and the wider region of the South West have traditionally always been an area with an ethnically colourful mixed population. Coaltown's population has traditionally been dominated by Schwabs (ethnic Germans), but there were Hungarians, Boyash Gypsies, and even ethnic Serbs and ethnic Croatians living in the surroundings of the town before the Second World War. The entire region has a very rich and long-lasting tradition of ethnic cohabitation, in which Boyash Gypsies have always occupied the lowest strata of the social hierarchy, moreover, they were also physically separated from other ethnic groups (they lived in small colonies composed of self-made hovels in the forests), still, their professions and products⁶ were important and indispensable in the local economy.

Although both towns have a similar proportion of Roma inhabitants, there is another significant difference between them, which concerns the ethnic composition of their local Roma populations. While in Coaltown the dominant majority of Roma belong to one subgroup, the Boyash Gypsies, Chemtown's Roma population is ethnically heterogeneous, including Romungro Gypsies, Vlach Gypsies and Musician Gypsies. The homogeneity/heterogeneity of the Roma population does not only concern ethnic identity but also social status, profession and the history of the communities. Coaltown's Boyash Gypsies have a collective history, most of them live in the same areas of the town, on similar standards, and have very comparable chances of providing subsistence. In contrast, Chemtown's Roma are not only ethnically diverse, but are also geographically dispersed in several enclaves and household in the various 'communities', have very different strategies of subsistence and, consequently, also vary in terms of the standard of living. Let us present a bit more detailed picture of these phenomena in the following paragraphs.

1.3. Characteristics of the Roma population in the two sites

1.3.1. The Roma in Chemtown and their history

As described in the survey report, there are various estimations with regard to the percentage of Roma living in Chemtown. These range from 1,2 % (2001 census) to 13% (estimation of the local Gypsy self-government). The most likely rate is somewhere in-between: expert estimations put the ratio of Roma at 6–7%. (Kertesi – Kézdi 1998). Since 1998 there are no expert estimations available, and we may assume that the proportion of Roma might have increased in the town to some extent, due to the flight of highly qualified professionals and middle classes from the town.

There is a significant internal diversity within the Roma population in Chemtown. Three large groups of Roma inhabit the town: the Romungro, the Musician Roma (a subgroup of Romungro), and the Vlach Roma, and, furthermore, a great number of people with double identity, most of whom are offsprings of the many mixed marriages. There are also clear patterns of residential separation of Roma and the ethnic majority, but also among Roma subgroups. There are two subgroups – the Vlach and the Musician Gypsies – that were present in the territory originally, before the evolution of the 'socialist town'. Both traditional communities are nevertheless small, yet still exist. The vast majority of Roma, however, currently living in the town, arrived here in the decades of extensive industrialisation in the 1950–1970s. Most of them are Romungro coming from the eastern agricultural areas of the country. These people have mostly lost traditions and communities, but they also live separated from the majority society.

The vast majority of the Roma in Chemtown live in segregated areas of the town, and are concentrated in three distinct parts of the locality: along a suburban street, in an inner-city slum, and in a peripheral ghetto-like settlement.

Up until the 1970s, the Vlach Roma used to live in hovels by the river S. outside the town,

⁶ They lived of goods provided by the woods and manufactured wooden utensils.

however, this settlement was completely abolished by a flood in 1974 and those living here were forced to move into the town. Most of the families received low comfort social housing in a street that was then on (or outside) the boundary of the town. Some of the descendants of this traditional Vlach Gypsy group still live in an ethnically closed community formed by a few (4-5) extended families. The most important source of their subsistence is trading: they buy and sell anything that might provide some profit. Earlier, the community was composed by traditional horse-trading families. The art of trading that requires great geographical mobility, extensive network of information and craftiness have remained to this day, however, the subject of trading has changed: today it consists in the selling and buying of clothes, fruits, woods, metal and eiderdown, or anything that promises profit. Even though these traditional Vlach families live in the outskirts of the town, and are not appreciated by the ethnic majority (or even in certain cases are viewed with hostility), they are not poor at all. Although their houses are originally low comfort homes and look rather shabby and disorderly from outside, as soon as one enters the house, it becomes obvious that the owners live comfortably. The homes are renovated using valuable materials, children are carefully dressed in nice and expensive clothes and, in contrast to stereotypes, there are very few children in a family. We also met young women who were very highly educated, yet decided after all to stay in the traditional community and follow the traditional profession (trade) of the family.

The other traditional Roma community in the town is that of the Musician Gypsies. This is the only group of Roma that cannot be characterised by residential concentration. In the state socialist era making and playing professional music served the basis of their subsistence. According to memories of the locals, ten Roma music bands existed in the town, each formed by kinship ties. They played in bars and restaurants of the town, but also travelled to further settlements of the county or some other country when called for a party, wedding or any other occasion. Musician Gypsies followed the way of living of the majority, and carefully kept distance from other groups of Roma. The transition hit the community hard: most of them lost their subsistence due to the shrinking demand for professional 'Gypsy' music in the region and the country as a whole. Many have left the town and settled in more prosperous regions of the country. Chemtown's Musician community has decreased to a couple of families (approximately 10-15), most of whom stopped playing music at all or do it as a hobby. A few of the families managed to establish small businesses in construction and service industries, and employ other Musicians in their businesses.

Most of the Roma, especially those having moved to Chemtown in the 1950s and 1960s in the hope of getting a job providing a stable living in the expanding heavy industry, lost their traditional communities and strong identity enriched with positive elements of Gypsy belonging. Today, they mostly live in two distinct parts of the town: the inner city slum and the former miner colony.

The inner city slum is constituted by blocks of high-rise buildings, each having 16 to 32 one- or two-room flats with low comfort. This part of the town has experienced extreme decay due to the fact that the local government has consciously concentrated Roma families with unemployed adults and children in need in these social rentals. The population here is ethnically mixed: the majority are Roma, but have no particular ethnic identity. In this sense, this is not a community but resembles more to a classic inner city ghetto, densely populated by socially deprived 'underclass' families with a large proportion of ethnic minorities. Most of the middle-aged adults living here used to work in the mines or in the industrial factories before 1989, but were the first to lose their job in the process of economic rationalisation of the heavy industry (closure of firms, reduction of the number of employees), due to their generally low level of education and probably Roma ethnicity as well. Now it is the second generation that was brought up without ever seeing adults regularly go to work in the morning. As a consequence of the extensive and lasting unemployment, the families living here are severely deprived. Their income is characterised by a 'portfolio' of different social and family allowances (unemployment benefit, social assistance, child-care benefit, mother's leave, social assistance for those in temporary crisis etc.), badly paid day-labour and participation in public work programs, which together do not cover essential needs. Families here are typically large: despite the small sizes of the flats (40-50 square

metres) most of the families raise 3-6 children, and some even take care of an elderly at home. Many families are severely indebted to official and private lenders.

Another part of the town, which became an ethnic ghetto, has evolved on the periphery of the town in the former mining colony. The mining colony is situated far from the centre of the town, close to the mines in a valley of a creek. As the mines were closed down during the 1980s, and miners moved or died, this little colony became inhabited by poor, mostly Roma families, who were unable to pay the utility costs of urban flats, and moved to these small, wet and strongly decayed houses assigned as temporary accommodation for the needy by the Municipality. (See a description of the colony above in this chapter). The subsistence of families living here depends mostly on social transfer incomes. There are very few who have a regular job, but many accept opportunities of temporary day-labour or seasonal work, both in agriculture and construction industry, no matter how badly it is paid. Living on the edge of the settlement, near to the forest, an important element of their income is the illegal cutting of lumber -- mostly for their own use but, to a lesser extent, also to make an income. A few families are involved in various illegal activities, such as prostitution or trading with illegal goods or on illegal conditions. One can say that those living in this part of the town are the most excluded, not only in geographical terms but also regarding social distance.

The significant internal division among various groups of Roma in Chemtown is evident from the way they speak about each other. Musician Gypsies find Vlach Roma to be deviant, not keeping the norms of social cohabitation: "When Vlach Roma got into the town, they were so much underdeveloped that they couldn't behave themselves. They were quarrelsome and truculence. We always kept the distance from them. The elder ones have died, the young are a little bit better", said the musician president of the minority self-government. On the other hand, the Vlach take Musicians as arrogant people who regard themselves as superior to other Roma, and who "pull to Hungarians". Vlach Gypsies, in general, despise Musicians' efforts towards assimilation. The ethnic border between the two Roma communities (Musician and Vlach) is strengthening because the stressing of differences provides the opportunity for reinforcing different identity in defence against the homogenising perception of 'Roma' by the ethnic majority.

1.3.2. The Roma in Coaltown and their history

In contrast to Chemtown, the Roma in Coaltown form a rather homogeneous group both socially and ethnically: their vast majority belong to the traditional Boyash Roma, who have lived in this region since the 19th century. There are only a few Vlach and Musician families in the town and its close surroundings.

As described in the survey report, there are various estimations with regard to the number of Roma living in Coaltown, which differ significantly. According to the Roma Self-Government, the number of Roma is somewhere between 3,500 and 4,000 (14-15% of the local population). Expert estimations calculate with a smaller (6-10%) presence of Roma in the town (Kertesi-Kézdi, 1998, Tomics 2004).

The Boyash Roma is a group that originally migrated to southern Hungary from the South and the South East (Romania) in the 19th century. They speak Boyash, identified by linguists as an archaic version of Romanian. They are traditionally 'forest-inhabitant' people, who have earlier lived in small colonies in very small self-made tent-like houses. They have always been travellers in the sense that they were moving all the time, depending on possibilities of providing subsistence. The most important sources of income had also been related to the forest: traditionally, wood-cutting, manufacturing kitchen utensils from wood, and collecting mushroom and berries in the wood. They sold these goods peddling from door-to-door. The above description already reveals their traditional social and geographical exclusion from society: their homes were far, hidden in the forest, and their ties with the majority was limited to selling and buying goods. The Boyash Roma have always been extremely poor, too – the poorest among the already poor Roma.

An in-depth study on the history of local Roma by Gábor Havas (Havas 1982) describes the traditional way of living of local Roma communities:

"Traditional wood carver settlements can be described by two characteristics: their close relationship with nature and being out of society. They mostly lived in or next to a forest many kilometres away from any towns. The raw material was close, and the distance gave a minimal defence and shelter... These settlements also represent their socially excluded situations, since these areas were assigned to them by the land owners, at a distance that was considered to be optimal so that they were far enough from mainstream society."

In the 1970s Roma settlements in the forests had to be abolished and people were moved to settlements near the mineshafts. According to the historical reports, the migration was far from being spontaneous: "The Party directive told us that Gypsies go in, tent world is over...", as a town leader said who had a position then and now as well. Mineshafts were situated in the forests, 3–10 kilometres from the town, but with full infrastructure. The new residence for the Roma meant continuing separation from the majority society, who lived in the town, as well as a possibility to continue with their original crafts. Moreover, many of the Roma took on permanent jobs in the mines. Although, their standard of living was well below the average, in terms of housing comfort, level of income, and level of integration, the memories of those times are nevertheless dominantly very positive: "It was beautiful. We felt free. We had no tap water, no paved road, that's right, but it was very, very beautiful. The forest gave us plenty of fruits, and it was a real community", said a middle-aged Roma man who was born there.

The internal social differentiation of Roma in Coaltown started in these times: those who had a chance to work in the mine as a skilled worker – or were recompensed (because of ill health or mine accident) – managed to build brick houses, the low skilled had poorer buildings, while the old, single mothers and those being excluded from employment opportunities due to health problems lived in hovels far from even the other Roma in the same colony.

Paradoxically, real troubles started when the Roma were relocated again from the mineshafts to the city centre in the 1990s. The last relocation, characterised by a paternalistic benevolence, was initiated by the town leaders who wanted to end the third world like Roma settlement, crowded with dangerous and unhealthy homes at once. The relocation was against the will of the evacuated people because the only source of income that remained after the closure of mines was the forest. Understandably, most of the Roma did not want to move to the city centre. The relocation was carefully implemented. Most of the people were accommodated in an old part of the centre, but the Local Government kept a list of the services provided by civil aid organisations in order to filter the trouble-makers were then placed elsewhere. As a result, the inner-city ethnic slum came into existence by the town leaders' generative intention. Unfortunately, in spite all the supportive infrastructure and comfort, a classic social and ethnic slum emerged in the very middle of the town, where various social pathological phenomena emerged (i.e. chronic unemployment, despair, shattered families, deviant behaviour, criminality, alcoholism). Most of the families here receive various social transfers related to social need and children. Some are also involved in seasonal work, but this activity seemed to be much less frequent and also less organised here than it was in Chemtown. Most of the families living in this area of the town are regularly employed by public work programs, at least for 3 months/year.

There are some other parts in the town where only a few (2–5) Roma families live. Most of them are also unemployed and their main source of income is social transfers as well. A similar phenomenon to the one in Chemtown is present in Coaltown as well: many of the poor families (Roma and non-Roma alike) move to weekend cottages situated in the hills surrounding Coaltown. These are not ethnic segregates, poor families escaped here from the high fixed-cost flats of the city.

The summary above highlights the fact that Roma people have always been on the periphery of society in Coaltown. The term 'peripheral' is adequate in describing both their social and geographical position. They, however, maintained a functional relationship with the majority, both when living in their traditional communities and afterwards when working in the mines. The mess arose after the transition in the 1990s, when mines closed and after losing their jobs, they were moved from the mineshafts to a concentrated area at the city centre. Paradoxically, the abolishing of Gypsy colonies that produced a

new from of ethnic segregation was a result of an honest anti-segregation initiative by local leaders

Only a few of those living in Coaltown and identifying themselves as Roma have escaped poverty and deprivation. There are very few skilled workers who run their own micro-business and struggle daily for a better living. Interviewees mentioned only two wealthy Roma families: an entrepreneur who is the president of the Roma Self-Government, and an antique dealer who came from another town in the county and has his ties there. The vast majority of the Roma are long term unemployed living primarily on social transfer incomes.

1.4. Ethnic organisations

Concerning civil organisations, the general tendency seems to be that, although their activities are important and beneficial, they reach a very small number of people. There is also a major difference with respect to the strength and significance of the activity of civil organisations dealing with ethnic minorities between the two towns. While in Coaltown several such organisations are active, and the role of the Roma Minority Self-Government⁷ is also significant, in Chemtown there are no civil organisations and the Minority Self-Government's activity is irrelevant with respect to the everyday life of local Roma groups. While there are no civil organisations dealing with Roma people or youth in Chemtown, in the village near to Chemtown where research was conducted⁸, a Roma civil organisation that has the education of multiply disadvantaged youth on the top of its agenda is very active. They run a school where over-aged youth and adults can continue their studies and obtain secondary level qualification. This activity is unique in Hungary and is perceived as an example of good practice of improving the qualification of socially deprived young adults. Besides education, this organisation is working as an incubator space for the self-organisation and empowerment of the local Roma community.

Roma Minority Self-Governments in Hungary are supposed to serve as elected bodies of the local Roma community, primarily responsible for preserving cultural identity. In practice, however, they also represent the interests of the minority towards the local government. In Chemtown this is not the case. The Roma Self-Government is occupied by Musician Gypsies (four out of five seats are taken by members of the same Musician family) representing a small minority of the local Roma population and not identifying with other Roma communities in town. Therefore they neither play a role in preserving cultural identity, nor act in the interest of the majority of local Roma.

The Roma Minority Self-government in Coaltown, although stirring rather mixed emotions among both Roma and non-Roma, is nevertheless actively involved in various spheres of life of the local Roma community (i.e. organising cultural events, taking part in public employment programs, supporting extracurricular activities for Roma children etc.). In Coaltown, an important civil initiative is the "Learnery", an organisation that provides tutoring and after-school activities for local Roma kids (and, in general, drop-outs or other over-aged children who want to obtain a high-school degree). It is perceived as a very useful institution both by Roma and non-Roma. However, among our interviewees, there were only a couple of pupils who had any contact with the "Learnery". Another minority-related institution that was mentioned in almost all interviews in Coaltown is the local Caritas run by Ms. A. The Catholic charity organisation plays a pivotal role in handling severe poverty in the town. As such, many of the Roma families have or had some contact with Caritas. Experiences and opinions concerning this organisation vary, but it is beyond doubt that its activities are, in general, very beneficial for the

7 The 1994 Minorities Act established the system of minority self-governments which has been considered as an important step towards autonomy and political participation of ethnic minorities in Hungary. (Szalai 2000; Kállai 2005). Each local minority community may elect a minority self-government, which represents the community in the given locality. Originally the system was designed with the intention to enhance the protection of culture and perpetuate minority traditions and languages, and it secures minorities only a marginal opportunity to contribute to national or local politics due to the lack of its power and resources.

8 The community research included a village in its sample, where a number of interviews were conducted with students studying in ethnically segregated environment and with their parents..

community. For instance, a lot of children can go camping only because it was organised by Caritas organised, and for many this is the only possibility to go on vacation. Even beyond the official activities of the organisation, various informal contacts exist between Caritas and Roma people.

The Roma elite established two more institutions in the past years in order to compensate for the malfunctions identified in the operation of the Minority Self-Government. The first one is a music band called Fekete Gyémántok (Black Diamonds), a name that refers to both black colour and coal, thus mining. Instead of playing traditional Roma music, which they used to, recently they have been performing Roma wedding music. The head of the band is respected by both Roma and non-Roma. They play at festivals and take the few opportunities to perform whenever the diversity of culture is aimed at being represented through the demonstration of Roma culture, too.

The second institution is a civil initiative that was established later but bears more significance with regard to our research. It is called Belso Tuz Egyesület (Inner Fire Association), and was founded by young Roma intellectuals who provide comprehensive after-school programs and spare-time activities for students. The Association was founded in 2004 with the particular aim to apply for support in setting up and operating a local Learnery. However, as the head of the Association revealed for us in an interview, their mission was also to emancipate:

"It was initiated by 11 young people of Roma ethnicity. The others were finishing school or were studying at a high school, whereas I had already had a diploma at that time. We wanted to link membership in the foundation to qualification. Some of us got angry though our aim was not to exclude anyone but to show to the town that there are enough people to set up an institution and to unite and make it a reality. The most important goals of the association were to improve the school achievement of children living in disadvantaged conditions, with special attention paid to Roma students; to remedy social problems; to provide assistance to young career-starters and to introduce them to the world of work; and our main profile has been the Learnery so far."

The presence of the Church is similar in Chemtown: one of the technical schools of the town is run by the Salesian order, and it absorbs the majority of Roma children. More than 50% of the 500 students are of Roma origins, however, children come not only from the town but also from various settlements of the county, or even from further places. Primarily those children gain acceptance who were unable to enrol elsewhere, the majority of them being over-aged and in need of special assistance. On accomplishing school, they intend to acquire a profession.

There is a village near Chemtown, regarded as the 'black sheep' of the region, where the Djsai Bhim Buddhist Community runs a school. The founding fathers are all well-experienced in the field of minority education and have already called into existence several educational institutions, similar to the village school. This school offers educational opportunity for students who have dropped out from the system. As a church institution, the Community is devoted to animate local civil/public initiatives, for instance, it provides room and financial support for the Woman's Club. While the media, various state institutions and even the President of the Republic pay extra attention to the village's school-initiative, on a local level it looks like their efforts are not appreciated, and the schools in Chemtown are not receptive to their experiences.

2. METHODOLOGIES AND THE "HOMES" OF THE RESEARCH – THE SCHOOLS

2.1. Methodologies

The qualitative part of our research project (WP7, community study) was launched in April 2009, shortly after finishing the survey fieldwork.

Based on the common decision of the Hungarian team, in the spirit of "qualitative

representativity" we have chosen four schools in the two sites, Coaltown and Chemtown. The two, equally important, factors defining our selection of the actual schools were ethnic composition and recruitment and the integration policy of the schools. As our colleagues have already had personal experiences in all the schools selected for the survey, they could lean on their impressions during the time they spent in classes when 8th grade students filled out the questionnaires, on their informal conversations with head masters and teachers, and on their preliminary discussions with the heads of the Educational Departments of the local communities under investigation. As a result of thorough discussions in the team, we decided to choose schools showing efforts to integrate Roma and socially deprived students on the one hand, and schools where ethnic/social selection occurred within schools, on the other hand. Eventually, we chose two schools having the above mentioned characteristics in both sites. In addition, we decided to involve a fifth school in a later phase of the community research. S, a village in the close vicinity of Chemtown, served as a typical example for ghetto-like settlements where, due to "white flight", the local school is mostly attended by Roma students, while children from non-Roma families commute to the more prestigious town schools.

Thanks to the introductory visits of team leaders in every school of the two selected sites, as well as to the good relations established with schools during the survey, schools selected for the intensive phase of the project accepted the presence of researchers and secured us a friendly and cooperative atmosphere during the fieldwork. Principals and teachers helped us to organise focus group discussions, and teachers were willing to participate in the interviews. In some cases referring to students as "Roma" and raising ethnicity related issues seemed to be unpleasant or even unacceptable for school personnel because of the illegality of ethnic registration at school. At the same time, opinions and arguments extensively utilised ethnic categorisations and characterisations in interviews and focus group situations.

Topics and methods of our research were welcome and assessed as one of the most relevant issues in present day Hungarian public education. Participants even asked us to report on our findings after the completion of the project.

In the schools where the qualitative research was run, we used both sociological and ethnographic research methods.

The research team has conducted:

- 20 individual interviews with teachers and members of the school staff (in the five selected schools). Head masters, school principals and teachers of the main subjects were interviewed;
- altogether 13 focus group discussions with students (5), teachers (4) and parents (4) were organised in each selected schools, with a special effort to involve students and parents with different ethnic and social background in focus group discussions;
- 31 individual interviews with students were conducted partly in schools, but mostly in the home of students. This was the place to make interviews with parents as well;
- 10 further individual interviews were made with representatives of organisations, civil organisations, and other important institutions related to the schooling opportunities of minority ethnic youth (clubs, cultural centres, religious communities, etc);
- 6 instances of classroom observation took place in every 8th grade class of the four selected town schools, usually a full day (from 8 to 13 hours);
- in case of special events, participant observation was employed (on 6 occasions) during festivities at schools, common school programs, local festivals, etc.;
- 4 school observations were carried out in the selected five schools, with informal discussions with students and teachers during the break and outside the classroom;

The main goal of individual interviews with students was to explore strategies of identity formation with regard to different stages of development of social and ethnic identities of Roma adolescents. Through the semi-structured form of the interview, our respondents could evoke their own experiences, thoughts and feelings with their own words about schooling, about their interpersonal relations within school and class, and about their future aspirations as members of the Roma community

living in the given settlement.

We conducted interviews with voluntarily agreeing students – boys and girls in the same proportion – who identified themselves as Roma. The length and complexity of interviews varied from case to case, depending on the adolescents' readiness to speak about very personal and uncommon topics, like ethnic belonging, family traditions, the role of ethnicity in everyday life, their in-group and out-group relationships, etc.

Individual interviews with parents focused on the same major topical areas as interviews with students, and special effort was made to enable the comparison of attitudes of the two generations toward the majority population and the Roma community and toward schooling.

In some cases, due to the overcrowded homes and the presence of family members during interviews, instead of individual interviews, family conversations took place. In these situations – the only occasions when the father was also sometimes involved in the discussions – the guideline of interviews has been modified and focused more on common experiences and feelings, instead of exploring separately the viewpoints of parents and children regarding the proposed subjects.

Another type of individual interviews was represented by interviews with different professionals (teachers, representatives of local authorities and services, local civil and church organisations, etc.) who have possible impact on the opportunities of minority youth.

Interviews were conducted with teachers who are in direct contact with Roma students in the selected schools: masters of classes, teachers of key subjects, mentors, etc. We also conducted interviews with every school principal. Through these interviews, we aimed at understanding how teachers perceive socio-economic and ethnic inequalities among students, how they explain differences in school achievement, behaviour in school, and future aspirations of their Roma and majority students. School personnel cooperated readily during the quite long interviews, in almost every case without any hesitation to speak about Roma students as such, despite of the existing legal prohibition of registering students according to their ethnic belonging.

2.2. School system in the two sites: similarities and differences

Before describing the selected schools in detail, the report has to provide a more general overview of recent changes in the local school systems. Due to the turbulent transformations in Hungarian educational policies and the massive decrease of student population, accompanied by shrinking funds available to schools in the past decade in the country, it is important to give an idea of the restructuring of the local school systems. One aim of the state measures was to force municipalities to decrease the costs of education, the other goal was to enhance school integration of the socially disadvantaged and Roma students, or at least fight against intensifying segregation processes. In both of our sites, the local school systems have faced a gradual but significant decrease in the number of school-aged children during the past ten years. Both towns reacted to this phenomenon with reorganising their local school systems, as a consequence of which several schools were actually closed, while others were administratively united. One of the major differences in the two sites is to be found in the stakeholders' honesty towards the principle of social and racial integration in the course of restructuring the local educational market. While in Chemtown integration measures have remained mostly superficial, in Coaltown, despite the strong resistance on the part of majority parents, integration of Roma students have become, to some extent, a reality. So let us show the details of mergers, reorganisations and changes in the whole of the local educational policies, which strongly affects the schools that have been selected as sites of the community study.

The schooling system in Coaltown has undergone several waves of restructuring during the last couple of years, thus several shifts and merges took place in the years 2000 and 2005 that have resulted in the current arrangement of four schools in five buildings.

The first restructuring of the local school system, which took place at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of 2000, due to the number of students shrinking to a critical minimum, included three schools: in the course of the reorganisation two schools were merged, one was closed down, and two

schools exchanged buildings. The next phase of restructuring took place four years later in 2003-2004, when the school that had the most radical decrease in students' number (School D.) was ruled to closure – first it was merged administratively with Alpha School, but four years later, when only students in the upper grades (the fifth, the sixth, the seventh and the eighth) remained, the school was closed and students were transferred to Alpha School. During the 4 years between 2004 and 2008, the majority of students left the school, and only the most deprived, problematic, mostly Roma children, who were not accepted by other schools, remained in School D. Most of these students, then, were transferred to Alpha School, where they were not distributed among the prevailing classes, but formed a separate class (class D). This decision, though seemingly caused the least conflicts (with parents, with students) on the short run, resulted in an ethnically and socially segregated class, collecting the pedagogically most problematic children. Some of the Roma children from school D, in fact, the most problematic, over-aged students, were, however, unofficially refused by Alpha School. These students were directed to a special school in a nearby town that collects drop-outs from the entire county.⁹

Another aspect of reorganisations in Coaltown was to introduce changes in the system of school catchment areas. The restructuring of school districts focused primarily on the most "neuralgic" street in town, street K., which is actually an urban ghetto mostly (but not exclusively) inhabited by Roma¹⁰, and which used to belong to the catchment area of Beta School exclusively (see chapter 1 of this report). It was understood by the municipality that the problems of spatial segregation in the town have direct impact on the social (and ethnic) composition of schools, and this realisation led to the redefinition of the boundaries of school catchment areas. The aim of the measure was to disperse children from the urban ghetto into three schools.¹¹ The measure caused a lot of anxieties, as high prestige schools with practically no Roma or socially deprived students had to take children from the urban ghetto. The municipality tried to avoid conflicts, thus the parents' committees had to evaluate, and agree to, the decision beforehand. Some of the parents of the students in the ghetto, however, resisted, sending their children to schools located farther away from their homes.

The reorganisation of the school system followed mainly financial rationales in Chemtown, and it had the integrated education of socially disadvantaged and Roma students low on its agenda. In the course of rationalisation processes the seven schools were administratively merged into two central primary schools in 2008. The original settings: the buildings, teachers and students, however, remained mostly untouched; therefore little impact of the reorganisation has been felt by the affected actors. Earlier, in 2002, however, a school, educating exclusively socially disadvantaged students living in the inner city ghetto, was closed and its students were transferred to separate classes of a nearby public school (Gamma School) serving middle-class children up until 2002, when its merger with the de facto 'Roma school' took place.

When the Public Educational Act entering into force, the redefinition of school catchment areas ensured a similar rate of disadvantaged students in the various schools. In addition, since the vast majority of multiply disadvantaged students are Roma, the implementation of the law would ideally result in schools with ethnically mixed student populations. However, the right of parents to choose freely the school for their children countervails the affect of these regulations, while due to the persistent

9 This school is run by a civil organisation, supported partially from state funds. Its student body comprises children commuting from various settlements. The school absorbing the most problematic children in the entire region definitely embodies a segregated institution of drop-out Roma children, all of whom are overage, and have learning and behavioural problems. They have special 'catch-up' classes for students who did not manage to complete primary education, and special vocational training courses for those who have managed to complete primary education but are still of compulsory education age. The determining majority of students are Roma..

10 It was revealed in the Educational Equal Opportunity Strategy (2008) of the town that the "the geographical segregation characteristic of the town is not mitigated by the current school district arrangement".

11 Part of the truth is that behind the desegregation measure there was an important financial rationale as well: schools are entitled to an increased normative state support if socially deprived students are integrated in the school (the proportion of such students does not exceed a certain rate), and the municipality tried to maximise these available state supports.

decline in school-aged children, schools have a surplus in free places and are allowed to accept children outside of their school districts, so free places become filled mainly by children of middle-class families residing in villages and fleeing from failing village schools. Thus, contrary to the existing regulations, the interplay of these mechanisms points toward the direction of segregation. Even if local policies aim to maintain the principle of integration, there are additional forces at play that accentuate the value and reinforce the principle of segregation.

The other school included in the community study in Chemtown (Delta School) seems to be successful in terms of organising classes according to the principle of integration, which can be explained by the low number of socially disadvantaged and Roma children in its student body.

Methodological elements for promoting equity and equality within the local school system in Chemtown can barely be found in the pedagogical strategies of schools situated in the urban area. Furthermore, pedagogical strategies unanimously fail to include intercultural elements and the value of cultural dialogue. The discourse of assimilation, instead of integration, in schools, or in other words "the requirement to meet the standards and the norms of the majority", erases the value of inter-culturality from everyday school reality.

2.3. The schools

This section will introduce the selected schools that provide the "framework" to what we will learn in detail in the subsequent chapters. Firstly, this brief description will locate the schools within the community – both in geographic and social/"ethnic" terms. We will learn here about the schools' neighbourhood, their embedding into one or another socioeconomic and/or "ethnic" segment of the community. Secondly, based mainly on the earlier School Case Studies, some characteristics of each of the schools will be introduced: their size (one by one, if they counted for big, average, or small schools); again, one by one, the origins of students (if the given school has a specified catchments area; the proportion of those coming from outside; the base and the routine of selection; if it is a matter of pride, or, on the contrary, a "punishment" to be sent there, etc.); furthermore, in broad terms, we will learn about the socio-economic and "ethnic" composition of the student body of the selected school, as well as that of the teaching staff. Finally, again in general terms, considering the internal structure of each school and the classes in them, we will see if the institutions in question are cohesive-integrative organisations, or, just to the contrary, highly segregated internally. When the latter is the case, the question arises if internal segmentation/segregation follows a meritocratic principle (i.e., students are selected according to their performance), or it takes place along socio-economic aspects (i.e. there is a spontaneous selection according to family background), and/or along the "ethnic" dimension (i.e. "minority ethnic" students tend to study in classes organised "just for them"), or, in fact, an interplay or mix of these various factors and rationales governs the selection process. A further question is whether selection (any type of it) is voluntary or involuntary, and who makes the decisions about it.

Coaltown

Two schools in Coaltown have been selected as sites for the community study. Both schools are situated in a mixed neighbourhood, thus serving an ethnically mixed student population. Beta School is medium size, has two parallel classes, while Alpha School is the largest in town, and has 4 parallel classes in each grade.

Beta School is a middle-size, 8 grade primary school, with two parallel classes in each grade. The total number of students in the school was 301 in 2009, one fifth of whom came from outside its catchment area. The high proportion of students outside the catchment area is due to a special program adopted by Beta School: one class in each grade has a German ethnic minority educational program

aiming at ethnic German children¹², but naturally attracting non-ethnic families as well that want their children acquire high language competences.

Being situated at the edge of the inner city ethnic and social ghetto (K. street and its vicinity) Beta School has always been the institution in town where most of the socially marginalised and deprived children were sent. According to information provided by the school staff, the proportion of socially disadvantaged children is 85% there. The school, until recently, served not only the mostly Roma kids living in its proximate environment, but also those who lived further, in a marginalised ethnic slum, as well as children staying in child care institutions.¹³ At the same time, the school has always carefully paid attention to attracting also middle-class students with high aspirations. For this purpose, one among the two parallel classes is a multilingual German class, with high standards, being one of the most prestigious place of elementary education in town. A special feature of the school is that the distribution of students, very divergent in their qualities, among the parallel classes does not follow ethnic or social lines but takes academic merit into account. Several talented Roma kids, even those coming from the inner city slum, attend the German class, while several middle-class children are enrolled into the regular class. A special competence of the school is to handle simultaneously children of lower and higher status, socially marginalised and middle-class families with high expectations towards the school and education.

The pedagogical program of the school is based on its social mission and shows the commitment of the present director and staff towards socialising and integrating socially deprived and middle-class children. An important incentive to reinforce the integration was the support of Soros Foundation in the 1990s.

The most important elements of the school's pedagogical program are the following:

- Emphasis on cooperation with parents. Teachers are required to cooperate with parents even if it is difficult to handle parents of socially deprived children.

- Conflicts are always talked over and all stakeholders are involved in the mediation process.

- Emphasis is put on professional work and especially on methodological innovations. Teachers apply the "project method" in teaching, and also organise workshops where questions and problems of integration are discussed. Teachers are acquainted with and use different innovative pedagogical methods (project method, cooperative learning, drama method) to cope with the same problems.

- The school openly deals with Roma culture. Culture became important not for its own sake but as a potential source of answers to problems that teachers had to face during their work (e.g. difficulties in learning Hungarian grammar). Due to many Roma children feeling ashamed of their origin, the school puts special emphasis on showing positive values of Roma culture. To this end, one of the teachers got support in order to accomplish a university course on Romany studies. Earlier, there was a Gypsy club where once a week in a two-hour session children learnt dances, songs and tales. This activity was stopped two years ago because of the lack of financial support.

- Differential teaching for students with different capacities and problems has been introduced. The school understands that the general curriculum is not appropriate for teaching all kids, and special approaches are needed for kids with various problems.

As a result of the dedicated and conscious pedagogical program, teachers maintain good relations with the parents and through them with the whole community, and thus the ethnicity of students is not an issue of conflict or disgrace.

The most important consequence is that the director and the teachers of the school firmly believe that pedagogical innovations and the treatment of socially deprived children or children coming from a different cultural environment can and should be applied simultaneously. The greatest challenge

¹² Schools running ethnic minority educational programs do not have to comply with regulations on school catchment areas, and they are free to accept students from outside their catchment areas without any administrative limitations.

¹³ Coaltown has several (4) child-care homes, each serving for 10-12 children. Most of those of compulsory school age attend Beta School.

they face is to do this while having to keep up with the other schools in a generally competitive environment. For this reason, they need to be flexible and open-minded: they have to find methods that make it possible to deal with socially deprived children and, at the same time, provide quality education in order to stay competitive. One problem, however, that the school is unable to handle is absenteeism. Children in class A often do not come to school at all, or they simply "disappear" when they get tired or had enough of school for the day.

An important feature of the school, however, is its internal segmentation. As mentioned earlier, there is significant difference between the two parallel classes in terms of pupils' academic achievement as well as their social and ethnic background. Even if the school makes sure that children are distributed into the German and the regular class in line with the parents' will and the students' talents, as well as their willingness to study more than the regular curriculum would require, class A (the regular one) is composed of mainly socially deprived pupils, many of whom are Roma, while Class B (the one specialised in German) is attended by less deprived pupils, and there are also significantly less Roma children in this class.

Let us explain this process a bit more thoroughly:

Although selection is not based on any forced treatment but primarily on parents' decisions and children's expected capacities to follow the heavier curriculum, there is considerable sociological selectivity at work in the procedure. Those coming from higher status families have more self-confidence to put their children in a specialised class. Moreover, it is a "common knowledge" that class B is better, so without having to say anything or force parents to do something against their will, they chose the class where their children socially belong. The same is true for parents of low-status families: either they are not conscious enough, or they have low self-esteem and find it more secure for their kids to attend a class with lower expectations. However, it needs to be pointed out that the school management is very conscious about this arrangement and practice and does its best to compensate for this inequality, convincing parents of talented children living in poverty to apply to the German track. In addition, they are about to change the system by mixing the two classes in the coming year in the first grade.

Several classroom observations were carried out in the school in both eight grade classes. One important conclusion of the observations was that there is no ethnic, and even very little gender, grouping among students, either in classroom arrangement (although it seemed to be their choice where to sit), or outside the classroom in any of the observed 8th grade classes. According to our observations an important element of teaching is that basically in all classes, irrespective of the discipline, the material to be covered and the level of pupils, a mix of different methods were used during one class. The use of mixed methods resulted in making the classes interesting and probably more effective. Pupils were highly motivated, paid attention throughout the whole session, and there was a good atmosphere in every class. Moreover, students were very active, accomplished their tasks, participated in discussions and answered questions. The atmosphere in most of the classes was work-oriented but very friendly and supportive at the same time. Relationships between both students and teachers and among students seemed to be comfortable. Teachers usually gave a lot of positive feedbacks to all of the pupils, not only the well performing ones.

Frontal teaching method, otherwise widely applied in Hungarian schools, was not dominating the organisation of classes. Teachers often divided pupils into groups and encouraged them to work in teams. One type of team work was based on differential teaching relying on the pupils' individual capacities. When they had to choose groups or partners, no animosities were observed. It was also clear that there was no differentiation by teachers among pupils by ethnicity, gender or social status. Team work was used in chemistry, German, Hungarian grammar and maths classes.

Another important conclusion of the observations was that, due to the huge gap in the academic performance and maturity of students in the parallel classes, teachers and methods, essentially the same in both classes, were somewhat different. The most important differences came from the fact that class A pupils suffer from various learning difficulties, have problems with concentration and "cannot behave themselves". In class B there is no need really to reproach the pupils, whereas in class A they make a lot

of noise, constantly chat during classes, provoke the teacher and, as a result, more time has to be spent with disciplining them. In general, teachers had to invest more energy to have the classes running more or less smoothly. An important personal trait that was seen useful in overcoming these difficulties was a sense of humour and an intimate knowledge of children.

According to the director, positive attitudes towards socially deprived and Roma children can only be learnt in concrete situations. The methods used to deal with them should be established by the teachers themselves through their everyday contact with the children. Teachers rarely talked directly about "Gypsies" without a specific reason. Gypsiness is present in the discourse of the school mainly as a cultural category.

Alpha School was founded in 1967. It is an eight-grade regular primary school. This school has been specialised in sports since 1969, and its students have achieved important results in sports competitions in the last 25 years. Since the 2002-2003 school year it has also specialised in providing education to children with special needs (mainly with dyslexia).

The school is the largest in town, has four parallel classes in each grade (while other schools have usually one or two parallel classes). Consequently, its student population is significantly larger than that of any of the schools in town: it had 541 students in 2009. The school serves a district that is socially mixed but mostly characterised by working class (formerly miner) families, with a considerable presence of Roma. The mixed social composition of its students is reflected by the relatively high proportion (40%) of socially disadvantaged students. One fifth of students arrive from outside its catchment area due to the school's specialisation in sports.

The school has a very complicated story, characterised by various waves of mergers, moves and reorganisations. By now the management as well as the staff of the school has gone mad about any ideas regarding 'reorganisation'. The school was first merged and relocated in 2000, and three years later it was merged with a small school serving primarily socially deprived Roma children. In 2009, however a new wave of reorganisation took place, the greatest in the history of the school, when it was united into a mega-institution including all of the secondary schools in the town, a small primary school of a neighbouring village and several kinder-gardens (pre-schools). The rationale behind the merger on the side of Alpha School was the fact that the school-building became small and dilapidated. Renovations and enlargement required huge funds, available through EU support. A prerequisite of applying to EU funds was the provision of comprehensive education, understood as the extension (both in terms of students' age and type of education) of the institution.

A further shock for the school was when they had to give up their program for children with special needs. The school introduced the program of education for children with special needs in the early 2000s. Although the program was motivated by budgetary motives, it nevertheless led to a methodological renewal considered by the director as an important outcome. One of the important results was that parents were satisfied with the education provided for their children. A couple of years later, due to governmental policies of integration, children with special needs had to be integrated into regular classes. The small class C-s had to be closed and children dispersed among the other classes. Parents were very indignant, teachers were lost, and there was no concept of how to carry out the integration, which finally resulted in putting children with special need into regular classes without any special support. The opinion of the school director and involved teachers was that it was more efficient and more comfortable for children with special needs to be in small, separated classes, where they also benefited most from schooling.

The general atmosphere of the staff compared to the other school was distrustful, and teachers were very inexperienced in talking about professional questions and social issues. Among other things, their discourses were dominated by cultural and ethnic stereotypes and their own personal experiences do not undermine their way of thinking. The disintegration of the staff may partially be attributed to the unending reorganisations and changes around the school, as well as to the perception of failure in investing into professional progress (due to the negative experiences of the special education program).

The 'policy' towards ethnic heterogeneity of the student population adopted by the school is clearly 'colour-blind'. The head of the school stressed that Gypsiness was neither a problem nor an issue in this school. The colour-blind policy of the school is reinforced by the lack of data provided on this issue, but in personal interviews teachers estimated the proportion of Roma students to be around 10%.¹⁴ The colour-blind policy of the school, however, is not realised in practice, at least as far as the organisation of parallel classes are concerned. In two of the four parallel classes surveyed in the 8th grade, only one child admitted having Roma origins, in one class 14% of students, while in the fourth class (class D) one-third of students indicated Roma background. Class D is the class that had been moved from another school building – also another institution – to Alpha School in September 2008. There seemed to be a lot of tensions and conflicts around this class. Further, we collected some information about drop-outs, and we found that this school had got rid of approximately half of the students before the merger took place in 2004, and is still doing the same with the most problematic, over-aged Roma children still in their compulsory school age by consistently directing them to a special school in the neighbouring city (30 kilometres away). Every year several children from Alpha School in Coaltown show up in this segregated private institution.

Despite the efforts of removing the most problematic kids (half of students in the original class), class D is still an extremely problematic class. It quickly became evident that the situation had got out of the hands of teachers for many reasons, so that by now they were unable to do anything about it. They had no means and methods to deal with these revolting teenagers. In most classes, teachers spent their time trying to discipline the class, in which effort they generally failed. Except for the arts class, the general situation of tuition in the class could be described as "catastrophic" in terms of the effectiveness of teaching, the atmosphere, the relationship of teachers and students, etc. Another important element in the school is the huge gap between class D and the other classes in terms of performance, discipline and the general atmosphere, which also results in considerable hostility between students of class D and other classes and between the teachers and students of class D. One important factor behind these phenomena was, apparently, the merger: being placed in a new school, they were all newcomers, outsiders in a well established big school. Teachers did not give them much help in dealing with this situation.

Classroom observations focused on this class not only because of its special situation but also its multiethnic nature. The sitting arrangement in the class reflected the students' level of activity: the active "good" students sat in the front and the passive "bad" ones in the rear. Those in the back were not only passive but also showing signs of revolt by chatting loudly, doing their own business and refusing to do anything the teacher told them to do. There was an obvious counter-world created by these children that they also demonstrated by using slang and bad language. Another characteristic of the sitting arrangement was that there were small groups of two or three boys and girls separated from one another. There was no ethnic cleavage observable as groups were ethnically mixed.

As to pedagogical methods applied during work in the classroom, it became immediately evident, even for an outsider, that teachers were not equipped with methodological tools that would enable them to handle these problems. Without exception, teachers used exclusively frontal teaching methods that presuppose that teachers have authority and are respected by their pupils. From the teachers' point of view, the lack of respect seemed to be the major hindrance of having a normal relationship. This inspired them to use a moralising language all the time, for example: *"Don't you think you're insolent? I used to like to come here but you are not respecting me anymore!"* In personal interviews all teachers complained that it was impossible to work with those kids. In sum, these classes gave the impression that a war was going on between teachers and pupils, and in all cases kids won.

As against all these gloomy descriptions, a very positive counter example should be mentioned, too, with respect to how this "bad class" can be treated successfully. This concerns their arts and drawing teacher, a young man, who managed to find the right way to engage and "discipline" these

14 Students' questionnaires indicated a similar proportion of Roma students.

"insolent" young people. Observing the arts class one had the impression that it was a different group of youngsters. There was a friendly and peaceful atmosphere, kids were attentive and actively participated in the class. They were creative, enjoyed being there and "respected" the teacher, who said that:

"It is important to accept them the way they are and make compromises with them. If we do not try to discipline them too much, it pays off."

In sum, this school provides a 'perfect' example of the consequences, at the level of individuals, of a professionally unconsidered reorganisation of the local educational system, and the outcomes of incompetent pedagogical methods applied in the case of a student body with behavioural problems and learning difficulties: all participants – students, teachers and parents – were injured in the process.

Chemtown

The sample of the community study included two schools in Chemtown. Gamma School is the lowest prestige school in town, with a considerable student population including many Roma living in the nearby inner city slum. Delta School is a middle-size school that serves middle-class families with only minor Roma student population. Since this school is supposed to carefully mix children from different social backgrounds, the success of the policy of integration can be studied here.

Furthermore students and parents of a school (Omega School) in a nearby village (Sk) were also interviewed. This decision of the researchers was based on the special nature of the school (and the village itself): despite of the considerable non-Roma population in the village, this school has become an almost exclusively Roma school by now due to the extremely low level of education and, consequently, white flight of non-Roma (and even better-off Roma) to the nearby town goes on. The study of students in this school was decided with the idea in mind that the consequences of school segregation, white flight and complete exclusion of Roma might be found here.

Gamma School is located in the outskirts of the town. It is one of the units of an association of four schools which are drawn together under joint administration and financial management while still maintaining some independence. Gamma School is a middle-size school that had 212 students in 2009. The majority of the students live in storey blocks of the inner-town ethno-social ghetto built between 1950 and 1960. As for the quality of housing in the catchment area of the school: the buildings are devastated, the flats are without full facilities, the staircases are ruined and everything is covered with rubbish. Since the school is on the border of the inner-city slum and a middle-class residential area, it has high status family houses in its catchment area as well. However, children of middle-class families prefer to attend other, higher prestige institutions in town, outside the catchment area. This is also reflected by the high proportion of socially disadvantaged children, who constitute two thirds of the entire student population according to the statistics run by the school. The school estimated that 40% of students are of Roma background, which is identical to the ratio counted on the basis of self-declared ethnic identity of students participating in the survey. In many respects, this school is analogous with Alpha School in Coaltown, both in terms of its history and its composition of students, managing of reorganisations and ideas about integrating socially disadvantaged Roma students, but consequences of internal ethnic segregation are even more devastating here.

We may say that Gamma School fails to adopt the policy of integration: ethnic segregation within the school is clear in its 8th grade where most of the socially disadvantaged Roma children are placed in class B, and majority children in class A. Ethnic segregation, however, is just slightly linked with social segregation, as the social status of children in class A is just a little bit higher than that of their mates' in class B. One reason for ethnic segregation is the merger with a 'Roma-only school' that took place in 1999. It triggered, on the one hand, an intense white flight, and, on the other, it prompted keeping the Roma in separate classes. As a result of the tensions stemming from the above segregation policy, the school with an already decreasing prestige lost all its appeal. 2009/2010 is the last school year for segregated classes running parallel.

The head of educational department of the municipality admitted in an interview that the

decision taken in 1999 about segregating Roma children from the urban slum proved to be a mistaken decision, with a long term devastating effect for the students, the teacher and the whole of the school community. The case of Gamma School demonstrates the process of how the struggle for integration remains theoretical and works towards selection, concluding in strong segregation. Let us have a closer look at the process and the consequences of the merger of the 'Roma' school with Gamma School, provide both the teachers' and the students' perspectives on the issue.

Interviews with teachers revealed that the staff of Gamma School was "shocked" by the announcement that the town's "Roma school" had to be "fully integrated" into their institution. The school personnel perceived the decision as one that had been forced upon them by the Ministry and to be endured by them together with all its consequences. None of the interviewees considered that teachers and school management can be active agents in the process of integration and, consequently, the measure did not result in a new approach to teaching at all. The school was afraid of implementing de facto integration of socially disadvantaged Roma children, most of whom came from the urban slum: they envisioned an intense "white flight" on the short run, and the closure of the school on the long run. Hence, decisions and implemented pedagogical strategies were driven along the line of the abovementioned considerations. The most important aim after the merger was to artificially maintain the "pre-integration state" and act as if nothing had happened. That is to say, Roma children were kept separated from the ethnic majority, and the parents of the latter were convinced that "everything was the same as usual". As a result, there is a huge gap in terms of academic performance, motivation and involvement in studying and education in general between students of the two parallel classes. Absenteeism, failing grades and serious behavioural problems are common in Class B, where the situation of instruction in general, and consequently future chances of further education, are disastrous. Besides, the policy of internal segregation also resulted in serious inter-group and interethnic tensions and hostility within the school community. A further problem is that teachers who teach 'Roma' classes perceive their position to be at the lowest level of the school hierarchy.

Students involved in the reorganisation perceive the transformation equally injuring. The former 'Roma' school is remembered as having had a homey atmosphere, where both parents and students were willing to come by, classes were small, and exclusion and hostility within the school were unknown. These memories stand in opposition to the present reality in which Roma students feel tendencies of exclusion and hostility on the part of majority teachers and students. The feeling of exclusion is intensified by the fact that 'newcomer' Roma students were placed into the furthest corner of the school and were taught by their own teachers, in order to reduce the chance for interaction between old and new students and thus calm anxiety on the side of majority parents (thus reducing the expected white flight). The focus group discussion revealed that internal segregation worked just like a self-fulfilling prophecy: it generated ethnic conflicts that later justified the necessity for separation and legitimised the control that has basically triggered the whole vicious circle.

As a result of these deliberate processes, ethnicity has become the most salient identifier in school relations. Parallel classes have failed in developing any positive attitudes towards each other, because they did not have a chance to do so. As a result of strong institutionalised segregation, the prevailing scheme of interpretation was ethnicity that can be applied by anyone, including students, teachers and parents. This involved that students of the "Roma class" explained their pain by reference to their "Romaness": when they were not satisfied with their grades, or were told off by the teacher. At the same time, focus group discussion in class A revealed that racism was significant in this class, some of the most influential students in the community were openly racist and they expressed their anti-Roma attitudes by wearing T-shirts and other symbols of the extreme right. The enemy for them was represented, in general, by class B.

The lack of classroom observations (we were not allowed to participate in any of the classes, except from the one held by the headmaster) in class B prevented the researches from examining, and giving a detailed account of, student-teacher relations. However, the decision of the school not to let researchers observe any classes is telling in itself. Focus group discussions with students in

class B that were extremely difficult to organise revealed that the only person seeking to establish a rather intimate relationship with students was their headmaster. Nevertheless, this intimacy bears an essential significance for both students and parents. Gamma School is the disappointing showcase for demonstrating how a bad decision on behalf of the local school's management can lead to segregation, reinforcing the decrease of students, creating an unpleasant working environment and conducing to the decline of the quality of teaching as well as hostility within the school community.

Delta School is located in the public housing area of Chemtown, surrounded with blocks of flats and stone-made buildings from the 1950s. The school is one of the affiliated units of an administrative complex. It is a relatively large regular eight-grade primary school serving 549 students and running three parallel classes in most of its grades. The proportion of disadvantaged students is 35%, and 5% of the students are multiply disadvantaged, which means their families are severely deprived socially. The school refused to provide an estimated proportion of Roma students, thus we may have an estimation solely based on our survey among 8th grade students, where their proportion was 10%. One fifth of the students come from outside the catchment area of the school, which is at the outskirts of the town. This school has much higher prestige than Gamma School, and its student community is also more heterogeneous, both in terms of socio-economic background and the parents' educational level, while more homogeneous in terms of the ethnic belonging of students. The building is facing an entire infrastructural renovation that is expected to transform it into an institution able to meet modern standards. At the moment, the school cannot afford any extracurricular activity for children since there is no resource for providing any quality services.

This school seems to be more competent in terms of treating ethnic and socio-economic differences among students. Its situation is also easier with regard to integration, as socially disadvantaged and Roma students form a much smaller proportion in the school population, and consequently their integration into middle-class non-Roma classes is more realistic. The school's "official policy" is colour-blind, that is, it aims to provide equal opportunity for every child, disregarding their social or ethnic background, and aims to apply a framework within which these differences become meaningless. It is apparent that students from varied social backgrounds are distributed evenly in the three parallel classes in the 8th grade. At the same time, any policies of ethnic mixing are lacking: almost all Roma students (4 out of 5 in the 8th grade) attend the same class. The actual fieldwork of the community study (interviews, focus group discussions and participant observations) focused on the class where the 4 Roma students (from among 30 students) are placed.

One can recognise that the principle of integration – especially social integration – has not remained just an idea but has actually been implemented by the school management. Nevertheless, interviews and focus group discussions with teachers revealed that they attribute school performance mostly to genetic and social conditions, and value the role of the school very low in the overall outcome. Teachers fail to realise their own responsibility in leaving their imprint on students' experiences with schooling. Instead, they charge the parental background, not in cultural but in a rather social sense, for affecting Roma students' school achievements.

Although the school welcomes the idea of integration, and also supports Roma students in their will to become equal members of the school community, according to our observations, the teachers resist handling ethnic differences.

On the basis of our observations, we claim that the teachers make various attempts to integrate Roma students in everyday school activities and to eliminate any hardships from the way of learning: i.e. they offer them seats in the front row and pay special attention to their work. For example, there is a teacher among the newcomers who holds extra class sessions for Roma students regularly. True, these programmes, on the one hand, are the results of private initiatives, which are neither opposed, nor taken as a norm, by the school. On the other hand, this wide range of extracurricular activities focuses on the development of skills essential in order to accomplish studies successfully, but fails to cope with experiences of 'minoritisation', exclusion or 'otherness'.

Despite the above, focus-group discussions revealed that the implementation of integrated education has managed to develop a language for exchanging ideas, solving tensions and coping with

difficulties both among teachers and within the student community. During the focus-group discussions – in contrast to Gamma School – students demonstrated their disapproval of discrimination, of all sorts of racial differentiation, and aimed to understand the complexity of the situation of the Roma in Hungary.

Omega School

In addition to the four schools, the Hungarian research has included several student and parental interviews from a village situated near to Chemtown¹⁵. This settlement is of interest for our research for hosting one of the poorest and most deprived Roma colony in the country. The village is divided into two parts that are separated also geographically: one is the Roma settlement (colony), and the other is the 'village'. The former reminds one of Latin American favelas, crowded with shabby, extremely crowded huts, lacking sewage, electricity, running water and surfaced roads. The school of the village has, by now, turned into a 'Roma' school, where instruction is substandard and from where not only Hungarian parents but also the better-off Roma parents take their children out. We decided to conduct several interviews here for two reasons: on the one hand, because consequences of ethnic segregation on the school level may be studied here, and on the other hand, because there has been a remarkable civil Roma movement aiming at educating the most desperate Roma children and youth since 2008. The organisation embodying this movement is run, in fact, by the Buddhist church, and maintains a school that serves as a 'last resort' offering flexible regulations on compulsory education in order to let the adults fulfil their schooling obligation. Besides the school, a number of community development programmes have been launched recently.

Given the fact that local students of the ethnic majority have left and commute to the town, the school has become a "Roma-only school" where Roma students make up 80% of the student body. Despite its ethnically segregated nature, there is a remarkable social segregation realised within the school. Students in the two 8th grade classes running parallel show significant differences in terms of social composition. "Good" Roma students attend to class A, whereas class B hosts the "underachiever" Roma students. It is useless to say that this distinction correlates strongly with the students' social background (that of the latter group being multiply disadvantaged) and their residence (being the Gypsy colony in the latter case). It is a widely known fact that class B requires less from its students than class A that has adopted the normal curriculum, which ultimately concludes in disastrously influencing achievements and locking later opportunities of Class B students.

The teachers attended trainings and believe that the village school possesses all the necessary assets in order to be a shelter for children: it is homey, open, and there is a personal relationship with each parent. However, the teachers blame parents and their social as well as ethnic background for the children's bad achievements at school.

¹⁵ Because of the timing of the research – the school year had finished by the time we made this decision – we could not perform classroom observation, or organise focus group discussions with teachers, parents and students.

3. EVERYDAY LIFE IN AND OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

Following the presentation of the four schools and their respective structural constraints, in this chapter we intend to give a more detailed ethnographic account of everyday practices and preoccupations of different actors within these institutions. Drawing upon ethnographic data and personal interviews with those in the 8th grade, with their parents as well as their teachers, we investigate everyday manifestations of differentiation and separation, solidarity and community building. Everyday perceptions and practices of othering and ethnicity will be presented in relation to the social spaces in which they take place: firstly the school and classroom related ones, secondly those related to the family, and thirdly the neighbourhood and peer group related ones.

3.1. Everyday life and social relations in the school

The everyday life of a student is largely shaped by the institutional setting and (unequal) student-teacher and teacher-teacher relations, which translate into the daily working of the school, and it is also defined by the child's social background and socio-geographical environment. The first part of the study discusses the development and working of inter-ethnic relations, with particular emphasis on how students of the ethnic minority relate to each other and frame their daily routines. The second part provides a deeper insight into the child's social background and socio-geographical environment and looks at how these factors lay the foundation of, and contribute to, departing social and ethnic profiles.

Considering the commonalities of the four schools where our qualitative research took place, there were no strained situations: neither sharp, daily conflicts, nor any initiatives to establish an entirely multicultural or ethnic minority-focused curriculum. Furthermore, the policy of one of the schools in each selected site limits the number of Roma students, separates the most complicated ones and fails to recognise the differences of the rest. Meanwhile, the majority of teachers are saturated with fear and grievance stemming from the reorganisation of the schools. Students, who are more to be considered as victims of the recently ongoing processes of school-rationalisation, set themselves in opposition to the educational system and take revenge either on the teachers or on the schoolmates who were not forced to move classes. However, the ethnicised aspect of the conflicts remains concealed. Hence, the next chapter ("Othering") explores how young people of ethnic minority approach their identities and perceive themselves in relation to others.

Taking into account the other two schools from the two selected sites, both are located in the poorest area of the settlements and both have a considerable proportion of students of poor social background or of ethnic minority. This state of affairs is approached in different ways by the institutions as well as by the local communities, resulting in different inter-personal and inter-ethnic relations.

The "ghetto-school" in Coaltown (Beta School) provides a secure and friendly atmosphere for both students and teachers with its managerial and pedagogic policies and, in compliance with the school's mission, it puts special emphasis on studying. In the meantime, teaching, especially that of Roma or poor students, in the "ghetto-school" of Chemtown fails to be efficient despite the efforts of some of the teachers. Inter-personal relations are conflict-burdened and indulged with fear. The majority of Roma students coming from the same neighbourhood, and in many cases from the same families, bring their communal life into school, which tendency is primarily induced by the school's policy to isolate the newcomers and put them into separate classes. Developing on the discussion in section 2.3 describing each educational institution under investigation, sometimes repeating important observations related to arrangements, activities, processes and mechanisms in the classroom, this chapter aims to discuss how these tendencies manifest in the daily working as well as in the inter-personal relations of schools.

On the basis of our observations, the general atmosphere of Beta School in Coaltown is full of motivation, friendliness and respect. Furthermore, students were active in the class, participated in the discussions and answered the questions. In the biology and chemistry classes of class A – which

we attended – teachers asked questions and encouraged everybody to answer. As a matter of fact, all students got involved in class work, not only the so-called "good ones". This was made possible by the generally democratic and supportive attitude of the teachers who constantly gave positive feedback to the pupils. Teachers kept repeating: "you were all very good!"

Teachers did not, or only rarely, used frontal teaching, rather they rendered the students into groups and made them work in teams. A type of team work was methodologically designed based on the concept of differential teaching, relying on the pupils' individual capacities. Teams were formed in accordance with the pupils' learning abilities, and the teacher gave them tasks appropriate to their level. The advantage of this method was that all pupils could enjoy having done successfully their task. This type of team work was used in chemistry, German, Hungarian grammar and maths classes. For example, in a Hungarian grammar class the most advanced group had to make a rather complicated typology of different parts of a text, whereas the least advanced group had to form words from letters. In the end of the class they all had the feeling that they had accomplished something important.

Another variety of teamwork was also used. Groups were formed randomly, so that both "good" and "bad" students had the chance to work together. Apparently, they liked cooperation. When they had to choose groups or partners, no animosities were observed. It was also clear that there was no differentiation made by teachers on the basis of ethnicity, gender or social status. Similarly, no ethnic grouping was observable in the classroom. That is to say, pupils were sitting together in ethnically mixed arrangements. The process of selection, while making teams, choosing partners or neighbours, was based on gender. The fact that boys and girls create worlds divided along the criterion of gender, which gap could be barely bridged over through interactions, might be a generational characteristic. Nevertheless, in order to meet the requirements of the teacher, they cooperated with no major conflicts.

The daily atmosphere was very different in Alpha School of Coaltown. Here the methods applied, the concrete classroom activities, as well as the efficiency of teaching were very different in class A, B, C, on the one hand, and D, on the other. The latter one is the class which had been moved from another school building, and ever since there had been tensions and conflicts around this class. (Our fieldwork took place there, and we observed that in most classes the teachers spent most of their time trying to discipline the class, which attempt was generally doomed to failure.)

The description of what was going on in the classroom gives a hint of how complicated and, at the same time, stressful the situation was in the class. The sitting arrangement of students reflected their level of activity: the active "good" students sat in the front and the passive "bad" ones in the back rows. Those in the back were not only passive but were making signs of revolt by chatting loudly, doing their own business and refusing to do anything the teacher told them to do. There was an obvious counter-world created by these children that they also demonstrated by using slang and bad language.

Another characteristic of the sitting arrangement was that there were boys and girls grouped together by 2 or 3 separately. There was no ethnic cleavage observable as groups were ethnically mixed. There was a group of three girls who were ostentatiously playing with their sexuality, provoking both their classmates and teachers. Another type of open revolt took place in the end of a class: one of the boys stood up and left without the teacher's permission. She could not stop him. At the physics class, there was a guy who "put on a show" by provoking the teacher constantly: e.g. he opened the window, and the papers on the desks flew all over. He made the whole class laugh. It should be noted that this boy's test was officially graded A, however, the teacher deducted some points in order to discipline him.

Looking at the teachers' side, it was evident that they were not prepared to handle such a class. Their methodology used was grounded on the conservative approach of frontal teaching that takes the teachers' authority for granted and claim that they shall be respected by their pupils. This fact explains why all teachers complained that "it's impossible to work with these kids!" From the teachers' point of view, the lack of respect seemed to be the major hindrance in having a normal relationship with students. This made them use a moralising language all the time, for example: "Don't you think you're insolent? I used to like to come here but you are not respecting me anymore!" This might seem

a generational problem, older teachers not finding a common language with the fourteen year olds. However, the English class had the same atmosphere although the teacher was young. She was equally unable to handle both the children and the situation, and used the same type of teaching methods. It seemed also problematic that the only means to discipline the class was to challenge their knowledge by giving them a test. In sum, these classes gave the impression that there was a war going on between teachers and pupils, and in all cases the students won.

Apparently, the majority of the class revolted not only because of their more or less natural eight grade attitudes and mentality or because of their teachers' inability to deal with them, but also because of the merger: they were forced to change schools, and were all regarded as newcomers or even outsiders in a well established big school. Teachers did not give them much help to deal with this situation. Students identified themselves with the concept of "bad behaviour", which they heard from their teachers, considering it as legitimate as well as valid.

V: The technology teacher says we are losers.

F: He says I'm arrogant.

Researcher: That is to say, there are two circles: 'You' as you see yourselves and 'You' as you are regarded by the teachers.

Zs: My form master says I'm a pit bull.

V: I'm said to be a person without any emotions.

F: And I'm said to be uncivilised.

(...)

T: We can be evil!

Researcher: You have mentioned several times that you are rubbish. In what sense do you see yourselves as rubbish?

F: We are despised or they deal with us in an odd way.

Zs: I can be extremely rude if I want to.

F: We know that!

Zs: I'm nasty with the physics teacher.

Concerning the unusual or extraordinary events, the same effort characterises both schools: they focus on curricular or curriculum-related topics, including national history, but they never (or rarely) touch upon political or ethnicity-related topics. Beta School of Coaltown is the only exception; there were some considerable attempts made by the school management to create a special space for ethnic representation. Once, a couple of years ago, they had a project in connection with the national holiday of the 15th of March concerning a "Roma hero" of the Hungarian Revolution of 1848. The current students don't seem to remember that, though the school director explained us that it was a good example to show their commitment to the minority issue. With the same intention, they supported

the formation of a song and dance group presenting Roma music at different school festivities. (Because of the lack of financial support, this activity has recently been suspended.) However, school festivities are destined less to represent the Roma as a different group with a special culture, than to integrate Roma children. As a matter of fact, the school flag is carried around at each school festival by four representatives of the student body. When we managed to attend it once in 2009, there was a boy of Roma origin, an eminent student, among the four flag-holders.

There are some school events that may be regarded, especially in the light of other Hungarian precedents, as occasions for the unfolding of tensions. As a matter of fact, one can make a list of such events related to 8th graders, like the school-leaving ceremony or the prom. However, the observations of the school-leaving ceremony in Coaltown justified our assumption that processes of ethnic differentiation are not visible in the daily working of the school. In Beta School, the 8th-grader Roma students were accompanied by their families and relatives in the school-leaving ceremony, which was then followed by a celebration, either at home or in a restaurant, similar to that of weddings or christenings. The photos were organised into an album in both classes, and one could recognise that Roma and non-Roma students were standing next to each other (see the photos in the Appendix). However, the school-leaving ceremony as well as the prom was antagonistic in Alpha School. Heated controversies and open conflicts polarised the parties along the same social and ethnic lines as in everyday interactions: the newcomers wanted to follow their old school's traditions and refused to accommodate to the new circumstances or celebrate hand in hand with the students of the other three classes.

By the same token, school or class excursions constitute another, equally significant type of school-event. The headmaster of Beta School., who teaches natural sciences in almost all classes, takes the 8th graders in each year to a field trip to the local power plant. The power plant is not just worth seeing but it is also the working place for many Coaltowners, so the technical explanation of the mechanism of the power station was followed by a career counselling. There was an informal conversation going on between the students and the teacher which was imbued with intimacy and mutual respect. That is to say, although the students were paying attention to the teacher, they still managed to talk to each other and have fun. The organising principle of inter-personal relations was not ethnicity.

Excursion was also on the agenda in Alpha School, mainly due to its absence. On the basis of our discussions with the students, their greatest complaint towards the new school and their new form master was that while the other class of 8th graders concluded their past 8 years with a few-days long class excursion, they were not taken to anywhere due to their alleged ill-behaviour and untrustworthiness. Forbidding someone to take part in a class excursion is the last and the most severe educational means that can be applied by the form master to discipline a student. A failed student with learning and behavioural problems, mostly of Roma origin, is likely to be identified as renitent. In this case a whole class was categorised as such.

In both schools, students spend their breaks in the spacious schoolyard. The majority gathered in bigger or smaller groups on the cemented central part of the yard. They were talking, joking, laughing and eating. Smaller groups or pairs were sitting or walking around on the school's lawn. Everywhere, we could see mainly ethnically mixed groups, while groups mixed along generational or gender cleavages were seldom observed. Boys and girls were gathered separately, but were communicating with each other. As far as we understood from their later interpretations, students spend the breaks with those of the same neighbourhood. Breaks provide the time and space when conflicts between certain student groups can be sorted out. We learned from hearsay that smaller, weaker boys often get insulted by elder ones, or quarrels take place between rival girl groups. In most cases, teachers fail to notice these conflicts, and as a consequence, no signs of ethnic differentiation become visible.

The everyday atmosphere of Gamma School in Chemtown, especially for the pupils of minority background, is to a large extent defined by structural factors of separation and processes of segregation. As already mentioned before, there are two separate classes: the „Roma-only class" and the so-called „normal class" that has no Roma students. One can say that institutional practices preserved as well as imported segregation mechanisms, working among urban schools, within the walls of Gamma School.

In order to reduce the chance for interaction between "old" and "new" students, the newcomers were placed into the furthest corner of the school and taught by their previous teachers. The classroom of Class B ("the Roma-only class") is close to the gym. Like with other school buildings built in the 1970s, the gym in Chemtown occupies the entire backside of the school. On the upper floor there is a circular gallery and the classrooms. The walls were not constructed so as to filter the noise coming up from the gym. This makes the concentration for 45 minutes hard for both sides: teachers and students.

The headmaster of Class B, teaching maths and natural sciences, says that he aims to adjust his way of teaching to the students' expectations and modes of communication. This means that the teaching methodology aspires to make them interested in the subjects, and create affiliations between students and the curriculum. He avoids frontal teaching and seeks to offer more creative exercises. As a result, among the teachers he is stigmatised as the "Roma teacher", who, just like the students, is placed within the "Roma ghetto", and whose methodology is not considered to be equally valuable as that applied in teaching the majority students but labelled as the "Roma ways of teaching". In the school Hungarian and "normal" are synonyms, which implies that they can be taught using "normal methodology". The headmaster of Class A is responsible for the teaching of history. During our conversations he appeared to be a sophisticated gentleman, conveying the sense that everything is in its right place in the school.

90% of class B lives in the town's ghetto-like Roma settlement or in storey blocks mainly inhabited by Roma. This implies that apart from being classmates they are usually neighbours or even relatives. Their former school used to build upon these special relations, creating a homey atmosphere where parents were also willing to come by. These memories stand in opposition to the present hostile reality. However, these unusually strong and complex relations in a school environment challenge the official student-teacher pattern, since it becomes harder to maintain the teacher's own position and that it is not self-evident anymore that teaching is about transferring knowledge.

Compared to an average class-community, friendships and inter-personal relations in Class B are more complex and tighter, which challenges teachers who might feel that they step into an intimate family life where the topics of discussion appear to be exclusive and incomprehensible for outsiders. The children are familiar with each other's family life and love life. As a matter of fact, while we were there, they were discussing a girl's escape story and she was teased by the boys but protected by the girls. Based on the accounts of teachers, one encounters difficulties when the border lines between social spaces – such as family, friendship and school – get blurred, and the teacher is in charge of making students focus on school matters again. Our observed form master has sufficient routine in dealing with this problem easily, and managed to discipline softly the boy who teases the escaped girl: "R. dear, if you are so interested in K. make love to her, but in the break, please." At this point everyone was laughing, R. felt a bit ashamed and stopped teasing K. The maths class could go on.

The form master had the best insight into a class' life and knew well each student's family background, problems or significant moments, which knowledge allowed him to reflect well upon the related subject-matters. The way the students communicated with each other was not strange for him, even if it was full of "ugly" words and Roma-specific phrases that were regarded by his colleagues as signs of linguistic deficiency. Although the form master has a similar way of thinking as the other teachers, he aimed to get on well with his students, which aspiration occasionally put his position at risk. As soon as the students recognised that someone opened up to them, they started testing the boundaries. Since neither the English nor the P.E. teacher agreed upon being observed, the form master took the students to the gym in the 3rd class. The 10-15 minutes long warming-up was followed by a football game in which boys and girls, as well as the form master, were participating. In the heat of the game the boundaries became more flexible, and when the class was over the teacher was surrounded with students and an informal conversation started between them about all sorts of things that appeared to be crucial in their lives: who dates with whom; how confidence can be developed and how the parents accept one's partner. In this intimate atmosphere one of the girls said that she had her birthday. The teacher wished her happy birthday and wanted to know what kind of present she would get. The girl lowered her voice and gave a short but pithy answer: "spunk"! The others were shaking their heads to

conceal their roars of laughter and also to express that she went too far. That is to say, these answers are integral elements of an exclusive, Roma-specific language for the children that would hardly be legitimised in a school environment. The girl was simply testing the situation's informality, whether the boundary between a "Hungarian" teacher and the "Roma" students can be bridged over, since the atmosphere after the game conveyed the possibility to do so. The form master might have anticipated the above and did not make an issue of the irregular answer. He re-fixed the boundaries with a small scolding and the conversation was over.

The form master is specialised in maths and natural sciences. He makes every effort to adjust his teaching methods to the expectations of the children and grab their attention as well as make them involved in work. The beginning of the maths class was based on quick and short word-challenge dialogues and the children, who were accustomed to the language of teasing, played confidently. The teacher took the examples from real life and assigned exercises of calculation that are supposed to be useful in everyday life. The students recognised themselves in the texts with pleasure, since the characters were usually people whom they knew well. However, the flipside of all this is that social spaces can easily be overlapping and children might find themselves at the crossroads of their private life and school, distracting their attention from maths. Nevertheless, just like in the case described in the previous paragraph, the teacher always managed to get them back on track successfully.

In the natural sciences class the teacher aims to be pedagogically progressive and applies methods to bring students closer to the subject-matter. They make experiments and work in clusters, however, through the course of time, the majority of the students loosed their interests and stopped using the things for the proper experimental purposes: some built houses out of them and some did fencing with their neighbour. These small failures elicit dissatisfaction in the teacher, nevertheless it must be noted that his main ambition is to use educational methods that draw the students into work. He avoids frontal education and aspires to build his classes on cooperation.

Comparing the classes on the basis of teaching methods, they seem to be completely different. While class A is characterised by frontal education, class B is grounded on methods of cooperation, creativity or interactivity. The latter is deduced from the former, which not only assigns a lower status to it, but also makes it applicable only for those children who "are not on the same normality level".

The school aspired to control the separation of the two classes. When a class is over, students of class B either stay in their classroom or are grouped together and go out to the corridor or courtyard. Although not all the students are involved in such activities, most of the time there is a "Roma gang" created which copes with its ethnic stigma but monopolises it and proudly walks along the corridor. That is to say, the "cool boys" in class B play with their stigma and make the fears held by the "Hungarians" real by acting consciously threateningly. However, just a few boys are part of the game and they don't always find pleasure in it. Considering the principle of "I am not concerned with them, and they are they concerned with me, either", followed by the majority of the students, it sets in motion the logic of differentiation as if categories of "Hungarian" and "Roma" were parts of two separate life-spheres.

Students in Delta School were stigmatised by their ethnicity, even though the school aims to establish a framework within which these differences become meaningless. The school's "official policy" aims to provide equal opportunities for every child, disregarding their social or ethnic background, in order to let them enjoy the same rights and duties. By the same token, there are only ethnically integrated classes. Both the teachers and the school dedicate themselves to establish equal conditions for students of different ethnicity. Not only the official policy, but also the conceptual framework and the actual practices of the teachers are very similar in Delta School in Chemtown and Alpha School in Coaltown.

The class we observed was attended by 27 students, 4 out of which were Roma: 2 boys and 2 girls. The two Roma boys took advantage of the policy of this school. They seemed to be well-integrated and the strength of the relationships they established was not supposed to be determined by their ethnic identity. One of the Roma boys lives with his non-Roma foster parents, and the other lives with his parents in a less-Roma-populated area of the town. His grades are better than the class average.

As opposed to the boys, the two Roma girls form an independent enclave within the class: they sit next to each other, avoid participating in any common class activities and leave the class room in the small breaks in order to find their other friends of the ethnic minority. Their school performance is worse than the average: they fail every year and then manage to scrape through the mock exams. They and their younger sisters experience ethnic discrimination on behalf of the teachers as well as other classmates although this is denied by both groups. According to the form master, they exclude themselves from the community. During our stay we recognised some attempts to include them in class activities. However, these gestures were rather taken as harassment by these girls. The Roma girls refuse to take part in any of the programmes saying that they do not like their classmates. They feel that the Hungarians despise them. On the basis of our observations, we claim that the teachers aim to pull the girls out of their "self-segregation" in various ways, such as by offering them seats in the front row or paying special attention to their work. The girls, personally, prefer sitting in the back to sitting in the front, where they can be hidden from the eyes of the teacher. Nevertheless, they seemed to appreciate teachers who offered them extra help in terms of explaining the curriculum. They leave the classroom immediately after class in order to meet their other "Roma" friends. Teachers, however, do not appreciate this kind of behaviour and ask them to go back to the classroom, or at least try to break the whole group of Roma students into smaller parts. Considering the school's strategy to dissolve the "Roma" among the majority, the teachers' hostility against "Roma-gangs" reveals the failure of the official approach. "Teachers don't like when we gather like this. They say we block the corridor. And they also dislike that we hang out together, that we are ghettoising.", told us one of the girls. All in all, they claim that they experience differentiation on the basis of their ethnicity, and as a result, they have to organise their own protection.

The life of these Roma girls outside of school is strongly different from that of their classmates. They are surrounded with at least 6 or 7 people and live in an extended family. They have no privacy at home, which significantly affects their school performance. These girls have bad school performance and experience failure after failure due to the challenges they face but cannot meet. They feel that they are different, but since the school's strategy is to overlook difference, their constantly anticipated otherness has to be protected. If, contrary to the school's intention, they feel that they are different or, in some sense, downgraded, the school takes its hands off them and starts blaming the children's social and parental background for being 80% responsible for their achievements.

While both the teachers and the students claimed that the school had been running dance-classes, especially before the national memorial days, we did not witness such occasions. These classes are said to be attended by a large number of Roma students, too. We did visit though some of the classes in which they practiced their dances for the prom ball, and we did not see any Roma students there.

3.2. Everyday life and social relations within and around families

The motivation for schooling and the range of afternoon activities targeting students are mainly defined by the socio-economic background of the given family. Moreover, as we will demonstrate, the available social relations are also, to a large extent, determined by the social embeddedness of the parents, by patterns of communication and by the level of cooperation within a neighbourhood. An overall characteristic of the entire sample is that the families we investigated belong to the lowest strata of the Hungarian social hierarchy. Even though there were a few relatively better-off families that managed to establish a lower-middle-class standard, presuming social mobility in the given local societies, the majority of our target group is significantly below the national average in terms of social status. This is reflected in the residential and housing conditions of families, the educational level of parents, and their employment histories and ways of making a living. In analysing the interviews, we found families in extreme misery but even relatively consolidated ways of living that are nevertheless tainted by temporary unemployment and different kinds of losses.

Extreme misery goes hand in hand with two types of locations. On the one hand, it is the characteristic of inhabitants in urban poverty-stricken neighbourhoods (of streets and blocks segregated in a ghetto-like manner as well as of the barracks that used to belong to mines that closed down, or

the fast spreading huts in the small plots in the suburbs). On the other hand, misery was seen among those living in "poor ghetto-like settlements" or segregated neighbourhoods in villages. Relative wealth, in turn, was reached by families living in good-quality flats of urban housing projects and apartment buildings in green areas in those parts of the selected cities that are scarcely populated by Roma, or, in a few cases, in an independent family house located not at the edge of the settlement.

In spite of the wide variety of the employment histories of parents, apart from a few exceptions, there were no families in our sample in which the parents were employed on a permanent basis. Even families in which one parent used to have a stable employment relationship have been forced to cope with temporary or permanent unemployment, and as a consequence, experience participation in some form of welfare provisions (disability pension, public employment, unemployment benefit), or illegal or semi-legal activities. As a result of the conditions in both sites, many of the fathers used to be miners by profession and have been receiving (disability) pension. Just a few of the former miners have managed to find jobs in some other area after the closing down of the mines. As for the entire sample, it is characterised by the forced assumption of temporary and black labour.

Based on parental patterns, a characteristic mode of raising income can be detected that has two pillars. One, relatively stable, pillar is represented by the various social transfers, a source of livelihood that, without any exceptions, all the families rely on. Transfers include family allowance that is a universal provision, childcare aid, child raising support (provided for families with 3 or more children under 6 years of age), disability pension and income supplement received by those who previously had an employment relationship. The other, usually less secure though often more lucrative, pillar is represented, to a lesser extent, by income-generating activity performed in the legal employment market and, to a greater extent, by black and temporary jobs that do not necessarily correspond to the educational degree of the parent (like cleaning or shop assisting in the case of mothers having a professional certificate in dressmaking, or occasional brick laying or black labour related at road-building or large construction works, sometimes guest working abroad, in the case of fathers).

Considering the living circumstances, the social status of families and the scale of embeddedness in the local community, we created a typology of the social conditions of children and their families. By marginalised status, we found families who live in ethnically segregated areas (at the edge of town) in very poor housing conditions, having very few contacts with members of the majority society. It is a typical "ghetto" atmosphere: delinquency, drug dealing, alcoholism, family aggression, etc. They are mainly embedded in their family and relative (dominantly Roma or maybe with some non-Roma relatives) networks.

There is another type of segregated area mainly inhabited by Roma people whose social network is also constrained to the family. Since it is not an urban ghetto, it has to cope with different social problems than those mentioned above, however, the living standard is even lower here: this seems to be the terminus for families. Since it is geographically located far from the town, it is difficult for people to establish or nurture social contacts other than with their few neighbours. Whereas there seems to be ways out of the ghetto, this social setting might be a dead-end for both adults and children. People living there are the most marginalised, even more than those living in the urban ghetto. As a child explained us: "They beat me and they bully me, always me because I come from there. They look down on me."

The third category represents those whose living standard is a bit higher than that of the members of the previous categories and their living condition is more tolerable than that in the ghetto. Families have both majority and minority contacts, which is mainly the result of their social situation. Whereas the latter is more of an involuntary type of segregation, this seems to be a voluntary one: here, they can live in tranquillity. A more modest form of this category is effectuated by those families who chose to or are forced to move to the outskirts of the town. There are usually small houses without or with very few utilities. These areas are ethnically mixed areas and people seem to decide to go to live there because of financial considerations (cannot afford any more to live in town) or to escape the ghetto. Children living here have even less contact.

Within this third category there are a couple of families who live in ethnically mixed, medium status areas. It is not unusual that these families still have very few minority contacts. However, these are decent, lower-middle-class neighbourhoods where Roma families live exactly the same way as their fellow, non-Roma neighbours. The most dissolved type of families live in a higher status area in a mainly non-Roma environment. There are only a few Roma families living around, dispersed and "hardly noticeable". Their standard of living is obviously higher than in any of the previous cases mainly due to the fact that someone has a permanent job in the family.

3.3. Peer group and neighbourhood relations

Given that our target group belonged to a specific generation, one of the core questions of our research has been how after-school generation-specific activities – such as sports activities, music listening, clothing, music subcultures – are organised and interact with ethnic differences. We scrutinised institutional arrangements that might affect or frame spare-time activities, and found that institutions providing organised spare-time programmes for young people were present in both towns. Moreover, both towns inherited a well-established network of institutions from the 70s and 80s, the period of local industrial and infrastructural investments. Hence, community and cultural centres as well as sports facilities were established in public buildings of large capacity in the town centre, as the socialist urban planning required.

As a legal successor of Chemtown Chemists Sports Club, the town has been running establishments that provide space for mainly student and spare-time sports activities. The House of Culture in Chemtown was founded in 1969 and developed into the cultural centre of the region by the 1980s. However, as a result of the political, social and economic changes from the 1990s onwards, it has started losing its popularity. Recently it has been hosting smaller cultural and civil initiatives and amateur theatre groups.

Considering Coaltown, the Miner Sports Club, founded in 1922, is still active even if the mine was closed down. Sports events, such as the matches of the once Hungary-wide famous male handball, have always been the constituting pillars of urban community life. Due to the uncertain financial circumstances, the glorious days are over, nevertheless these occasions still provide the opportunity for the younger generations to spend some quality time together.

"Many times the problem is that the spaces of social life have been narrowed down or even disappeared in Coaltown. There used to be at least 2 days and 600-1000 people went there and I happen to meet some people only there. I haven't seen those people since the championships came to an end and the team was not qualified..."

(House of Culture, junior rapporteur)

In Coaltown there used to be 4 clubs, a house of culture, a community centre, a movie and a theatre operating. At the present there are 2 clubs open on particular weekdays and in the weekends, while the maintenance of the House of Communities, the legal successor of the House of Culture, has required significant efforts on behalf of the town. Cultural services provided locally are hardly available so those who can afford it go to Pécs to watch a movie or to see a performance staged in the theatre. Considering the above, Coaltown, in a sense, has become a commuter town: young, well-to-do people move out and those who stay seek entertainment opportunities elsewhere for the weekends.

Our target group – 14-16-year old students – can get involved in sports life through school. In one school football, in another one handball is strong enough to earn recognition for talented students, lift them out and send them to the youth sports association of the town. The sports teacher of Beta School in Coaltown also works as a football coach, consciously aiming to integrate students with "bad" school achievements to the sports circulation of the town. Success in sport is appreciated by students and those who excell at football also become popular among their school-mates.

The already poor programme provided by the local cultural and sports facilities barely aims at incorporating our target group. According to the junior rapporteur of the House of Culture in Coaltown, in order to address the so-called "K. street neighbourhood", or in other words the youth in the poverty-stricken urban neighbourhood, "well-trained social workers would be required, otherwise these groups cannot be recognised". From the point of view of the children, this has financial limits. They are aware of the existence of the clubs in town, but they rather meet in front of them and while the music is coming out they gather in groups and talk to each other. (They gather in the parking area of Tesco for a similar reason: this is the best place for skating, dancing and alcohol is also available on the spot.)

The third one among the above discussed status groups in the context of family background includes those children who manage to join sports activities that primarily target children of middle-class background. This is the smallest category in both towns. The after-school activities of concerned students are rather individualistic, meaning that it is them who make the related decisions that are structured and contextualised by, but also influence, the prevailing institutional setting. These children come from nuclear or single-parent families, and have no or only one sibling. The extended network of relatives – as opposed to those who live in ghettos or ghetto-like settlements, as we will see later – is not a formative element in their lives. Furthermore, Roma origins, for them, do not lead to a commitment to their own ethnic group, or in other words, it does not provide them with any positive feelings towards themselves. In case of mixed marriages, the parent of Roma origin, instead of keeping or transmitting his/her identity, has often been making tremendous efforts to assimilate, frequently by changing the family name. The parents are concerned with their children's school performance and are willing to establish the circumstances necessary for good school and after-school achievements. The children usually have a room of their own, which is shared with one of their siblings, and they also own a bicycle and a computer. They spend a lot of time alone. The clearest manifestation of the ensemble of the above described characteristics in Coaltown was observed among children living far away from the school, in residential areas at the edge of the city. These children spend part of their spare-time in front of the computer. Children living in residential areas mostly establish relationships with other children of the same generation, and these interactions are forged by the same after-school activity, such as cycling. By the same token, a Roma boy in Chemtown, who attends the Roma-only class, has never lived in the "Roma neighbourhood". Having been raised by his divorced mother, neither he nor his siblings maintain a good relationship with the relatives. He has never had any contact with Roma children outside of school. Before he met his best friend, he had been riding his bicycle alone. Since there are not many children in his neighbourhood, they became close friends and hang out together. L. was introduced to the local football team by a former class-mate of his. and since then he has been taking part in the training sessions four times a week with mainly non-Roma children.

In contrast to the above, the social interactions of the children are constrained to the sphere of the family, including relatives and generations living in the same neighbourhood. As a 14-year old boy living in Chemtown's Roma neighbourhood said:

"Those of us who live in the same settlement belong together. If anyone needs help we give them 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. There is solidarity here."

The most important components in the formation of friendships are similar social background and same ethnic belonging,, that is to say, friends are also relatives, primarily cousins. Hence, the unit of the family implies a complex and open body and the spare-time activities of the children do not constitute a separate sphere from that of the family. It is then understandable indeed that in this case, in order to create the sense of community, there is no need for common activities through which young people would "recognise each other". Bridging over the boundaries between family and friends seems so natural that the students even forgot to highlight it unless we asked them about it straight:

„' Are your friends in the school the same as outside of school?'

'Well, the thing is that I have some other friends here, but those with whom I stay in our place, my cousins, are also close to me here!'

These are strong bonds: they visit each other every day, hang out together and spend some quality time together. For an outsider these friendships might seem to be empty and pointless since, as a girl told us, they sometimes stand in the bus stop for hours and are joined by others who pass by.

“'Where do you usually go out?' The answer to this question was always the same: 'we just hang out in the street, or we are at the bus stop and talk or fool around, laughing' 'We hang out at each other's place, or go for a walk and meet others'”.

Boys often complete the repertoire with football played either with their relatives or with those living in the same neighbourhood. “Gang life” provides the opportunity for making new friendships, relationships or even for looking after girls. There is no chance for these young people to spend their free time somewhere else, with different people, since they are excluded from the local disco and are afraid of leaving both their neighbourhood and the protective circle of relatives because, as they say, the Hungarians despise them and reject their company:

„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.”

There is a small village close to Chemtown where the majority of Roma students live in a ghetto-like settlement. The local Roma organisation draws upon these strong bonds and aims at shaking up the social life of young people in order to make sense out of loitering and standing in the bus station. It organises discos and dance competitions:

„I sometimes go to the disco where we dance to disco music and Latin music. There are sometimes competitions organised where one has to apply and the prizes are champagne, chocolate or cake. I won the first dance competition a long time ago, and the prize was a bar of chocolate.”

Summing up the above, students can be divided into two distinct categories on the basis of social network and spare-time activities. In the first category, students' family and social lives do not constitute two separate spheres. Most of them live not just in an ethnically segregated neighbourhood, in a so-called ghetto-like Roma settlement, but are also surrounded with their relatives. They do not have a private life and consider individual activities boring and pointless. Home-preparation for the next school-day is approached with the same attitude:

„I do study, but it's sometimes boring, I have to say, boring and then it is difficult to study. It is boring to be by myself, however, if my cousin N. or some other friends come by, we study together, making fun, and then it is good.”

These children do not have a separate room because their flats lack the space for privacy. Their free-time is characterised by social interactions rather than a set of individual ways of being. The reason why the above cases are drawn only from our Chemtown experiences is that the majority of these children come from a settlement that is close to the town and functions as an ethnic ghetto. This does not imply that there are no settlement-like neighbourhoods with the same kind of social structure and practices in Coaltown. At the edge of the town, there is a block of barracks that were destined to be demolished a decade ago. However, in those three houses an estimated 50 people live, constituting an extended family. This is the home of that 8th grader, too, who is the most marginalised

in his class. He does not have any friends with whom he would hang out after school, so he spends most of his afternoons either with his father collecting iron and other metal trash, or with his siblings and cousins.

Features of the third category are similar those of the previous one, with one exception: although these children live in segregated circumstances, family and relatives play a minor role in their lives, nor have an influence on their choice of residence. Some families have already been transformed many times, whereas the majority attributes great significance to their Roma origin that provides them self-awareness and self-consciousness as well as a sense of belonging to somewhere that can otherwise only be experienced in gang-life. In both towns the ghetto is identified with one street: „K” and „HK”, which spaces embody “immorality”, “criminality” and the “Roma population” for the town dwellers. All the children who live there are aware of these stigmas, but internalise them with different kinds of sensitivity. This contradiction becomes apparent in the perception of children living in the two streets: on the one hand, they are despised and, as a matter of fact, through this the common opinion becomes reproduced, while on the other hand, they are respected and become significant reference points for their generation on the basis of the cohesiveness, unity and solidarity of their circles, the “gangs”.

Both ghetto-like neighbourhoods have a vivid, teeming street-life. Elder people are sitting in front of their houses, playing cards, while the youngsters are gathered in groups and talk to each other. Loudspeakers are placed either in the windows or in cars, the music is switched on, and the whole neighbourhood echoes with rap or Roma music, or, occasionally, other genres of songs broadcasted by commercial radio channels. Children either visit each other after school, or just gather in the streets at a certain hour:

„We play cards. There is 500 HUF and we divide it among ourselves. It depends on how many of us play the game, but the one who beats everyone wins everything. If it is poker, we play it in smaller amounts with the Roma, either in the street or not in the street but some grassy parts of HK.”

Music or dancing constitute “uproars”, which are integral parts of everyday life. Conflicts primarily stem from the fact that the older neighbours complain about the loud music and call the police at some point.

Young people in Chemtown relate these events to their ethnic belonging and let some affection towards “who I am” be developed around them. Instead of re-emphasising family bonds and tradition, this kind of self-awareness invokes a “Roma-like” style that, as a subculture, manifests itself in clothing, music or in some aspects of speaking.

„I spend most of my time with the Roma. I rather hang out with them.”

‘Why?’

‘It’s not that I get along with them because there are normal kids, I would say that all of them are normal although some of them are pompous. All in all, it’s good there, not bad, and there is always something going on. I like that in the Roma... While the Hungarians sit inside, which I don’t... In HK everyone is in the streets and, as a result, they are looked down already. Every time you are asked where you live and your answer is HK, the immediate reaction is a bunch of negative comments. I say ‘Come with me, and if you don’t say anything then nothing will happen, and they don’t even tease anyone anyway.’”

At the same time, we should note that smaller significance is attached to the actual and performative manifestations of being a Roma in Coaltown’s ghetto-like neighbourhood, where many of the young people come from mixed marriages, and the non-Roma in the neighbourhood actually identify themselves with the Roma. “I only received help from the Roma. My best friends, my best mates

were all Roma", said a boy belonging to the ethnic majority who not only hangs out with the Roma but also goes to the Learnary, which is regarded as an institution specifically for the Roma.

Besides the above, we shall point out that considering "Romaness" as a subculture has a political dimension: the neighbourhood is a protective shield against young people who are hostile with the Roma and identified with the skinheads. When leaving the settlement Roma youngsters always act in groups since otherwise they would be more exposed to both physical attacks and verbal insults:

"Well, let's think about the skinheads. They hate the Roma. Once we went to the downtown and they kept picking on us. There were 3 or 4 big guys with us who could have beaten all of them. I said that we should disregard them, otherwise they would report us to the police, and then only 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 pm., say. And the police came as always. However when we call them because they play music loudly, the police doesn't always come. Sometimes they come but most of the time they don't. Many times they come, but many times they don't."

In the light of the above we shall conclude that even if spare-time activities appear to belong to the after-school life of the children at first sight, our research demonstrated that this is just one possible interpretation of the phenomenon. The most burning issue in the "Roma-only" schools is that the school fails to conceptualise the life of the children, and it induces 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 share some common friends. When they open the door and enter the school building, the environment does not carry in itself the sense of change. According to teachers, one encounters difficulties if the border lines between social spaces – such as family, friendship and school – get blurred, and the teacher is in charge of making children focus on school matters again. They claim that the problem is that in the Roma-class the students know each other well: 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 ethnically homogenous classes:

"Do you mean that the school communities and communities outside of school overlap?"

- Yes, there is no difference between the two. We, outsiders, have to figure out how we could be a part of their lives, because they are living their lives as they were at home. It's not that easy not to stop them when someone has an idea and says something to a friend, that this and that happened and how it happened and what they did. We have to try to bridge the gap and turn back to our original topic, since we have a task in class and we have to focus on that."

4. EXPERIENCES OF BEING "OTHERED"; VIEWS ON "ETHNIC" DIFFERENCES

This chapter will narrow down its scope of analysis largely building upon both ethnographic descriptions provided by the previous chapter and categories into which we clustered processes of differentiation and ethnicisation identified in different social contexts, such as school, family or generational group. The chapter will be devoted to the issue of 'Otherness' that is always in relation to 'Sameness': how it is constructed and shaped by multi-layered processes of discrimination and integration as well as by collective habitual practices or strategies of resistance. Considering the theoretical grounds of this chapter, we approach processes of discrimination and ethnicisation from two directions: practices of differentiation (othering) of the unmarked majority, and collective as well as self-identifying practices of the marked – group or individual – minority ethnic belonging.

In the following, we will explore processes as well as practices of othering in three different contexts:

1) by understanding othering in the wider social context relying on our interviews conducted with students, parents and teachers, as well as on other sources;

2) by gaining a deeper insight of othering in the operation of various educational institutions, elaborated first in our focus group discussions, then in interviews with students and teachers;

3) and, finally, by looking at the children's micro-world, we are interested in how children manoeuvre in an environment that is structurally constrained, and furthermore, how they develop meaningful and personalised understandings of the experience of otherness with a special emphasis on the conceptualisation of being Roma.

4.1. Othering and ethnicity in the broader society

The analysis of interviews conducted with children shows that although there are varied attempts in each school to either even out or reinforce differences, the broader social context is collectively perceived as hostile. That is to say, disregarding time and space, hows and whys, othering is always perceived as following ethnicised patterns, whether at the parents' workplace, in the shop, or during an identity check in the street or an encounter with an unknown passer-by. On a structural level, these practices of differentiation are manifested in the prevailing presence of the extreme right-wing party in both towns, against which – in varied degrees – both the democratic traditions of the majority society, and the self-organisation of the minority prove to be inefficient. Although to portray the present political situation in Hungary is not the primary aim of our research, it seems important to give its contours in order to have a better understanding of the interplay between micro- and macro level identity formations.

There were parliamentary elections in Hungary in spring 2010. Due to their industrial past, and hence the working class' assumed dedication to left-wing ideas, both towns were considered as acropolises of the Socialist party, The mayors as well as the majority of the body of representatives in the municipalities were provided by the political left, however, in 2010 (in many regards in accordance with national tendencies) a right-wing breakthrough occurred.¹⁶

While in Coaltown the candidate of the extreme right-wing party (Jobbik) got 11%, which is significantly below the party's national average, in Chemtown the results of Jobbik were much higher than the average: 28,8% in the first round, and 25% in the second. Furthermore, in the village providing the majority of Roma children among 8th graders in Chemtown, Jobbik had a landslide victory. By looking at Coaltown's 13%, and 11 % for the party's national campaign, we have to add by way of an explanation that neither is the local candidate well-known among the Coaltowners, nor are there any registered members of the party. As opposed to Coaltown, the activity of Jobbik in Chemtown is much

¹⁶ In Coaltown the right-wing party, FIDESZ-KDNP, and its candidate got 49 and 39% of the votes, respectively, in the first round, whereas in the second round, it received the 64 % of the votes. The Socialists' (MSZP) candidate first won the 25,20 % of the votes, then 26%. The extreme right-wing (Jobbik) party won 11%. In Chemtown FIDESZ-KDNP got 37% in the first round and 43,22% in the second; MSZP (the current mayor is affiliated with the Socialists) got 28,6% and then 30,91%.

more intense. Its local organisation set up several forums for the residents where the leaders of the party gave speeches in front of a huge in-house crowd, and by organising extra buses the activists made it possible for many people to take part in the party's official commemoration of the 1948 revolution on the 15th of March.

There might be a correlation between prevailing extreme right-wing ideas and the collective view of Roma children that they live in a hostile environment where they are not welcome by the majority:

"How do you get along with your Hungarian neighbours?', I asked a 14-year old girl living in the so-called Roma street. „They threaten us to call the police and tell them how many of us live here. My brother's friends and their siblings come to our place, and the neighbours say that they spend the whole day there and that we are loud. You can see how quiet we are. They go to play football, that's all. They do those things because we are Roma."

Others explain that they are not excluded from the disco due to their ethnic belonging:

"For instance they never let us in the disco. The other day we just asked for a Coke and they didn't give it to us claiming that we had to be club-members! 'What do you say then?', I asked. ' Nothing. We just leave. They despise the Roma saying that we are dirty, or 'look at that smelly Roma!. Hungarians say things like this."

Similarly to the children, the parents in Chemtown consider the "outside world", in other words, places where they perceive themselves in a minority position, to be dangerous:

"They are nicer with the Hungarians at the self-government, when I go for the welfare assistance. They see that my skin colour is darker... they talk to the Hungarians differently. Here we receive the same amount. In Chemtown it is set that Hungarians and Roma are entitled to the same amount of money.' ' Have you heard about the Hungarian Guard?' 'I have, but I haven't seen them. Everyone is scared. I know it from hearsay that they were marching here with flags, and they were shouting too. They know more. Gabi and Andi. They are younger, they walk around. I stay at home. I fear for them. It's dangerous outside."

The most significant and most widely debated theme underpinning all the focus group discussions with parents in Coaltown was the forms of ethnic discrimination in the labour market. All the participants, including the non-Roma, had stories which supported the reality of open or concealed discrimination towards Roma in the field of employment. Most of the stories explained how ethnic discrimination was manifested in either not employing someone of different ethnicity, or not even providing them the opportunity to be interviewed. Names, in particular, the last names among Boyash that denote their three main former occupations, as well as different skin colour translate into the field of employment, thereby reinforcing and deepening the involved ethnic distinctions.

Already at the first stage of their educational career, children sense various forms of discrimination, especially in high schools of bigger towns that could provide further chances for social mobility, as Roma and non-Roma parents of Coaltown's Beta School explained to us:

"I have just heard a story: my niece passed her school-leaving exam and her teacher told her just before the exam... she was a good student, her skin was dark, she was Roma. She wanted to be an economist. The teacher told her that 'don't ever dare to dream about being Emese in a bank in Budapest, as it is in the advertisement. Let it go! This is how she was put on her way, while getting 'A's or 'B's in each subject. She was treated like that because she was a Creole. And she was sad. Now she has been attending a course to become a chef. There is a good chance that she will be

placed in the kitchen where nobody would see her. She is very talented and very smart..."

As opposed to the above, Coaltown is considered to be a place where discrimination against the Roma is not that common. Hence, the town offers a protective shield to the Roma, who can stay in "their own environment", and also the experience of being stigmatised as a "Gypsy" warns them against the potential dangers of mixing. According to the parents, the same applies to Beta School:

"We don't really sense it because we don't experience it in our environment. I'm sure I would be upset, too. The children are in the proper place, and my child has never come back home saying "Mom and Dad, I was said to be a Roma at school". It never happens in the town, either. Here the ratio is 50-50%, Roma and Hungarian, and it never happens that my child comes home saying that I'm Roma. I'm sure I would be offended if my son was told not to go to that school, but we don't experience it here."

The same ambivalence can be noticed in the discourse of students in Coaltown. They were talking about their pains and hurts, street fights and smaller incidents, or forms of discrimination their parents told them about, but a closer scrutiny of the way they talked and related to each other – especially in comparison to Chemtown – showed that the community in Coaltown was more cohesive and, as a matter of fact, more resistant to racism and extremist ideas.

4.2. Othering and Equality in the Schools

In this subchapter we focus on how concepts of "otherness" and "sameness", or in other words, processes of differentiation and equalisation are contextualised and then manifest themselves within school arrangements. First we aim at investigating the selected schools' political statements on disadvantaged children and children with minority ethnic background. By the same token, we explore how the idea of integrated education is approached and understood by schools and teachers. Then, on the basis of individual and group discussions with teachers, we analyse various education-specific forms of differentiation and evaluate teacher-student and teacher-parent relations.

As it has already been discussed above, on the top level of local educational policy-making, both towns appear to make significant efforts to conform to the officially set standards and guiding principles in the field of education, however, the process of implementation took four different courses in the four selected schools.

How the teachers approached the process and what kinds of conclusions were made are all problems that might have an impact on the school performance of Roma and disadvantaged students. In both towns, one of the schools have undergone one or more mergers in the recent past, and according to their own understanding, the teachers were required to follow higher orders: their opinion was disregarded, there were no consultations, and no time was given to let them understand and accept the changes.

ZS: I think we do that as if we were blindfolded. We are experienced in this sense...

K: We have to do that, we do that because we always have to do what we are told by the town, no matter what. It's hard for the children.

E: Every September we witness that more and more tables are taken out of the teachers' office. Eventually, only 10 of us have remained...

The merger has been one among the many other changes in Coaltown's Alpha School. The school introduced the program of education for children with special needs in the early

2000s. At first, this was motivated to solve budgetary difficulties of the school, but finally it led to a methodological renewal that is considered by the director a significant outcome. One of the important results was that parents were satisfied with the education provided for their children. It was a shock when a couple of years after the special program had been launched and the new methods learnt, the children with special needs had to be integrated in "normal" classes. The small class C-s had to be closed and children dispersed in the other classes. Parents were very indignant and teachers were lost, as there was no concept of how to carry out the integration. Parents were more satisfied with the earlier segregated arrangement because their children received more attention. The opinion of the school director was that it was more efficient and more comfortable for children with special needs to be in small separated classes. This view is shared by the interviewed teachers and head teachers.

It seemed that the school staff is aware of problems related to the integration of children with special needs and socially deprived children, however, analysing and talking about difficulties is missing from the institutional culture of the school. One of the reasons is the merger of the two schools resulting in dismissing teachers. As a consequence, one can feel an existential fear among the staff members as well as sensitivity to the problem of aging. Due to these factors as well as the under-motivated school management, innovations in teaching methods are not introduced.

The general atmosphere of the staff was distrustful and teachers were very inexperienced in talking about professional questions and social issues. Among other things, their discourses are dominated by cultural and ethnic stereotypes, and their own personal experiences do not undermine their way of thinking.

By analysing focus group discussion with parents, various practices in Coaltown's Beta School prove that the institution is committed to integration and is rather open to progressive teaching methods. The teachers framed the emerging problems in a sophisticated manner: as a response to the merger, they suggested a step-by-step integration of the newcomers, mixing the classes in the first 4 grades whereas keeping the more mature class communities separated in the higher grades. The management has to look at processes of mixing and separation with special attention and take into consideration one of the most relevant implication of the merger, that is – as it was ascribed to the Hungarian stereotypical way of thinking by one of the interviewee – "the white flight". Furthermore, experience shows that the major issue here, as well as the main source of conflict with the parents, is not the mixing of schools but the mixing of classes.

Obliging to the will of non-Roma parents operates as an external force to which schools are surrendered due to the fierce competition for students: they 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, as the headmaster of a school in Coaltown said once.

In Chemtown, the vice principal and the other teachers of Gamma School were even more "shocked" by the announcement that the town's "Roma school" had to be "fully integrated" into their institution. According to the interviews, "integration" did not mean an entirely new approach to teaching but a principle that was forced upon them by the Ministry and which they had to endure together with all its consequences. None of the interviewees considered the possibility that teachers and school management can be active agents in the process of integration. In theory, integration was approved and favoured, but it was never about to become reality, and the teachers appeared as the passive sufferers of a top-down decision-making mechanism.

Teachers were afraid of implementing the amendments of the Public Education Act. They foresaw the dead-end of their carriers: they were afraid of the reaction of the parents that might have concluded in an intense "white flight"; they had to work with a completely new "material of children"; and finally they imagined the shutdown of the school and the possibility of unemployment. Hence, decisions and implemented pedagogical strategies were driven along the line of the above mentioned considerations. The most important aim was to artificially maintain the "pre-integration state" and act as if nothing had happened. That is to say, Roma children were separated from the ethnic majority, and

the parents of the latter were convinced that "everything was the same as usual". One can see that the principle of integration remained just an idea, while in reality strong segregating mechanisms started to operate.

Not surprisingly, in cases where integration encounters strong resistance, or when its implementation lacks professional preparatory work and leaves the teachers out from decision-making, various mechanisms of segregation still remain in power that, in turn, formalise and thereby reinforce and deepen the gap between children of different ethnicities. Considering the framework of the school, the most brutal forms of differentiation are linked with certain forms of institutional operation, especially with dismissals, or declining individual applications or the creation of classes.

The most dramatic manifestation of institutionalised segregation is "streaming", or in other words, the influencing the class-settings, e.g. by separating children along ethnic lines. As a response to the merger, Chemtown's Gamma School created a Roma-only class producing highly differential within-school composition primarily along ethnic lines. Hence, "Roma" and "Hungarian" are framed as mutually exclusive entities, with a significant gap between the two marking everyone's place, and ethnic origin or – as the students said – "race" has been taken as an important explanatory factor for the various forms of discrimination. That is to say, differentiation has become a natural phenomenon, and "Why would not the teacher protect the Hungarians if she/he is Hungarian, too?" argued one of our interviewees. All in all, the above depicted "drama" is the result of a long "process of integration" that is doomed to failure.

Teachers' opinions vary as to whether it was the right decision to keep up separate classes. The argument for separation says that there was already a big gap between old and new students in terms of what they learned, and besides, the parents were promised to have the classes preserved after the merger. The teachers, however, admitted that separation had turned out to be harmful for inter-group relations.

The teachers systematically differentiate between "Roma" and "normal" students, the latter being synonymous with "Hungarian", whereas the former always standing for the "other", or the "deviant".

„Which approach do you prefer more: the integration or the segregation of disadvantaged students? I have been thinking about it a lot. The most efficient way might be to integrate them into a normal community, but not in crowds. One should recognise that if they appear in crowds then they are less willing to, or want to learn the other community's norms. However, in the case of the integration of just a smaller number of people, it is easier for them, and the whole integration process would be much easier, too.”

Hence, although the composition of the class is responsible for all the upcoming problems, it never occurs that the majority society make its compromises to coexist with the minority, since the former unquestionably represents the norm which, by all means, shall be adapted by the Roma students. The majority of the teachers do not consider segregation as the proper solution, however, they fail to question the legitimacy of their own decision on establishing two separate classes along the line of ethnicity and regarding the role it has played in the creation of the current dramatic situation in the school.

Chemtown's Delta School provided a different solution in implementing integrative educational policies. As we have seen, in the case of Gamma School, categories of "Roma" and "Hungarian" imply meaningful, deep-laying distinctions, and the students involuntarily identify themselves with those categories, whereas Delta School aims at establishing a framework within which the otherwise well-operating differences disappear. The official policy of Delta School is to provide opportunities for all the children to be the same as the others, to enjoy the same privileges and to have the same rights and duties. As we witnessed, this policy does really open up new prospects to certain children. Two out of four students who identify themselves as Roma manage to grasp the opportunity and capitalise on it. Nevertheless, their ethnic belonging does not play a major role in their lives. We also noticed that within

the same framework all the efforts of the other two students end in failure, which they always explain as the outcome of processes of ethnic discrimination or differentiation.

Similarly to the above, Coaltown's Alpha School emphasises the importance of balancing out unequal power relations and pursues a colour-blind educational policy. The head of the school emphasises that Gypsiness is neither a problem nor an issue in this school. Their proportion is relatively low (10% of the 540 students), and many of them come from mixed marriages or do not consider themselves as Roma.

In this school differentiation can be grasped in different mechanisms from the above: as a result of the merger, there are "new" classes (formed by the newcomers) and "old" ones. There are no ethnic differences between the classes labelled as old and new, since the proportion of Roma children is not representative in the new classes, either. With regard to this kind of situation, the balanced ethnic composition of the classes has been the consequence of the relatively high number of repetitions and drop-outs.

Because the head teacher of the „new class" (class D) pointed out that there are 23 children who used to go to this class while they were still in the old building... She tells about all of them in detail and their family background: the majority of them are Roma and most of them continued school in a special institution for dropouts. Apparently, when merger was decided in 2004, a significantly higher proportion of "problem kids" dropped out of school than in the previous years. By the time the merger took place, half of the eight graders disappeared from the school.

Talking to the head of the special school we gained a deeper insight into institutional practices of segregation, and realised that a number of children in Alpha School are regularly declared to be mentally or physically disabled and are sent to a special school maintained by private and foundation sources. (One of the main forms of segregation is the establishment of the special schools, where the curriculum is simplified, the certificate it provides is incompatible with that in a "normal" educational institution and, as a result, children in this form of education can rarely return to the normal track but continue their studies in special vocational schools.) The above mentioned special school in P. has 206 students, out of whom 15 are from Coaltown, and no less than 13 students among the Coaltowners are from Alpha School. The picture is more ambivalent than it seems at the beginning: if looked at from Coaltown's perspective, processes of selection appear to be colour-blind, however, from the viewpoint of the special school, it is rather ethno-specific. 60% of the students in the special school are Roma, moreover, as one of the teachers explained, the others are either half-Roma or entirely so, it is just that they have made a different decision regarding their identity.

The categorisation of students as "good" and "bad" manifests in several other ways and under various circumstances in Alpha School. As a matter of fact, students who are considered to be "bad" or "unreliable" are never taken to class excursions. By the same token, a form master decided upon not taking a whole class to excursion which is the most painful grievance a student can experience.

The third form of differentiation and selection in the field of education is, due to its general nature, the most popular tool in the hands of schools: talented and motivated students are separated from students of less desirable potentials. In the case of Coaltown's Beta School, the class with extra curriculum and special training in German language is recruited from the "cream", i.e. the best-performing students, and has higher expectations in all fields of education. This is a result of a virtually spontaneous selection process that has already been described in section 2.3 on the schools of Coaltown. Let us repeat here how selectivity works in this case.

In Beta School of Coaltown, the class A is composed of mainly socially deprived pupils, many of whom, though not all, are Roma. Class B is attended by less deprived pupils, and there are less students of Roma origin there. Class B specialises in German language and thus has higher prestige, and pupils attending this class have better school results. At entering the school, parents declare whether they would like to have their children to go to a specialised or a "normal" class. Selection thus is not based

on any forced treatment but on parents' decisions. However, there is some sociological selectivity at work in the procedure. Those, coming from higher status families have more self-confidence to put their children in a specialised class. Moreover, it is a "common knowledge" that class B is better, so without having to say anything or force parents to do something against their will, they choose the class where their children socially belong. The same is true of parents of lower-status families: either they are not conscious enough, and do not care at all, or they have low self-esteem and find it more secure for their kids to attend a class with lower expectations. So far, the school also had to take "problem kids" from the whole town: pupils with slight mental disorder and behaviour problems were often directed to Beta School. However, it needs to be pointed out that the school management is very conscious about this arrangement and practice and does its best to compensate for this inequality. In addition, they are about to change the system by mixing the two classes in the upcoming year in the new first grades.

Taking into consideration the above, we have identified three different forms/systems of differentiation in our four selected schools, among which only the first one has an entirely explicit language on the Roma. However, just half of the story has been told so far. In analysing interviews, especially those made with teachers, let us provide a nuanced picture about the visible or concealed links existing between ethnic discrimination and segregationist policies.

In some sense, all the interviews with teachers suggest that the school is either completely powerless or has little influence in shaping the educational career of children with respect to the students' family background. Instead of identifying the school and the teacher as the two most important actors in influencing a child's future career, they defined the family's social background, financial opportunities, and cultural approach towards education as crucial factors in shaping adolescents' aspirations and ideas about their adult lives.

The majority of teachers assume that school performance is based mainly on the skills the child was born with, and secondly on the family's social background, and that the school plays no role in the already predestined future of the child. As a headmaster put it, "genes and the family make 99%, the rest is upon the school". Some teachers would alter the picture and included the nursery, claiming a 20% for both the nursery and the teachers in determining children's future career. In referring to such calculations, they not just set themselves free from all responsibilities, but also undermined the value of their own work. The less radical teachers blamed the students' social environment instead of genes, which modification still lacks the teachers as if they were not an inherent part of the students' social environment. Teachers fail to realise their own responsibility in leaving their imprint on students' experience with schooling.

Teachers of the seemingly colour-blind school developed explanations relying on discourses of the otherness of Roma children within the frames of cultural or biological determinism. According to their perception, the only possible way for Roma children to break out of their present deprived position is by leaving the family behind and attending a special, segregated. "Roma-only" school.

K: What did she/he bring from home?

ZS: If it's about a child of an undereducated Roma family, then his/her future is already determined, right? This is my opinion at least.

A: It requires an incredibly strong commitment to break out, and she/he has to consciously aspire to achieve it.

Zs: I would like to mention, as an example, the Ghandi high school, where the schoolmates are of the same ethnicity, and the teachers aim at helping everyone who sees the world differently.

Teachers of the focus group discussion in Coaltown's Beta School approach the problem that Roma children are praised to the skies by their parents who unconsciously set the bar high for them

more realistically. During the discussion, overestimation became one of the issues that provoked a fierce debate but created a strong consent among the teachers. A similarly strong consent evolved after the story of an older teacher on the advantages of teaching in homogenous Roma classes.

Seeking for an explanation behind ethnic differences in school performance, our interviewees emphasised, again, the significance of different family backgrounds, and embedded this claim into a genetic discourse: ..."differences between traditions, cultural differences. Zs: One has to accept: Gypsy blood is Gypsy blood.") Then they mentioned later in the interview: „one's genes are more salient than one's circle of friends, the latter stems from the former."

Emphasising cultural differences linked with the discourse about genetically inferior "others" appears to be popular among the teachers in both sites. However, just a few teacher and only one school in Coaltown seemed to be concerned about expressing a socially framed argument that, rather, identified the sources of the problem in deep poverty, unemployment and experiences of discrimination. The fact that the teachers are aware of the conditions these children and their families live in can be explained with personal experiences. (As we have mentioned earlier, this school is concerned about developing and maintaining strong relations between teachers and parents.) That is to say, although there are teachers in this school who share certain stereotypes on ethnicity, there are some who recognise the influence of poverty, and of the broader, prejudiced and discriminative social environment, on the children's life and their struggle, and intend to help them. These teachers, belonging to the latter group, are the opinion-leaders in the school.

A short part of a focus-group interview tellingly demonstrates the dynamics of diverse opinions:

J: There is an instance I could never forget. It happened in the bakery in G. street (densely populated by Roma) and not even in V. street (main street). A young Roma, a trainee who studied commerce, served customers in white sleeves. He weighted bread.

Y.: Why is that a problem?

J.: That's not the problem pre se, the real problem is that he was the only one wearing sleeves, just the Roma assistant. I'm never going to forget this. Poor boy.

Sympathy: This is how it is.

I.: And then he says to his friends: 'See, I studied, but for what reason?'

X.: Their role models do not represent real values. They stand for images in the media, for the atmosphere of the streets, and fail to point out the really interesting things.

I.: If they were surrounded with more people of Roma origins 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 shall note, there are Roma colleges or university graduates but they disappear. However, their guidance would be important.

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

I.: He is the exception.

The management of Coaltown's Beta School takes an essentially different approach towards the cultural otherness of Roma children: neither segregationist nor colour-blind. They attempt to adopt a "colour-conscious" education model seeking for an alternative that does not change power relations significantly, guarantees the efficiency of teaching for Roma children, and does not frighten away non-Roma belonging to the institution's district. The need to experiment with new ways of teaching and assessing stems from the institution's history.

Beta School has always been the institution in town where most of the socially marginalised and deprived children were sent. The present director of the school inherited a staff that had been socialised to deal with these kids. The school has always put great emphasis on dealing with socially deprived children as well as children coming from different cultural backgrounds. Dealing openly with questions of ethnicity and the concept of a „special culture" became important not for their own sake but because answers were expected from it to problems that teachers had to face during their work. In addition, it was noticed by teachers that Roma children often feel ashamed of their origin. Therefore, they thought that special approaches were needed. The most important factor that stipulates the success of this special, and very much local, version of multicultural education is that it is implemented in a professional context where the quality of teaching and pedagogical innovations are very important, and in a social context where both teachers and children feel comfortable and trust each other.

4.3. Students' experience of being othered

We have found a wide range of examples as to how children experience being made to feel different and the ways in which they themselves differentiate, the differences they create, and the role of being Roma in all this. The only common tendency in both sites, and in all schools in those sites, was that they felt the broader majoritarian social environment to be adverse. The narrative of traumas developed primarily from stories of institutional discrimination heard from parents and stories of personal humiliation. These stories either came from personal experience, or were passed by word of mouth in their own peer group about how, when and who was insulted or "called names", because they were Roma. The interactions with the majority society, therefore, carry the message for these children that being Roma/Gypsy is simply bad.

However, in their experiences at school, we can detect much more significant differences. Everyone agreed in the rejection, in principle, of segregation in schools; however, those for whom desegregations had been a personal experience, reported many personal traumas linked with it. These traumas immediately appeared in an ethnicised way in Chemtown-pupils, while this was not the case with Coaltown-students.

New pupils were clearly aware that they were not welcome. A boy from the eighth grade recounted his change of school:

„How was the M street school? Was it a good school?’

‘It was good, it wasn’t that strict. Here, at Gamma School, they wouldn’t even let us go to the shops. I liked it, it wasn’t too strict, all my friends were there, more or less. When we left there, it felt very alien in this school. It was unusual for me because we were among Hungarians...people of Hungarian origin, and there, in the M street school, most of us, the majority were Roma.’

‘So it was strange for you among Hungarians?’

‘Well, they didn’t want to make friends with me, I really don’t know why, because I don’t care about what your background is, but the teachers didn’t really pay that much attention to us, either.’

‘So you didn’t really make friends at the new school?’

‘I did have a couple, though not very serious friendships, they were more like acquaintances.’

‘And what was it that made you feel unwelcome there?’

‘They didn’t pay attention to us, they didn’t make friends, and the teachers were pretty much the same.’

‘And did that change, later?’

‘No, it didn’t.’”

When talking about the other class, students labelled it as the “Hungarians”, the “Gazhos”, or the “Roma”: ethnicity has become the most salient identifier in school relations. Students of the “Roma class” attribute their grievances to their “Romaness”, whenever they are not satisfied with their grades or are told off by the teacher. Parallel classes have failed to develop any strong affiliations towards each other. If there is any, those fragile attachments can be destroyed by a conflict that appears to be ethnic. That is to say, any conflicts between children can easily be ethnicised. As a result of strong institutionalised segregation, the prevailing schema of interpretation has been ethnicity that can be applied by anyone, including students, teachers or parents.

However, we do not only encounter the ethnicised interpretation of conflicts and traumas in segregated schools that have a “Gypsy” class, but also in schools having a colourblind policy, which do not, in our view, provide grounds for the children to feel discriminated against because of their ethnic origin. Our example in this case is drawn from the school in Chemtown, where there are four Roma children in the 8th grade class. The two boys get on well with the colour-blind policy of equality, but the two girls do not.

As for our observations on the Roma girls, they refused to take part in any of the programmes, saying that they do not like their classmates. When asked for an explanation, they answered that it was because they are “Hungarians” or “Gazhos”, meaning they are “pompous”, “sniffy”, and stigmatise them because of their “Romaness”. We were utterly surprised since we did not experience an atmosphere within which ethnic stigmatisation would have been justified. After

a while it turned out that the situations in which they found themselves less valuable than the majority were experienced by them as ethnicised humiliation: when someone made a comment on the bad students, for instance. The Roma girls do not meet the ethnic majority outside of school, which means that the school becomes the "Hungarian" place from them, where they can experience their otherness. They also differentiate themselves from their Hungarian peers saying that they are cooler and stand up for each other, in comparison with the Hungarians who are "under the thumb" and do not protect each other. While they see difference everywhere, the school demands the recognition of sameness. The school's policy of colourblindness can be held accountable for the girls' isolation in so far as their traumas and conflicts that they feel and interpret as coming from an alien or rejected dimension, are not treated seriously and are not openly discussed with the girls. It does not allow space for the difference of experiences, both within and outside the school, to come out, in fact expressly forbidding them from becoming an issue. At the same time, colour-blindness, coupled with pedagogical apathy, can often result in difference being interpreted as disability or defect. In other words, the girls can only blame themselves for their own failures in the discourse of the school, which is clearly too great a burden for a 14-year-old girl and so they explain their own lack of success in school and feelings of exclusion by blaming it on the racism of the teachers and other students. Despite the above, focus group discussions revealed that the implementation of integrated education managed to develop a language for exchanging ideas, solving tensions and coping with difficulties. Students in Class B demonstrated their disapproval of discrimination, of all sorts of racial differentiation, and aimed to understand the complexity of the situation of the Roma in Hungary, and there were just a few who made them responsible for their problems. At the same time, when asked to create a rank of the causes of Roma students' failures at school, an open debate evolved between the Roma girls and the rest of the group. The debate arose when one of the Roma girls started listing her experiences of discrimination, mistreatment and biased evaluation of her school achievements on the part of the teachers. The majority was shocked and felt being accused of something they did not do, and considered the Roma girls' interpretation of events unacceptable. Additionally, some of the students suggested that Roma had always received more help from teachers than any of the ethnic majority. More and more students started echoing the standpoint of the teaching staff in this matter, according to which the chances are equal to perform well, and it depends on the child if he or she is ready and wants to take the most out of the situation. There are plenty of inter-class or school conflicts in the Coaltown school, too, but, in contrast to the above, the interpretation of these conflicts is not ethnicised in the view of the children. In fact, considering the categories that are formed by the children when discussing these conflicts, and by what terms they define the confronted parties, it appears that the conflicts are between such and such type of girls – in other words, different interpretations of femininity become highlighted in interpreting the conflict. Clearly, the background trauma, affecting every student, is that they were moved out of their accustomed environment. However, the spokespeople of the class who vocalise this happen to be girls, who then find female enemies in the other classes, and thus the conflict is transformed to be seen as one about different categories of girls, their related behavioural norms, and the differing interpretations of sexuality. During one group interview session, conflicts were described like this:

F.M: Are there concrete examples from the recent past? I heard one just now...And I'd like to hear it again from you, it happened in the last physics lesson.

Sz: That we were chased out the '8A's? We got detention again. That was good.

Sz: The girls who were there are the ones we don't really like since the beginning of the year. They started eating during class. They laughed at us. So we told them where to get off, and the teacher sent them out, and we shouted a few selected words after the,.. The teacher put down what we said on a paper, and we got

detention straight away.

F.M: Why have you been angry with these girls right from the start of the year?

Sz: What happened is that the teacher said we should put our food away, and we put it away, but they just put it in their desks and carried on eating, and then the teacher sent them out.

V: And we got angry because they couldn't go on a school trip because they'd done something during class, but then they could leave the classes to go to the yard. While they should have been learning the same stuff as us.

Sz: Then we shouted at them that they're freaks and then we got in trouble ourselves...

Sz: There was this one time when a 7th-grader went over to someone and said you should control yourself or you'll get beaten up, but nothing came of it.

Zs: Yeah, I had the same thing, there was this girl who had a problem with me, she was jealous or something, and she carved on the desks all this stuff about Zsofi this and Zsofi that, and I got angry. I asked this girl why they'd written that stuff on the desks and she just made this noise and walked off. I pushed her a little, so she almost fell in the bin, and then she came back and wanted to slap me on the face but I got there first and slapped her. Then she ran off crying, and all. But nothing happened, I didn't get sent to the headmaster or anything.

The three or four strong groups of the most vocal girls and the ones who generate the conflicts include Roma and non-Roma, as well as those who did not take any open position in this regard. All of them rejected the serious and humiliating forms of racial discrimination of Roma, which one of the Roma members of the group characterised as follows:

Like, let's say, someone looks at me the wrong way, looks down on me or says something, like what kind of clothes you're wearing, or like this one or that one is 'Gypsy', or 'how does your mother look like', 'cause that happened, too, that I was friends with this boy but just friends and then we had a fight and the next day I came to school with my mum and when he saw my mum he told my other friend, like, "Jesus, her mum's a bloody Gypsy, too" and so on, and so ('cause I found out about it) I went and beat him up the next day. I got him a bit, and it was the teacher who stopped me. (Student, Alpha School)

There is only one acceptable form of discussion of Roma ethnicity for them, which they practice often: this is kidding around, humorous innuendoes, which most often are centred on difference in skin colour.

F.M: Do the others think differently, about how big a role Roma ethnicity plays among the children?

F: But we have our little jokes.

V: Like, for example, chocolate boy..., like that.

V: That's how we show Feri we love him.

Feri, who was mentioned in this dialogue is a successful and popular student among his peers, not so much because of his academic achievements but because of his sporting prowess and masculinity:

"Like, Feri, who said like, 'I'm FER! the big badass, would you like to shush me, but he was just kidding around like that, 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. ..."

What makes it difficult to accept someone? This question was asked in each of the three focus groups conducted with Coaltown students. The kids themselves seemed to insinuate that they would happily discuss this. We wanted to see if this subject would bring up ethnic categories. This did not happen, and the consensus was quickly reached that it was hard to accept someone who "had lots of money and was up themselves". In other words, the differentiation among the kids themselves is much more along class than ethnic lines. Indeed, as they said in one interview, there are forms of conceitedness that are typical of Roma (too).

We discussed at greater length in the previous chapter how children's extra-curricular activities structure peer groups, or rather, what activities are made possible by the existing familial and neighbourly relationships, and how these are – or are not – re-arranged by relations at school. Here we merely refer to the fact that, in the four schools of the two cities, we met very different typologies. In one case, which is the most extreme in the segregated schools of Chemtown, Roma children, when at school, are unable to leave a network of relationships ultimately based on kinship and neighbour-relations; in fact, in face of their contact with the "Hungarians" and "racists", they become more closely-knit, and a dichotomous worldview based on ethnic relations –Roma versus Hungarians – becomes a key element of their understanding of social relations and their understanding of how the world itself functions.

In another instance, difference and the situational visibility of ethnicity seemed more salient. In this Coaltown school, and partly also in the integrated school in Chemtown, class cliques and school 'gangs' are significantly ethnically mixed. This also indicates that Roma ethnicity is not constantly present for the schoolchildren, either as a topic of discussion, or as the habitual practice of stereotypes. It, rather, appears in a situational way, largely in ritualised forms of communication. These include verbal insults that reproduce the hierarchical relationships of the outside world, while at the same time maintaining the illusion of their reversibility. The other ritualised form is kidding around, joking, which we may also call a form of acceptable (?) incorrectness.

'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 said "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 it kicked off.'

'Do they call other people there names, too?'

' Well, that's pretty standard at 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.'

5. FACTORS AND MOTIVATIONS BEHIND VARYING SCHOOL PERFORMANCES AND DIVERTING EDUCATIONAL CAREERS

The Hungarian Survey Report produced a set of insightful results about achievements, advancement and later career options of young children of different socio-economic and ethnic background, which might enrich our knowledge about:

- how local school arrangements, with either processes of selection and segregation or with deliberate policies for social and ethnic integration, influence ambitions and chances of 14-16-year old youth of different ethnicity;

- how the social and ethnic background of the parents affect the child's school performance and educational career;

- how future career choices are determined by the concealed socio-economic, ethnic and gendered interests in grading.

A rich international as well as national literature has already discussed the tendencies that have become confirmed by the qualitative part of our research: students of the higher social strata have better school achievements than those of the lower end of the social hierarchy; children of the ethnic majority perform better than students with an ethnic minority background, and girls' performance proves better than that of boys. However, while the tendencies are surely not surprising, the scale of differences and the factors that shape them are shocking and worth discussing. Members of the majority of solid social background is over-represented among the so-called "good" students and hence, continues their educational career in good-quality secondary education, which provides a smooth path towards higher education. Students of equally good school achievements but in worse social situation apply for weaker, less prestigious secondary schools, and are more concerned about specialising in something, however, they do not preclude the possibility of higher education. Students of disadvantaged social situation, especially those with Roma background in our sample, opt for low-prestige schools, primarily because of their low level of performance in elementary school. There is a significant correlation between the educational background of the parents, on the one hand, and differences in school achievements as well as diverse paths towards future career, on the other, which tellingly demonstrates that compulsory education fails to compensate for disadvantages stemming from the socio-economic background of the family, instead, it emphasises and reinforces separation.

The Survey Report discussed in detail that measuring school performance by grading is neither objective nor unbiased, but mirrors stereotypes and teacher prejudices towards gender and ethnicity as well as expresses views on social differences. Also importantly, school marks are shaped by school policies of selection or integration as well as by the composition of students. Accordingly, one can recognise the relativistic nature of grades: the very same grade has different content in the case of different schools in the educational market. As a result, a play with different interpretations of grades has been enacted by teachers, who are in decision-making positions and are regarded as an instrument in the hands of schools to execute their power and justify their selections and ranking. Hence, chances for schooling and further education are not just influenced by individual abilities, efforts and ambitions, but also by the level as well as the character of local educational institutions. By the same token, even if the level of knowledge and competence of Roma students is higher than that of the majority, the unequal distribution of chances induce strongly departing careers and huge differences in later opportunities.

We intended to draw upon qualitative methods and gain a deeper insight into our target group, a number of 14-16- year old students in both sites, in order to investigate the assumptions briefly described above as well as related statements. By doing personal interviews as well as focus group discussions with teachers, Roma students and their parents, we attempted to reveal the factors that would explain the poor results of student of ethnic minority and the diverging paths of educational career.

5.1. Role of the family in school achievement and educational career

5.1.1. The socio-economic situation and educational background of families

Based on the interviews with parents and students, we can see that Roma families in our sample belong to the lowest strata of Hungarian social hierarchy. Even the few families that are doing relatively well have been able to reach, at best, the margins of lower-middle-class standards, which, to be sure, presumes significant social mobility in the given local societies, where the status of people is significantly below the national average. This is reflected by the residential and housing conditions of families, the educational level of parents, their employment histories and ways of making a living. The scale delineating on the basis of the interviews ranges from extreme misery to relatively consolidated ways of life that, nevertheless, are tainted by temporary unemployment and different kinds of losses.

Nearly all of the members of the parental generation come from families with many, often 8-10, children. The greater number of children compared to the Hungarian average is also characteristic of the families under investigation, however, our sample includes families with a single child or only 2 or 3 children as well. Only the smaller part of families are stable nuclear families, where both parents are present. Having children at a young age compared with the Hungarian average is especially characteristic in families with many children but is also seen in families with 2 or 3 children that are typical in the national context.

In spite of the wide variety of the employment histories of parents, there were not any families in our sample, save from a few exceptions, in which the parents were employed on a permanent basis. Even families where at least one parent used to have a stable employment relationship have to face temporary or permanent unemployment at present, and as a consequence, experience participation in some form of welfare provisions (disability pension, public employment, unemployment benefit), or illegal or semi-legal employment. Most of the families are thus characterised by a marginalised position, occupying a long scale, ranging from extreme misery to relatively consolidated ways of living. Still, according to the children and parents we interviewed, there are only a few families regularly struggling with hunger or facing a total loss of livelihood. Even the most deprived families can be characterised as living from one day to the next, that is, constantly struggling for survival. The sample talks about widespread, in some cases fatal, intergenerational transmission of poverty and social deprivation.

Parents' educational patterns are relatively homogeneous with respect to schooling. None of our respondents from the parental generation have a degree from high school or university, and parents having acquired some kind of professional qualification, either during their years at school or later on beside their work, represent a minority. Low education is a peculiar characteristic of mothers, some of whom have not even finished primary education. The background explanation is that for girls raised in extended families in Roma quarters domestic duties represent a stronger requirement than attending school that is not only hard to access but also fails to provide significant perspectives. As one of our interviewee, a mother from a small village said: "I attended school at H., but my parents were, like, having pigs and we had to be with tem. I vainly insisted on going to school. They said they'd beat me. I had to keep an eye on the pigs. They did not give me the chance to study. I am now ashamed."

Another, frequently mentioned, reason is early marriage, becoming mother at a very young age, as in the following case:

“Do you remember why you stopped going to school?”

‘Of course I do! How could I forget that! I got married when I was almost 15 years old and became pregnant 3 months after the wedding and then I stopped going to school. After I gave birth to my son I had go to classes once or twice in a week. Then I was acquitted.’

‘Did you like your school?’

‘I liked going to school, but love made me crazy. If someone is in love, school is not that interesting anymore.’”

The fate of parents appears to be repeated in large families with as many as 8–10 children that are also represented in our sample. Girls have to take care of their younger siblings, while boys often must help out in family income-generating activities (occasional or black labour, sometimes even involving illegal activities, like the steeling of wood or the collection of iron). Struggling for survival entails absences from school, which is also manifested in poor educational performance.

Despite the generally low educational attainment of the parents, the lifestyle, financial circumstances as well as the life-strategies of the families – partly due to the different historical, social, economic, and ethnic characteristics of the two chosen sites – might be different, hence, we attempted to identify some other reasons as explanations for poor school performance of our target population.

5.1.2. Psycho-sociological factors influencing school achievement

The second category of the factors stemming from the socio-familial background of Roma students and affecting their school performance adversely might include psychological reasons. As a consequence of the unfavourable effects of transition, such as the massive rise in the number of the unemployed, Roma families are faced with limited social mobility and increasing discrimination on the part of the majority society. Not just the poorest, but the formerly employed families with a solid income had to experience that neither qualification nor the school-leaving exam, nor further education guarantees a job under such economic circumstances, especially not for the Roma whose residential and school segregation has been continuously intensifying since the 1990s.

On the basis of the above, it is understandable that neither diligence nor good school performance is valued by some class communities, and the lack of social mobility induces low self-esteem and the feeling of uselessness. The following citation from an interview clearly shows the above. All the good students have gone from the class of a “good student” in Coaltown, and among the staying ones (mostly Roma kids) learning does not count as a source of success, although this is the „good” class in the given school:

„Some of my classmates were gone. Mostly the best ones, and then everything got started. The better students were always despised. ... Whenever I was at the blackboard and did something well, they started teasing me. If I was wrong, I was teased with that, too. Whatever I do, I would never be an integral part of the class. I don't know. They scorn me off... They sometimes fail to recognise that I'm there...”

As for Roma children raised in under-educated, poor families, especially in rural colonies or quarters segregated in a ghetto-like manner, further education can take place, at best, in some low-standard vocational school nearby. These are the only schools where, as it is described in the literature as

well as suggested by our interviewees, the danger of drop-out is high, whereas professional qualification that may be obtained there does not provide convertible knowledge one can benefit from in the labour market. One of the students gave the following account on the differences among accessible secondary schools in the neighbourhood:

"You are admitted at the Surányi school when your average is about 5, at the Don Bosco when it is about 2, and at 102 secondary school when it is about 3. [In Hungary grades are from 1 to 5, 1 meaning failure and 5 standing for excellent.] There are Gypsies at the Surányi as well, or at 102, but not that many, and they are taught together with Hungarians. However, at Don Bosco, there are exclusively Gypsy classes: so that makes the difference." (The mentioned schools, to which local residents attach very different prestige, represent the supply of local secondary schools.)

In this environment, most of the girls choose to be specialised as shop-assistants, hair-dressers or pastry-makers, while boys try their luck in areas related to construction work, such as brick-laying and welding. In such families, school careers – not only of the parental generation but also that of siblings – come to a dead end, and this family pattern appears as an unavoidable fate in the eyes of students. This is suggested by the statement of a schoolgirl attending a segregated village school: "My brother has obtained a certificate at a vocational school. He is in welding. My sisters have no qualifications, they did not go on. They could not have continued as they had not completed the eight grades. ... my elder sister did seven and my younger sister did only six, because they already had a partner at that time and so they stopped going to school".

5.1.3. Strategies of families regarding further education

According to the majority of the interviews done with parents and students, on the one hand, parents encourage their children to continue their studies and support their ambitions, while on the other hand, they try to remain realistic and provide a real picture on opportunities. Among both parents and students, there are three characteristic motives regarding the strategies of further education / career choices:

a. Accessibility of the selected type of school. A recurring idea in both parental and student interviews was that, since the intended professional qualification could only be obtained in a distant settlement, the child should make the decision either to complete the 8th and 9th grades of the local secondary school and then specialise in the selected field of studies, or to leave the settlement. (For instance, an ambitious and good student who, following his father's example, wants to become a butcher, rather stays at the local professional school, where he has specialised in informatics.) At the same time, we heard arguments that either convince the child to stay at home or encourage him/her to leave. Such arguments were made especially in focus group discussions, in connection with related topics (Vivien, a good student, is persuaded by her teachers to go and continue her education in a high school of a distant city). Among reasons of staying, material considerations (expensive travelling, high costs of staying there) were emphasised by the parents, as well as risks threatening girls and boys in different ways (in the case of boys, fear that they would mingle with bad people and start drinking and taking drugs, while in the case of girls, concern that, outside of parental control, they would adopt an immoral lifestyle). Another reason mentioned was that, far away from their community, they would be exposed even more to the danger of being discriminated due to their Roma origin. At the same time, one of the mothers argued:

"She must go, and that's it. Why would she work as a dressmaker in a small village? ... There, in that small village, she would not be able to succeed. Like it is the case with me: I have three children, so nothing has become of me. I could have attended a boarding school in V but I did not go... So what do you have here?"

Public employment and picking garbage in town – so my son is ashamed when seeing me on the street."

Similar opinions were articulated in students' groups: "she should stay close to her family", "she would be robbed and brutalised, would suffer provocations. Or: "If she goes to high school, her grades might improve, however, her father and mother will be concerned thinking she will be stigmatised. Because of her brown skin."

b. The child should accomplish more than the parent. This desire was articulated both by parents and children. A student said, for instance: "I want a different life than that of my parents. A better one. I study so that I can live better." As against this kind of quite general argument, difficulties faced probably by everyone in today's crisis-stricken Hungary, characterised by an exceptional high rate of unemployment, were mentioned all the time: obtaining qualifications is useless as long as there are no jobs available. Thus a way of gaining prominence and social mobility that seems to be viable for students is by taking a job abroad, which, in fact, is practiced by many people in the family and among relatives.

c. The child should not suffer failures due to his or her origins. The fear that people of Roma origin are unable to find a job and succeed in the labour market even if they have obtained convertible knowledge, was expressed both by parents and students. As a student said about studying further:

"Especially my father thinks it is important. He says that by studying I can prove myself. Well, I see all these people having several professions and still being unable to find employment, only because they are Gypsies." Or, in somebody else's opinion: "There is no use in graduating from high school when your origin prevents you from being hired anywhere. They always say the job has been filled."

Or: "...I have heard of a case when a university student of Roma origin, an excellent person – so he has everything: university certificate and whatever you want – finally received a job as a waiter..." Concerns regarding the resistance on the part of the majority society may influence already the choice of career. Opinions regarding the unwillingness to employ Roma in certain "visible" positions (as shop assistant, bank clerk, etc.) are frequently heard:

My daughter had a classmate who was also Roma and wanted to study food-supply. She was accepted at the school and so a shop had to be found where she could do internship. The reason why she has never become a shop assistant was that, wherever she tried, she was told that if she had touched the ham, no one would come to the store anymore.

For the same reason, some of the parents tried to persuade their children to start a private business, instead of working as an employee.

5.2. Role of teachers in minority students' school achievement and aspirations toward further education

Apart from individual characteristics (as there were one or two students with excellent abilities at every school), significant differences were found among interviews with family members regarding the attitude of the school and the teachers. Students attending classes where the number of Roma students educated together with majority children is low, or where the form master actively contributes to enabling participation in supplementary educational forms accessible for Roma students (after-school institution providing individual tutoring, scholarship programs), gave account of much more support coming from teachers. Here are two examples regarding supportive attitude of teachers:

"I believe that those who really try and study are not excluded but supported instead. ...That is what trainers and tenders are for ... when they see this or that

child is talented, they would apply for support to help him or her. They also try to find the appropriate place, high school or vocational school, for the student ...".

Or:

"the teachers as well as my cousin (an activist of a local civil organisation) recommended I graduate from high school. He graduated and now attends the school in Ózd, the same my form master suggested I try (a boarding school specialised in cultivating talent)".

The accounts of children and parents suggest that a teacher may be regarded as a positive figure in a child's life not only when he encourages students to perform better at school and, perhaps, continue their studies at a higher level, but already by accepting them and not differentiating them because of their Roma origin.

"It is a bit like she was our mother. Because she's like that. She doesn't differentiate between Gypsies and Hungarians. I like her because she cares for us. She's not like the other form master."

Influenced by his parents, a boy from Coaltown reassessed his opinion about how his form master and other teachers with his Roma friends and himself:

„He is strict, really strict. They (other Roma students) think he is strict just with the Roma. But it is not true. They just don't like him!"

Q: Why do they think that?

'My mother told me the stricter the teacher, the better it is for me. I accept that and I ceased fire with many of my teachers. In the beginning I thought that they were racists. There were the Hungarian teacher, the German teacher and my form master. I am getting on with them well now."

However, some cases were mentioned in almost all of the interviews – even though not always based on personal experience, yet as incidents that the Roma student or parent could have witnessed – regarding the tendency among teachers to differentiate Roma students from the majority. Distinctive treatment can be manifested in the degree of attention paid by the teacher, or in his or her judgment of school performance:

"Gypsies were not treated in the same way as Hungarians. They did not receive any attention. When writing test papers, teachers would write whatever they thought about us on the paper, whether or not we deserved it." Or: "We were always down-graded. After school exams, we compared the testpapers written by Gypsies and one that was written by a Hungarian. They are totally identical, yet the Hungarian gets 5 [the highest grade] and we get 2 or 3."

When a teacher jokes about the ethnic origin of a student, repeating stereotypes about the Roma held by the social majority, this constitutes a particularly severe injury suffered by the self-perception of minority adolescents. For instance:

"The school is good, except for a few teachers who make exceptions according to whether you are Roma or Hungarian. Let's say, we are outside having a gym class and the teacher keeps saying that, oh, if the Roma girls dislike it, they can leave just as well." "[The teacher] would say things, like, don't mess with me because I will accidentally slap one of them and then the Gypsies can go to RTL Club [a

television channel that has a Roma life show program] ... and then he would say a few Roma jokes ... he always emphasises that they are Gypsies..."

Discrimination by teachers is resented not only by students but also by parents as a kind of attitude that hinders their children's development, inhibits their accommodation in the school and, in evaluating their educational results in a biased way, prevents them from continuing their studies in relatively good schools. Parental responses to this problem occupy a wide scale, ranging from passive acceptance of an unchangeable fate, or defeatism, through reactions of verbal aggression, to occasional active interventions. A mother, for instance, whose child was physically abused by the teacher (who tore the new jacket he was wearing), rushed into the school calling the teacher to account for what she did, and finally the teacher reported her, and the mother was punished because of her aggressive behaviour.

The teachers also recognise that in certain hopeless situations of life there is no chance to motivate the child, especially when the parental background resists meeting the requirements set by the school. Some might say that there are basic differences in the values: in the Roma families weak result at school have no consequences and the good marks are not seen as valuable. So the family background is an obstacle in front of the children's motivation. Another interviewee blames Roma culture besides his/her disadvantaged social situation for low parental expectations and bad performance:

„There are many problems with the Roma children. .. We know the source of the problem... where it stems from, what their culture is like and what kind of background they come from. And the biggest problem is that they start their school career with a huge disadvantage and they get frustrated."

Not surprisingly, there is a sense of scepticism towards the school performance of Roma students even among teachers who generally approach students with empathy:

„The root of the problem can be found in the family and in the society, rather than in the schooling system. I am referring to the stereotypes that are evolved and then spread among the people. They also experience that they are despised and therefore cannot find a job. And then they live well on welfare assistance. ... If the parents are not supportive, we can't transmit anything but the basics and pieces of culture. ...They (Roma students) never want to work. If the parents don't mind having lousy children around, then it is obvious that the child doesn't want to study or work. ... The problematic period sets in for all Roma children when they become teenagers. Then they turn to be aggressive, triggered by all the harms they got already. (Q: Their parents suffered a lot too, didn't they?) Yes. This is one of the reasons why I don't see any chance for a change. The children take their parents life as an example which should be followed, and that is a vicious circle. They think that it's not worth putting any effort in there since they belong to different social strata."

By interviewing teachers, we intended to understand the situation of disadvantaged families and their children living under poor conditions. These conversations barely hint at those harmful effects that primarily impinge on Roma students and are originated either from the institutional arrangements of the given school or from the biased approach of the teacher. Apart from some expressive adjectives or sentences that revealed a general aversion towards the Roma, we rather experienced various forms of declining responsibility. The low performance of students and their dead-end educational career are regarded as evident outcomes of the poor social conditions of the family, while in relation to the low educational level of the parents the children's lack of motivation and the adults' carelessness comes up. Furthermore, it is commonly held that all the above is the consequence of a culture of living on benefits and allowances. Cultural explanations argue that the Roma "way of being" is incompatible with the norms and values of the ethnic majority.

Appreciatively but not accusingly, one of the teachers of Beta School in Coaltown shifts the responsibility of the school for bad school performance upon the families and their social conditions:

"What matters is the parental background, primarily, as well as the finances. .. I had a Roma student who had to help the groceries' in the market hall in order to afford a new pair of shoes or books as well as equipment. ... They have their own ways in life, but while one is working the other has time to study."

The reason why Roma students are lagging behind is considered to be the indifferent attitude of Roma parents towards school, which, according to teachers of schools sets limit to a constructive parent-teacher relation with the majority of Roma. One of them said:

"The problem is that the parents are uninterested. So whatever we try to do, all of our efforts are futile... We introduced the idea of 'open day' in school. They didn't come... Neither seize they the opportunity to come during office hours. We tried to be flexible enough so they can come any time, which is not that comfortable for us anyways, but they didn't show up."

This opinion is shared by another teacher who refers to the over-sensitivity of Roma parents:

"More and more parents skip the parental meetings, and there is a Roma-only class from which none of the parents came in. The rest of the Roma parents don't really care about this, just when think they are offended."

As for another teacher-interviewee: Roma parents are mostly not interested in the school. She admits that there is a constant conflict with the parents, e.g. they do not pay the class's expenses, or they do not come when they are called. She acknowledges that some parents help their children with studying, but according to her opinion this is not typical. Roma students are characterised in the following way:

"Their approach is completely different, it is – I don't know how to put it politely – ignorant. Maybe that's the good word. There are a few exceptions but I'm talking about the majority and my experience is based upon their ignorance... I think there is a lack of motivation in them since their parents do not require from them to study and they never help them or tell them off if they get a bad grade. They go home and tell their parents that they got an E, and their parents say: 'So what the heck?' They are under-motivated. I think they don't get support from their parents."

According to a teacher, studying is not that important for Roma families: instead of working, they prefer to live on welfare assistance, which is a bad pattern for children, and teachers are weak to counterbalance the impact of the family:

"... they represent two different systems of values, in any sense, such as their ways of being, the quality of their living or their future aspirations. It makes a difference if someone is brought up in an environment that has books and a computer and the parents are employed."

Some of the interviewees expanded the picture and placed the discourse on Roma culture as living on benefits and allowances in relation to the wider society's general attitude towards the Roma, as is revealed by a statement already quoted above:

"The root of the problem can be found in the family and in the society, rather than in the schooling system. I am referring to the stereotypes that are evolved and then spread among the people. They also experience that they are despised and

therefore cannot find a job. And then they live well on welfare assistance."

There was only one among our teacher interviewees who admitted that not only family and socio-economic situation, but also teachers have responsibility for the educational career of Roma children. According to her experiences,

"there are just a few of them who succeed in studying further than high school, and there is also a high drop-out rate. ... It can be partly because what these children see is that both of their parents stay home and are unemployed. So they might imagine the same future as their parents have. ... What is important is that the teacher should pay attention to each child, to let them feel that they are not lost. ... We have to cope with the situation even if it demands a lot of work, while they just dismiss them..."

5.3. Reasons for poor school advancement of Roma students – from three perspectives

On the basis of personal interviews, we assume that the same question concerns teachers, students and parents differently. We expected that the children would less accuse their parents and themselves than their teachers and the school for their weak achievement and worse future life chances; that the parents would be more willing to place the responsibility on the school or on bad social situation, instead of questioning both their own role and their child's attitude towards school; and, finally, we were certain that the teachers would commonly share the opinion that the low school achievement of Roma students is neither the consequence of their biased attitudes toward minority students, nor of the selective character of the educational system, but it is caused by the social problems that manifest in marginalisation and generate a negative attitude towards school.

The focus group discussions provided the opportunity for the participants to reach an agreement through debates ranking the reasons for poor school performance, high drop-out rates, low percentage of Roma students in further education, etc. The participants did not come to terms with each other in all cases. The composition of the groups – whether an entirely Roma group of students or of parents or a mixed one – highly influenced our results (teachers without exception belonged to the ethnic majority). We experienced varied opinions primarily in the mixed groups, however, the differences could not be rendered along ethnic origin but were formed in relation to the atmosphere of the group. Many of the Roma students and their parents in the mixed groups of Coaltown were more inclined to agree with the majority in crucial questions and, as a consequence, were willing to place themselves in opposition to their peers, as compared with entirely Roma groups.

In one of the mixed student-groups of Alpha School a heated debate took shape about which aspect should have been prioritised: bad financial situation of the families or the different value system of Roma families. The second place in the rank was also controversial since they could not come to terms with each other in raking 'the weaker capabilities of Roma students' and 'negative peer-group influence'. There were two lists created in the mixed student group of Chemtown's Delta School, where the opposition was visibly between students of ethnic minority and the majority: non-Roma students were keen on blaming the Roma for educational disadvantages, arguing that "the educated Roma do not help the other Roma as much as the Hungarians", or

"As to keeping or breaking social norms: in school they keep themselves to the rules but at the moment they leave the building they start acting differently. The norms of that population or community come into force and concern him. And they spend the rest of time among themselves."

As opposed to the above, Roma students rather identified the circumstances as limiting their educational attainment, such as unacceptable living conditions due to which children cannot concentrate on studying, therefore learning cannot become a value. They attributed the bad experiences about the

worth of studying to the unequal opportunities and discrimination in the labour market.

In the Roma student group of Chemtown's Gamma School 'discrimination by the teachers' led the list, and great importance was attributed to the fact that the Roma attend weaker schools in comparison with their peers belonging to the ethnic majority. Differences in school and family values were regarded as relevant, however, they claimed that the Roma students were troublesome, less willing to study, and had less chance to focus on school work due to the disadvantaged situation of their families.

Apparently, in the mixed parental group of Coaltown's Alpha School, Roma parents aspired to conform to the opinion of the non-Roma, however, identifying who was responsible for the poor school achievements of the Roma became a matter of dispute among Roma parents in the other focus group of Coaltown, too. Neither of the groups named the teachers or the school itself as responsible, and placed 'differentiation by the teachers' as the last one in the list. Rather, they traced educational disadvantages back to both parental background and hard social circumstances. However, the participants of the entirely Roma group contested the statement that Roma students did not care about school. A common denominator for both of the parental groups in Chemtown was that they regarded the difference between family and school values as having great importance. However, in relation to the quality of their children's school and its position in the hierarchy of local schools, parents whose children attend School No.9 assigned the weaker school, the collector of Roma students, to the first place. 'Differentiation by the teachers' was mentioned by both groups spontaneously, but placed behind 'disadvantaged social situation'. The ill-behaviour of students and their lack of motivation was placed in the middle of the list.

Among the teachers there were some noticeable similarities, disregarding whether teachers came from segregated schools with a Roma majority or from schools committed to integration, operating according to a colour-blind principle. Almost all groups emphasised the importance of the difference in the value-systems of the Roma and the non-Roma societies, putting it to the first place. Poor living conditions of families and the hopeless situation of unemployed Roma families were regarded as important but ranked lower than value differences. None of the groups took into account the mechanisms of the school system or the teachers' attitude as factors that might influence the school advancement of Roma students.

Even if it was not expressed openly in all teachers' group, in one school of Chemtown participants proclaimed that teachers had no responsibility, everything depends on family and student. There is an affirmative action policy, which means that it is easier for Roma students to go to high school than for their non-Roma peers:

"If a Roma wants to continue his/her studies further, none of us would harden his/her way, all the more, we would be more supportive with a Roma than with a non-Roma. If a Roma needs more help then every teacher would be helpful, but it requires reciprocity. That is to say it doesn't depend on the teacher but on the person how and what she/he decides upon."

While the teachers denied their role of differentiation between Roma and non-Roma in the process, they did not comment on a remark that was made in one of the groups: "the Roma blood is Roma blood". This implies that Roma students naturally bring their studies to an end as soon as possible. Some claimed that their birth and genetics determine their place in the world, and the values brought from home and strengthened by their peer-group influence their way of being the most. Roma students were characterised as if they did not have any self-discipline and self-criticism, and their parents were not regarded as partners of the school, since they were believed not to care much about their children's school achievements. Many of them stated that the Roma have a different value-system. "They have mobile phone but they don't have a notebook." The teachers emphasised the responsibility not only of the school but also that of the whole society, and acknowledged that Roma families have bad experiences about the worth of studying because of the unequal opportunities and discrimination

in the labour market. However, they raised the responsibility of the Roma community, too, arguing that "the educated Roma do not help the other Roma as much as the Hungarians do".

Only the teachers' focus group in Chemtown's Gamma School touched upon the issue that processes of selection conclude in marked ethnic divides and deep-going socio-ethnic inequalities. In the meanwhile, there were teachers in this group, too, who regarded the educational segregation of Roma as their own choice and as an inherent part of their culture: "they live in groups ... They prefer being together",. As for the majority of teachers, the school system is to be blamed for the fact that the Roma children attend weaker schools:

"Roma are concentrated in Borsod or Hajdú-Bihar counties, as a matter of fact, so you cannot find there good institutions. If there is just one good school in the district, there is no freedom of choice. However, if there are more than one school in the area, those are either run by an endowment or there is a secret enrolment procedure, so Roma children get excluded either way. Let's put it in this way: Roma are not accepted in good schools. This has been confirmed several times..."

5.4. Influence of different school policies: achievements, advancement and later opportunities of Roma students

Apart from the encouragement coming from the parents as well as the influence of the family motivating the child for further education, and disregarding the supporting or biased ways of the teachers in treating Roma children, the school also has a distinguished role in shaping students' ambitions, contributing to the planning of their career, and supporting or, for that matter, frustrating, their needs for mobility.

Given the constitution of our sample, our interviewees attended schools/classes where Roma origin was thematised in school life as well. As described in detail in the 2nd. chapter of this report, a part of schools have conscious selection policies to segregate Roma/disadvantaged students, while another part of them that has introduced conscious multicultural policies makes efforts to educate them together with the majority, and in the case of one school, virtually homogeneous Roma classes have resulted from the "white flight" of non-Roma families of the village.

The opinions of both parents and students concerning the school and the teachers, as well as their expectations regarding children's further studies and their actual decisions related to career choice, are primarily influenced by the type of school and class attended by the child. Since fusion of schools occurred in both settlements under investigation during the past years, the consequences of mergers were experienced personally by a significant part of students.

A part of students used to attend the school with a Roma majority that deteriorated and closed down, and since then they could experience segregation once more, this time the separation of Roma and non-Roma students within the school, while another part of them faced the changed proportion of Roma students within the class precisely as a consequence of mergers. A third group that attended village schools with increasingly homogeneous Roma classes could witness white flight, i.e. the withdrawal of majority children from the school. All these variations affected the inter-ethnic relationships of majority and minority students within the school, thereby contributing to interpretations of the position occupied by students in the given community as well as their image of themselves.

For many of our respondents, the previous "Roma school" was synonymous with a warm and cohesive community, while school integration elicited anxiety in them:

"...I liked it. It was not so mean. Basically, all my friends were there. When we came here, this school seemed so strange...here we were together with students of Hungarian origin".

A part of Roma parents also supported the maintenance of the school that was to be closed down:

"We were afraid when the children came here. We went to the self-government to asked them not to abolish the school."

At the same time, students of homogeneous Roma classes that were formed as a result of "white flight," experience the humiliating and socially detrimental nature of this process:

"Gypsies are despised. I have just heard that the reason why they do not register their children at this school is because of the Gypsies: they do not want them to mix with Gypsies. So let me ask: how can children meet and get to know each other if there are not any mixed classes?"

When the student has an idea of the background reasons, selection among classes within the school can also represent a harmful factor, inhibiting interethnic relations based on mutual acceptance and threatened identities tied to the students' own ethnic groups:

"We do not really like each other because that one is an almost totally Hungarian class, while ours is a Roma class, and they look down on us. ... The way they look down at us is this: although we are 12 and they are 18, when a new student arrives, he or she will be put into that class even though there are less students in ours, only because they would not put Hungarians in our class" ... "They are more protected because they are Hungarian. The headmaster is fonder of Hungarians than Gypsies ... well, he is drawn towards his own kind."

Ethnic conflicts are sharply articulated in schools that have "Roma" and "majority" classes, even though – as it could be seen from the survey – the motives of segregation included not just ethnic origin, as selection was also affected by the social position of families. There was, for example, an ambitious Roma mother of relatively high status, who thought her son would be more successful in a class where non-Roma represented the majority, and was disappointed when he ended up in the weaker, "more Roma" class:

"... When I schooled my child, I wanted him to attend class B. Because the standards and the quality of the community are higher in B... and I am not sure I wanted to have my child attend class A with other Roma children because of whom his grades and attitude would worsen."

There were children among students segregated as disadvantaged/Roma who did not think differentiation was harmful, as they feel more protected in their own, Roma, community:

"Well, I like it here, because Gypsies are separated and Hungarians are separated, too. (Question: why do you think you have not been put together?) Because they were probably afraid of Gypsies... they did not let us enter in their class, alright, just leave, said the teacher. And they do not enter our class..., they are probably afraid that we would fight them. We do not really make friends with children in the other class."

However, another part of segregated Roma students finds it really harmful that teachers try to inhibit the formation of friendships between classes, citing well-known charges and prejudices, such as Roma students want to go to the other class only to steel and fight. Students attending this type of school have developed some kind of mutual aversion, and since such distrust obviously does not favour becoming familiar with one another, it endangers future social integration as well.

Roma students attending classes with a Hungarian majority or integrated classes with a

multiculturalist approach mostly come from socially integrated families characterised by consolidated material conditions and living in mixed neighbourhoods. For them, accommodation into a mixed class community is usually not problematic. Although student and parental interviews as well as focus group discussions included opinions, arguments and observations suggesting that ethnic belonging is important in the formation of smaller groups within class communities, the gender or social status of students seems to have much more significance in the development of interpersonal relationships. At the same time, seeing minority ethnic belonging as potential disadvantage is quite frequent also in schools/classes aiming at ethnic and social integration, even if this is not because of the approach of the school but the unreceptive and prejudiced attitude of the majority society in general. This problem, evidently, can not be warded off even by a supportive school atmosphere.

5.5. Policy of integration or segregation in schools: Focus group discussions from three perspectives

Applied school policies related to integration of Roma students were assigned crucial importance in every focus group discussion. The story raised by the moderator in order to provoke a discussion was about the closing of a school in devastated conditions, which is supposed to be the collector of Roma students, and its merge into a school nearby that is primarily for students of the ethnic majority. The situation could ring a bell in each group since all participants either experienced mergers on their skin, or knew about it from hearsay, and could observe its effects on Roma students. The thought-provoking question was framed in the following way: "should the deteriorated and overly Roma school be merged with the higher-status school in the centre of the town?" It aimed at grasping attitudes of parents, students and teachers on a generalising level.

Student focus groups regarded the merger as problematic not from an ethnic point of view but, rather, due to the forced rearrangement of friendships and other relationships. They thought that the new-coming students have to stay together as a separate class so as to prevent potential aggression and fights between the old and the new students. In other cases, they assumed that the mixing of classes could trigger differentiation on the basis of social and familial background. Students of both sites stated: "Race doesn't matter", that is to say, integrated education of Roma and non-Roma students might compensate for social deprivation, promote the establishment of friendships and diminish the number of ethnic conflicts between students as well as eliminate the sense of racism.

The parents' points of view were in accordance with each other in measuring of the pros and cons of the school merger. This consent became even stronger when there were Roma parents or non-Roma parents in mixed marriage whose children were regarded by the majority as Roma. Starting with the strong statement that "Excluding Roma children is racial discrimination", to claims like "Gypsies and Hungarians, in fact, live together. ... they should be educated together starting from the first grade", the parents almost exclusively supported integrated education.

"Those are right who want to see the children together in one school, in one class-room. Naturally, the right solution is to educate children together, in the same school and class, because discrimination does no good to anybody... neither to children, nor to parents or to classmates. ... It's not good for anyone. It doesn't make any good in a society because the small details matter, and I think it is unjust that children are separated along ethnicity at an early age. ... Every child, disregarding ethnicity, has the right to get the same quality of education."

Parents of children who used to attend the former Roma-only school in Chemtown, and as a result of the merger were moved to the new school but remained separated, put more emphasis on mental and psychological injuries of the students, which might have been caused by techniques producing highly differential within-school compositions along the lines of social class

and ethnicity.

"Well, first that for a non-Roma student it is a nice environment... How do Roma children feel themselves? Is it bad good for them? The ugly, the devastated? And the Hungarian children go to the nice one? This is already such a mental pressure for them that they might develop an inferiority complex ..."

As for them, the expected result from integrated education is that the so-believed ignorant and badly achieving Roma students could catch up with their non-Roma peers.

"Unfortunately, there are Roma families with very silly children. They are sillier than the average. Well, we could say that the Hungarian children are more intelligent due to some other reasons and those children achieve more."

However, this was the only group which formulated the need for teachers of the ethnic minority who, as role models, could endow the younger generations with self-consciousness:

"...let's have a Roma teacher who would teach them, and the Hungarians would recognise her, too, and well, there is a Roma teacher who adapts herself to the children and teach them and then the Hungarians would approach the Roma differently."

The rest of the teachers regard integrated education as a policy forced upon the schools and doomed to failure, and claim that "The school opts for separation because integration deteriorates everybody's results." As a teacher said who favours selection in Chemtown:

„We want to force them to live according to our norms, but it looks impossible since it has not happened for 700 years. That is not the best way, but I do not know the solution. All I know is that they do not accept our norms", "They keep saying that the good student motivates the bad one. We experienced something different. The performance of the good one was deteriorating, not to mention that of the Roma students. Simply, integration is not favourable."

Other teachers, for example those working in the school with a Roma majority in Chemtown, expressed their worries and doubts in relation to the realisation of integration: "I think both are right. The municipality has to integrate them in order to show them how one has to work, what has to be done, whereas I also agree with the headmaster because integration demands a lot of efforts. As I see, they have a completely different culture, are brought up by different norms and values, and could hardly integrate. There are few exceptions, but the majority of Roma are like this." Another teacher said: " I think one should not create this dichotomy of integration or separation because both have advantages and disadvantages. The family is the most important. These children are brought up in a family and socialise in these units. I believe that 99% of the child is from home. We can possibly influence the remaining 1%."

The school in Coaltown is committed to realise a multicultural education, therefore its teachers support integration, however, they emphasised that the earlier it starts, the better. In this case Roma children with better results should motivate the other Roma, and non-Roma children could get to know and accept them inside the school, which leads to their acceptance outside school as well. According to the opinion of a participant teacher, this is a way to prevent racism. It was mentioned once in this group: "Looking at the society in large, it is impossible to separate children on the basis of ethnicity in school. In day life they cannot avoid each other, and it's much better if they get to know each other in school than to consider each other as strangers. It is true that the unknown is scary. It works in both ways, not just towards the Roma."

5.6. Conclusion

Our research potently confirmed that the following factors influence the achievement, advancement and later opportunities of Roma students:

1. A deep insight into the life of Roma families through the interviews allowed us to draw a rather nuanced picture about them. Through these discussions we learned that many of these families live on the margins, under poor living conditions; are socially deprived and stigmatised; fail to provide the criteria for learning at home; and the children are forced, as early as it is possible, either to help around the house or to enter the job market in order to contribute to the family budget. These all point toward weak school performance and limited career options.

2. The majority of the interviews done with students and parents – independently from their socio-economic background, the parents' educational background and the students' actual school performance – reveal scepticism concerning the students' future chances. The fact that the chosen regions are characterised by the lack of social mobility, which was induced by the transitions but deepened by the recent economic crisis only partially explains this phenomenon. Hence, in the case of the Roma families, one shall not disregard the socio-psychological effects of inter-ethnic interactions.

Taking into account that the interviewees were concerned about experiences of discrimination by peers, teachers or by institutional arrangements, both, inside and outside of the school, education has lost grounds in the eyes of these people; aspirations for upward mobility have become cracked; and students have become disinterested in advancement. Processes of selection within and among schools and ethnicity-based discrimination have powerfully affected and undermined the self-esteem of Roma students, creating a sense of inferiority in them (Steele – Aronson, 1995). As to diverging career opportunities, school results work as strong justifications for selection: the majority of Roma students plans to continue their education in some low-prestige vocational school in both sites, which might offer a qualification for future jobs but does not demand any extra effort.

3. The structure and management of schools, as well as school teachers' attitudes toward majority and Roma children, are not without prejudice and stereotypes categorising students according to their social status and ethnic background. Such detrimental tendencies cannot be compensated for even in schools where the school policy and the majority of teachers make a conscious effort not to associate difference with inferiority, and espouse that ethnic background be an accepted and recognised part of identity.

6. IDENTITIES, IDENTITY STRATEGIES, AND IDEAS ABOUT ADULT LIFE

6.1. Components of Roma identity

Most parents and students in our sample identify themselves as Gypsies/Roma. Self-definition as Roma, however, may refer to a wide variety of ethnic identities, according to factors determining identities as well as based on differences in the degree of loyalty towards the given ethnic group. The sense of belonging to Roma can emerge based on the "natural" fact and indisputable certainty of being born as such, or express conscious commitment to the minority community, and reliance on its traditions, language and cultural inheritance. At the same time, the way and degree of assuming Roma identity are also affected by the kind of relationship formed between the member of a minority and the majority society, and the fact whether these institutional and personal influences lead towards social inclusion or exclusion and rejection. It was observed both in the parental and the students' generation that relationship with the majority society constituted the decisive element of self-determination: the presence or absence of inter-ethnic residential and workplace relationships, the inclusive or selective character of the school, the "colour-blindness" of peer relations within the school and mutual separation based on ethnicity – these can all represent determining elements in the construction of Roma identity.

"Being Roma" was thus defined in a variety of ways by our respondents. The self-definition of our student interviewees ranged from the emphatic designation of their own ethnic group ("we are Vlach Gypsies"), through highlighting citizenship ("Well, I would say I'm Hungarian. However, I feel to be Roma."), to self-identification as a human being, and only afterwards as Roma ("I don't care whether Gypsy or Hungarian, we are all humans"). Responses averting the question of ethnic belonging were also frequent: "I don't deal with such issues. Everybody is what they declare themselves to be."

Inter-group relations and the emergence of the role of in-group and out-group distinction in identity formation reflect important aspects of self-definition. Thus a variety of attitudes could be discovered in the interviews:

- commitment to one's own group, often expressed in positive stereotypes with respect to the group, like for instance: "we hold together more", or "Gypsies and Gypsies are more attached... they do not look down on one another";

- distancing from other Gypsy groups based on language, origins and culture:

"We are normal, but the Vlach Gypsies are different from us. They relate to everything differently, they talk differently, they are self-conceited. ... they can not have fun without fighting and making a big row. They act as if they were kings. We are not like that, we know how to have fun and do parties, we can talk to any people, and we don't care whether the person is Hungarian or not Hungarian." (Romungro boy)

- distancing from other Roma groups that are responsible for the fact that the majority society has a negative image of Roma in general:

"Many Roma parents do not work. They live on family allowance ... you go home and your father is drunk as fish and beats you and spends the welfare on the booze..."

"they do not treat one another properly, the way Hungarians do. They do not have normal conversations, instead, only bad words and swearing come from their mouths..."

"to be honest and fair, most of these Gypsies, especially in villages, these very poor Gypsies...well being poor is one thing but they are so unclean! And this is why people start saying "smelly Gypsy", it is because of their behaviour, and the (lack of) cleanliness and hygiene, the lice..."

- distancing from majority attitudes that are injurious to Roma morality:

"Well, Hungarians show off, they wear mini-skirts... and then they take pride in being prostitutes wanting to be hyped. What's the point in that?! Nothing! They will just catch AIDS. Well, a Gypsy girl would never do things like that. Okay, there are prostitutes among Gypsies as well. However, a Gypsy girl who got good education would never do such a thing."

- and finally, negligence or rejection of essential differences between the majority and the minority:

"(Roma) say their people, their attitude and their tradition... that tradition should be forgotten because 500 years ago the attitude of Hungarians was different than it is today. It must be recognised that you can't make a living from dancing and music and such whoopee. If you could live on that, who would be working at all?"

The decisive criterion of ethnic identification, as suggested by individual interviews and focus group discussions, is not simply the reinforcement of the psychologically positive feeling of belonging to one's own group based on the objective comparison of in-group and out-group. Instead, it is conspicuous that being Roma conveys a host of negative contents when the sense of "being other" is elicited by threats coming from the majority society. These identity-threats (Breakwell, 1986) are manifested in negative stereotypes about Roma so widespread in Hungarian society, in various forms of discrimination and, in extreme cases, in actual physical violence.

Both parents and children mentioned several situations when they were judged not according to their individual performance and behaviour but based on some schematic image of Roma, which put them in a disadvantaged position. In previous chapters, many examples were provided of perceptions concerning the prejudiced attitude of teachers that are supposed to influence grading and decisions concerning further education. One outstanding case in point was the story of the student who has excellent results today, although after pre-school the committee examining learning skills advised him not to the normal primary school but to the special school for children coping with learning difficulties. The parents thought that this judgment had to do with the stereotypical views held by experts regarding the low performance of Roma children, and assumed that the decision made when the child was only six, potentially driving his future educational career towards a dead end, was not based on the actual abilities of the boy but influenced by his typical Gypsy family name. (In this particular case, the family succeeded in having the child admitted in the "normal" school, even though he could attend only its "Gypsy" class).

By the same token, virtually none of the interviews were devoid of some manifestation of discrimination. In parental interviews, several humiliating instances of workplace, employment and, occasionally, housing-related discrimination were mentioned, and these traumatic experiences reinforced in our respondents the negative aspects of belonging to the Gypsy population and subjection to stigmatisation. A name or way of speaking considered Roma, just like skin-colour or ghetto-like place of living, all provided opportunities for employers, self-governments and – as relates to the focus of our research, i.e. educational career – for schools to disadvantage their Roma clients. Student interviews, in turn, usually gave account of cases of discrimination embittering everyday life and manifested in remarks or insults suffered on the street, in stores, buses and bars. Those categorised Roma by members of the majority society – private persons

or, especially, representatives of certain institutions who, given their position, are people of power (policemen, form masters, bouncers of clubs) – and, on this basis, treated differently, can hardly be expected to consider themselves members of the Hungarian society or citizens of the state having equal rights. Here is an example of "ethnic profiling", a way of differentiating people practiced by the police:

"Well, I did experience it, especially when I was together with my friends. So we would walk in the city, full of innocent thoughts, and then the police comes and stops us, wanting to see our identity cards, you know...but with other people, in the case of a white person or group, their papers are not demanded, at least this is how they do it here."

Discrimination reinforces beliefs that it is about racial differentiation, that is, it is a manifestation of the racism of the majority society. As one of our interviewees, a girl, has learned from her mother:

"When we lived in J street, Hungarians would provoke us all the time, and we had many fights, us girls with the Hungarian guys. My mother said it was about racism. Because there are racists in all times."

Fear from racism has recently been intensified due to the reinforcement of the aggressive extreme right in Hungary. Related accounts were given by students talking about the threatening demeanour of fellow students called rocker or skinheads in the interviews for apparently having ties with the extreme right, as can be judged from their outfit, and this state of affairs is also evidenced by the appearance of the Hungarian Guards all over Hungary, including the sites of our investigation, as well as by the series of racist killings against Roma families that took place one year before this study, which occurrences have become widely known. With reference to these developments, one of the students said the following:

"We must look out wherever we go, so that we don't get stabbed by any chance only because we are Gypsies. Here, for instance, if you are caught by a member of the Hungarian Guard..."

Among responses to discrimination or racially based differentiation, avoidance of conflict situations by withdrawal ("I and my friends don't visit places where there are Hungarians ... they dislike me anyway because of my ethnic origin"), and examples of self-defence, occasionally manifested in counter-aggression, can be equally found:

"99% of this school is Roma. And skinheads don't like Roma... There is a skinhead in our class... Well, we have beaten him several times because he was saying all this nonsense like smelly Gypsies...he was not addressing us in particular, but was saying these things just like that. Then we slightly beat him. And since then he knows he's not supposed to say things like that here...If a skinhead goes to K street, well, he would not come out alive again, for sure. He would be killed".

One of our respondents pictured the future in a particularly dark tone:

"They say there is going to be a war. My grand dad said this, who is 84 years old and knows things like this because there was a war in the old days, too. ... This war will be fought between Hungarians and Gypsies. (Q: and what are you going to do then?) Well, I will also take up an arm and fight against Hungarians."

6.2. Identity-models of Roma families

As seen in previous chapters, the majority of the families of 8th grade students participating in our research are characterised by marginal social situation, ranging from extreme misery, through day-to-day survival, to the uncertain opportunities provided by the black market or the labour market. Most families live in the segregated and/or deprived residential areas of the settlements under investigation. While some of the suburbs, Roma rows or colonies function as ethnic enclosures, mixing is significant in urban ghettos. At the same time, seeing them from the outside, both kinds of places are ethnically stigmatised, thus the social environment determined by the residential area affects not only the social situation of Roma families but also their ethnic identification. Although, due to industrialisation and integration in the labour market during the 1970s and 1980s, the social situation of the parents have greatly improved in comparison with that of the previous generation, they have suffered negative discrimination in several fields under the unequal competitive conditions that have been developed over the past 15-20 years. An antagonism has emerged between structural and cultural assimilation that was partially completed before the regime change, filling some Roma families with the hope of being able to integrate into the majority society, on the one hand, and the rejection or even despise and open racism on the part of the majority society, experienced during the past years by people identifying themselves as Roma or having Roma origins, on the other. As a consequence, minority identities consist basically in reactive elements and motivations, while identities constructed from a sense of pride, of belonging together and a series of cultural traits, can hardly be found.

Based on the coincidence of elements contributing to the construction of ethnic identity, let us provide a family typology by way of an attempt to interpret variations of social mobility and relation to this kind of difference. Obviously, the categories of this typology are not stable and closed units but are based on artificial itemisation and dichotomisation of continuous scales. By projecting on one another two analytically distinct categories belonging to two major dimensions (social situation and relationship towards ethnicity), the following model can be devised:

	Ethnicity is significant in the construction of identity	Ethnicity is not significant in the construction of identity
Families in extremely deprived situation	<p>"ethnic ghetto" model</p> <p>Residents primarily of Gypsy colonies near cities or in the countryside;</p> <p>Large families with many children of parents also coming from families with many children, sometimes several generations living together;</p> <p>Parents characterised by low education and weak labour market position (mothers only rarely work, fathers do occasional or black labour, or go working to the capital or abroad);</p> <p>Scepticism regarding children's education;</p> <p>Children attend classes with a Roma majority or homogeneous Roma classes, and plan to continue their studies in the nearby poor-quality vocational school that has bad reputation;</p> <p>Self-enclosure in the ethnic community is typical.</p> <p>Advantages of self-segregation: intimacy, the presence of family support system, reduction of potential conflicts by minimising outside relationships;</p> <p>Distancing from other kind of Gypsies and taking into account the linguistic and cultural differences among Gypsy groups are significant in self-definition;</p> <p>Chances of positive identity: familiarity with, and transmitting of, the language, music and customs of the group;</p> <p>However: despite spatial and ethnic isolation, stigmatisation coming from outside and the harmful effects of stereotypes and discrimination can not be avoided.</p>	<p>"underclass" model</p> <p>Residents primarily of urban ghettos and slums, sharing their misery with the poor of the majority society;</p> <p>Severed family ties (partially conflicts due to mixed marriages), frequent changes in family life (divorce, becoming widow, remarriage, reconstructed family);</p> <p>Low educational level and lives full of vicissitudes of parents (criminality, institutionalisation, alcoholism, etc.);</p> <p>Theoretically supportive of children's education but scepticism regarding opportunities, choice of low-quality vocational schools;</p> <p>Belonging to Roma is articulated mostly through conflicting inter-ethnic relationships: calling someone a Gypsy with negative implications by members of the social majority;</p> <p>Given the negative stereotypes concerning Roma and the daily experiences of discrimination, belonging to the Gypsy ethnic group can only be articulated in a negative form, often leading to self-hatred and negative identity.</p>

	Ethnicity is significant in the construction of identity	Ethnicity is not significant in the construction of identity
<p>F a m i l i e s "getting along", i.e. characterised by a relatively consolidated way of life</p>	<p>"colour-conscious" ethnic identity model</p> <p>Typically nuclear families with a lower number of children living in relatively better housing circumstances in those areas of the towns under investigation that are less populated by Gypsies.</p> <p>Relatively continuous presence of parents in the labour market in occasional and semi-legal employment forms or in public employment programs;</p> <p>Children attend classes with a low number of Gypsies in schools employing selection policies, or classes of schools integrating students;</p> <p>Ambitious expectations regarding children's education – better school performance, heading towards secondary schools of higher standards;</p> <p>Familiarity with and, to some extent, fostering of culture and language of the Gypsy/Roma group the person belongs to;</p> <p>Participation in the local Roma cultural and public life (Roma scholarships, kids attending "Learnerly" providing individual tutoring for Roma students, relying on the local Gypsy self-government to get employment in positions kept for Roma, membership in cultural associations cultivating traditions);</p> <p>As a response to experiences of discrimination, steps made towards acceptance by the majority (e.g. change of name), thereby increasing the chance of being socially integrated as Roma.</p>	<p>"assimilated" model</p> <p>A type scarcely occurring in our sample and thus possible to describe only based on a very few interviews with children and statements of parents participating in focus group discussions.</p> <p>Parents with relatively high level of education, permanently employed or private entrepreneurs, in positions valued by the majority as well;</p> <p>"Middle-class" housing conditions and residential area;</p> <p>Relatively well-performing students attending classes with a Hungarian majority, able to adapt to the school;</p> <p>Gypsy identity does not form part of the self-image – efforts towards assimilation – suppressing identity – threats coming from outside, primarily by means of distancing from Roma groups that risk their recognition;</p> <p>Avoidance of identification as Gypsy.</p>

6.3. Identity strategies of Roma adolescents – ideas about adult life

Considering the above typology of families who were involved in the qualitative part of our research, we categorised them along structural features (such as residence, educational background of the parents, patterns of employment); the school achievement of the children (type of school, future career perspectives); the children's embeddedness into local communities of ethnic majority and/or minority; and the parental generation's attitude towards their ethnic origin. We regarded these aspects as crucial factors in shaping a child's identity within a family and influencing their future perspectives.

In the previous chapter we demonstrated that students, identifying themselves as Roma, sense various forms of differentiation, and we discussed how relevant role ethnicity plays in experiencing processes of othering that affect social interactions. By analysing interviews with students, we observed that our target group – independent from residence and the attended school – had all already faced with biased, prejudiced or discriminative attitude on behalf of the majority society, however, there were some differences in whether the process of othering was approached on ethnic or on social grounds. Hence, the two extremes of the experience of "otherness" offer tremendously different interpretations.

We perceived the most extreme form of otherness on the basis of ethnic belonging among students of Roma origin who attend segregated classes. In these cases the school failed to enable Roma students to establish friendships different from their social network of the same ethnicity or neighbourhood and, as a consequence of daily interactions with non-Roma students whom they consider to be racist, Roma students isolate themselves by way of self-protection. In this sense, their ethnic perception of the world is grounded on the dichotomy of "Roma versus Hungarian" and plays a decisive role in the evaluation of social interactions and of society as a whole.

By exploring the other extreme form of otherness, the ethnic aspect is rather situated and conditional, and manifests itself in social interactions with non-Roma students verbally, e.g. in jokes. Though this approach to Roma origin was not independent from mirroring power relations of the wider society, it still raised hope in our target group that existing social hierarchies and power relations between Roma and non-Roma can be transformed. This kind of view of Roma origin seemed to characterise students more or less integrated to the majority society, and whose school established an integrated educational environment.

We aimed at exploring how our respondents see their future perspectives, imagine their career, and to what extent they would pursue or modify any of the above described family identity models.

As the interviews suggest, social background is more salient in defining future expectations of young adolescent students compared with their relation to ethnicity. However, as it has already been proved, the child is aware of the connection between Roma families' disadvantaged social situation and processes of discrimination and exclusion in the wider social environment, and therefore they could not leave this out of consideration when asked to imagine their future perspectives. If then "Roma" and "discriminated" become synonyms, it is not surprising that the majority of our Roma respondents have chosen various ways to escape from their Romaness.

Simply, we witness two typical reactions with which the students reflect upon discrimination and, in relation to that, upon their disadvantaged social situation. In the meanwhile, these reactions frame their identity strategies, hence, we could make a more sophisticated analysis highlighting their nuances.

A) Self-isolation: the protective shield of one's own minority ethnic group

Students in this category are only of Roma ethnicity, from ghetto-like or underclass families. Accepting their Roma origin seems more to be a 'must' than a choice, even if we witnessed differences in the ways one follows the family pattern and the expectations towards one's future.

a) Withdrawal from the majority society

Some of our respondents have decided to cut themselves from the majority society due to

experiences of various threats on their identity. Affection towards one's place of birth as well as the desire to stay close to the family providing support and security characterised students – especially girls – living in segregated areas. Furthermore, since their choices are limited regarding further education, they barely see any chance to make a secure living and get a permanent well-paid job. Their adulthood – as it goes in the family – is imagined as enclosed in the family. True, slightly differently from the provided pattern, they claim that they would control the number of to-be born children in order to avoid poverty, misery and everything in life that makes their present circumstances difficult. Examples of their siblings and relatives demonstrate that their lives are characterised by the same conditions, from early ages to adulthood, so the ghetto-model is transmitted from generation to generation.

Students belonging to this group think it is important to have a partner in the future who is of the same, Roma, ethnicity: "...No way to get married to a Hungarian. I cannot stand Hungarians anyway. ...I wouldn't be with a Hungarian since they are showing off."

Here is another example:

"Do you think it would matter in your future that you are a Roma?"

'It would!'

'In what sense?'

'I'm going to be a Roma in my clothing, in the way I listen to music!'

'And your children?'

'They will be Roma, too!'

'Would you like to have a Roma wife?'

'Yes!'

'Do you have a girlfriend?'

'No, or yes, she is a Roma from the town of my mother's brother!'

'Does that matter whom you date with?'

'I prefer being with a Roma to a Hungarian!'

'Why?'

'Then I know that we have the same origins, Roma with Roma and Hungarian with Hungarian. I know that we listen to the same kind of music and she doesn't listen to rock music or disco music!'

b) Opposing to the majority society

Due to the lack of social mobility many of our respondents who were aware of experiences of discrimination have chosen resistance instead of renouncement. Chemtown-I provides a telling example of the above: there were processes of selection within the school and there was a boy attending a class with a Roma majority. He aspired to take revenge on the Hungarians for his and his family's grievances,

since he could not see any perspectives to be better-off and live under better circumstances. The way he protested was regarded as a criminal activity in the eyes of the majority society:

“Do you think it will be better for the Roma in the future?”

‘It’s going to be the same, or maybe better because there is the usury!’

‘What do you mean by the usury?’

‘If I give 20 to someone and the person gives me back 40, then it is good!’

‘If someone takes up the loan, right?’

‘Yes!’

‘Why are you keen on that?’

‘I’m not keen on that, but if I were doing it, I would lend money to the Hungarians only.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I would treat Roma differently than Hungarian. I would treat them better. If I lent money to a Roma, I would never accept the amount back with an interest.’

‘Are you saying that the Roma will be getting richer by the usury?’

‘Yes!’

‘Do you think they will lend money to Hungarians only?’

‘Yes, and after a while they will be offering it to everyone!’”

B. Diminishing the role of ethnicity in everyday life

However the majority of our respondents did not choose self-imposed isolation or positioned themselves openly in opposition to the majority but aimed at accepting the norms and values of the majority as well as integrating to the majority society. As we observed, not just those Roma students belong to this group who have already been integrated more or less successfully to the majority thanks to their families, and whose assimilationist aspirations are to follow their parents’ way of life, but also those who belong to the other group but imagine a secure and promising future only at the cost of integration or assimilation. Also, it was not only in the case of a “colour conscious” family model that young adolescents emphasised, in relation to their future, the importance of Roma culture or the salience of transmitting the Roma self-organisation movement tradition, experienced by their parents.

Many of them aspire to be an equally valuable member of the society by acquiring higher education, passing the school-leaving exam, having a qualified profession, anticipating a well-paid job, while disregarding their Roma origin and aiming at minimising its salience.

a) Unconditional acceptance of majority norms, assimilation to the majority society

Given the choices of integration or assimilation, students who choose these ways in order to adapt to the surroundings consider their future partner's ethnicity irrelevant. We witnessed this attitude among children of already integrated families, in which the parents did not raise objections to mixed marriage:

"I don't care (about his ethnic background). He should just be a good person. .. This is what my parents wish, too, and it's not important whether he is a Roma or a Hungarian."

Similarly to the above, the boy who was raised in a ghetto-type family claims that ethnicity will not play a role in his decision concerning a future partner. He imagines a smaller family and aspires to achieve better life conditions through studying, even if his choice of a future wife goes against parental expectations:

"How do you envision your adult life? How many children would you like to have?"

'Two. I would like to live differently than my parents. I would like to have a better life. I study to have a better life..'

'How do you see your to-be wife? Roma or Hungarian?'

'Doesn't matter. Loyalty is what really matters.'

'What would your parents say if you brought home a Hungarian girl?'

'I don't know. They might not be happy!'

The simple aim is therefore: to lose the relevance of ethnic origin in a person's life in the future.

"Do you think your ethnicity would influence your future?"

'I have no idea. Hopefully it won't... I imagined a flat, a car. We all have the same dreams: a car, two children and a partner who is nice, loves me and never cheats on me!'

Our Roma students envision a future that is full of fear and anxiety. In other words, they assume, in a rather unconscious way, that their dreams and aims might not ever be realised, due to their eternal ethnic stigmatisation. They can only express their concern towards Roma identity as a desire:

"I wish it wasn't that important. That is to say, I don't want to be despised or discriminated on the basis of my ethnicity when I become older." Every interview manifested some degree of scepticism like this.

b) Escape from the situation: loose contact with the majority society

By experiencing Roma origin as stigmatised, a radical but feasible way of pushing ethnicity to the background is to go abroad, according to some students. This means both setting oneself free from poverty and evading discrimination as a Roma. Interestingly, it was rather students of colour-conscious families who expressed a wish to leave the country. This might point to the fact that, in the eyes of

students who accept their Roma origin but make tremendous efforts to be treated as equal, establishing contacts with Roma organisations and sometimes working in them, these types of parental aspirations do not seem to be enough in coping with prejudices and discrimination of the majority society. However, families that motivate their children to study and are aware of the importance of education are also sceptical towards chances in Hungary. They understood the importance of good school performance because they did not perceive any forms of discrimination in the class, or see any constraints in further educational opportunities, however, they doubted that their children – even if they were well-qualified – had equal chances in the labour market, comparing to students of the majority. Hence, it appears to be reasonable to follow the example of successful Roma people – relatives and friends – who managed to work abroad where neither the labour market nor everyday life is saturated with various forms of ethnic discrimination. As a girl from Chemtown and a boy from Coaltown explained:

"After I finish school and get my high-school degree I would... start working first to save some money to travel to Germany where my relatives live, my father's brother. Either there or to France."

„I don't want to stay in Hungary forever. I couldn't make ends meet. That's not good. I would rather go abroad. ...I have been learning German for 8 years and most probably I'll study it for two more years. Additionally, I think I will continue it in Germany too. I would like to be a butcher. I would enjoy my life there and would never come back. My family will be in Germany, too. I don't want to commit myself to Hungary."

By way of concluding this chapter, we shall underscore that the four types of family model formed on the basis of the interplay between the social background and the ethnic belonging of families influence the children's future aspirations, plans and expectations. However we barely witnessed a conscious and full adaptation of one kind of family model by a child. This only happens in the case of children having a ghetto-type family, however, their decision is influenced by the fear from the outside world, so their proximity to their families does not stem from Roma tradition but from the need for security. There was not any child neither in colour-conscious families, nor in any other type of Roma families who imagined their future as being committed to represent Roma traditions and culture, or as Roma activists committed to change the disadvantaged situation of their people.

By analysing the responses of our respondents who claimed to be Roma or were regarded as such, we would argue that their ethnic identity is primarily negative. It is worth noting that in the age group of 14-16 social identity, and as one of its components, ethnic identity have not been fully developed and have not reached the stage of achieved identity (Brown - Bigler, 2005). The development of ethnic identity is largely shaped by interpersonal relations, family and school as well as by all kinds of effects and impulses from outside, which both frame the social relevance and define the content of ethnic belonging (Phinney - Chavira, 1995). By analysing it from different perspectives in our study, we have proved that in today's Hungary Roma origin is essentially disadvantageous, and "Roma" as a label has become equivalent to the notions poor, deviant, criminal, undereducated, abnormal and dangerous. Instead of working against the current, these perceptions are rather strengthened by spontaneous and selective processes of the Hungarian school system. All in all, it shall not come as a surprise that young Roma adolescents try to protect themselves from daily conflicts by using their own means. We witnessed various manifestations of self-protection, such as: self-isolation, escape from the situation or assimilation. Whether they will meet their expectations in the future, and if their recognition as well as equality as a Roma will still be inconceivable, these do not depend only on them.

CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative fieldwork research realised in selected locations allowed us to analyse several aspects of our central research query: the different school performance and educational career of ethnic minority students, as compared with the social majority. As the investigation was carried out in two Hungarian sites, it was possible to take the social-historical and regional differences between the two places into account. In the course of the study we visited several schools, which enabled us to analyse similarities and differences of the changes occasioned by the recently occurred fundamental modification of central school policies within each site as well as by comparing schools in the two sites. In becoming familiar with the narrow and broad environment of Roma students attending these schools as well as the attitude of the institutions maintaining the schools, of the directors and teachers, on the one hand, and the experiences and opinions of students and parents, on the other, we also had the opportunity to examine thoroughly the role played by different actors in processes of "othering" Roma students and shaping Roma identities.

During fieldwork we realised that while both middle towns are of similar dimensions and industrial in character, with more or less the same percentage of Roma population, yet they do not provide identical conditions for our target group: Roma students about finishing their primary education. Although the central effort of Hungarian educational policies – the integration of students of disadvantaged background, with special educational needs, or of Roma origins – was present in both sites, and thus measures have been recently taken in both places – like the fusion of schools or the redrawing of the borders of school districts – nevertheless, we found significant differences in the school achievements and opportunities of further education characterising Roma students who attend the schools under investigation in either site. It is important to highlight mechanisms that influence, in a structural sense as well, the social situation of youth we were dealing with in the two locations. Their situation is partly determined by the historical practices of the social majority in the given location, related to the co-existence of the majority and the minority, and – partly connected to this issue – by the local conditions determining the minority society's ability and possibilities of self-organisation. Comparison showed that Roma parents and children feel more secure in places where the immigration of Roma population was linked to a common workplace – for instance, a mine – for several decades; where there are/were other forms of ethnic difference apart from being Roma; where ethnic mixing started in the previous generation; and where, partly as a consequence of Roma self-organising, a local Roma elite is being formed. On this basis, it can be affirmed that Roma students in Coaltown have a generally better situation than those in Chemtown.

Our predominant experience concerning schools was that, though not with the same rigour and commitment, both settlements are making efforts to implement the prescriptions of the state regarding desegregation. Schools identifying with the endeavour to eliminate open ethnic segregation nevertheless go on – whether explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or as a "side effect" – with their practice of selecting among students. In most cases, they have recourse only to special educational procedures in their attempts to increase the efficiency of school work, however, these selective practices, being embedded in a severely divided society both in terms of ethnicity and class, implicitly reproduce such differences. Desegregating school policies focus on a single mechanism: that of schooling, in other words, on the moment when the child first enters school.

While trying not to violate related rules, they continue practicing previous forms of selection that are manifested, for instance, in redirecting certain children to specialised schools, qualifying them as "private students" (a special arrangement by which the student has to present him/herself only occasionally to sit comprehensive exams), or simply distributing them into classes applying different curricula. An example of the latter situation – embedded not so much in an ethnic but, rather, a definitely racial discourse – was provided by a school where teachers talked about "Gypsy" and "normal" students, and attempts were made to segregate the living space of the two categories by various means, thus virtually assuring "normal" or middle-class parents that

the integration of the "Gypsy school" would not affect, in a negative way, either the life of their children, or the work at the school. Another institution-specific means of segregation consists in sending down children with "behavioural problems", which – though not necessarily knowingly or admittedly – results in the systematic down-selection and exclusion of the majority of Roma children. By distinguishing classes with specialised curriculum from average classes, the reproduction of ethnic and class situations is realised effectively, yet in a much more subtle and sometimes ambiguous way. In this latter case, parents and teachers decide at the time of schooling whether the child can bear the burden of taking extra classes – like foreign languages or informatics – or should be exposed only to minimal workload.

While the intentions of school maintainers are unambiguous with respect to integration, school managements and, even more, faculties relate to central educational policies in a highly ambivalent manner. The ways in which they actually connect with integrative school policies, as manifested in discourses and pedagogical practices, form a wide range, starting from superficial and apparent acceptance, through passive resistance, to active rejection. Several causes were identified behind these approaches, including: teachers are not prepared for the changes in school politics and their consequences; teachers have no means to adequately adjust pedagogical work to the new circumstances, nor experience in how to employ those means, so that they are completely helpless in implementing new school politics. The tendency clearly present in both sites, consisting in the process of rescuing majority and middle-class children by the parents from schools accepting Roma, poor and "problematic" children, may provoke existential anxiety in teachers belonging to the same social strata. In addition, as the teachers themselves are not exempt from the cultural prejudices adopted by their own social strata, they also contribute to sustaining the enormous cultural and social distances between the social majority and the ethnic minority. Most of the actors we contacted, save one school and a few teachers, have been unable to overcome these obstacles.

When starting our research, it was presumed, based on theoretic considerations and previous research experience, that teenagers of minority background face various ways of "othering" at school. Their otherness as well as identities weight differently and may receive several meanings, according to the different scenes of their life, i.e. the various institutional, communal and discursive frameworks. Here we try to summarise resulting forms, classified in a typology.

The ethnicising affects of inter-school differentiation were singled out by examining teachers' discourses and classroom interactions. Thus three discursive strategies were reconstructed with respect to the otherness of children, all of which relate to some interpretations of pedagogic work.

1. According to one typical position shared by teachers, the relation of children to school and education, and thus their opportunities in life, are determined by the social environment of the family or families. "The fate of children coming from uneducated Gypsy families is predetermined," as a teacher put the main point of this kind of approach in a group interview. According to this view, the school is helpless in the face of such family influences. However, inasmuch as teachers do not believe in the efficiency of school work, they also depreciate their own contribution, which, in turn, provides them with a means of exempting themselves from any responsibilities.

2. The second discursive strategy is that of cultural fundamentalism, often accompanied by genetic arguments. This attitude can thus be best described in terms of racism, supposing hierarchical relations, in which the speaker, i.e. the teacher, talking from an invisible position, as opposed to the culturally and/or racially different subordinated subjects, holds on to the moral claims of his or her own superiority.

3. Thirdly, social arguments were also present in the teachers' narratives related to differentiation. This is the only type of attitude among teachers that also reflects the experiences and interpretations of parents. The reason, in our view, lies in personal relationships: this type of argument is common especially in places where the concept of pedagogic work includes the

consideration that it should be shaped by liaising with the local community.

The broader environment outside the school is deemed hostile by almost all the minority students. Their statements and examples in this respect is much like those claimed by their parents, the complaints and grievances of the latter being reinforced by experiences of discrimination. These experiences are complemented by age-group-specific grievances arising from contacts with anti-Gypsy and racist youth and music sub cultures, virulent especially in Chemtown and neighbouring villages, that is, the research site on the North Eastern part of Hungary. Students attending segregated "Gypsy" classes, however, meet the symbols and representatives of subcultures engendered by the mixture of skinhead and national romanticism not only on the street and in bars but also at school, reminding them day-by-day of the fears provoked by such phenomena.

Reactions of minority students to school regimes of differentiation and their attempts to rely on other kinds of cultural practices, primarily those of the parents, the family, the neighbourhood and the age group, were examined also in two ways: through the narratives identified in the interviews and by observing everyday praxis.

The kind of ethnicised narrative about grievances, reflecting primarily on the discriminative relations and hierarchical perspectives of the broader social environment and the insults experienced in the narrower environment, unanimously had marked presence among children attending to whichever school of the two towns, virtually in whatever school or social environment. There is, however, a school-specific form of this kind of grievance-narrative, interpreting the conflicts following the fusion of schools, the methods of selection and segregation characterising the school in question, and their effects felt by the students. Such differences are not necessarily of an ethnic nature: where the school applies a colour-blind policy, the rate of Roma students is low and the experience of a mixed environment forms part of their daily life, differentiation follows, rather, a generational logic.

Where in turn, Roma children are structurally segregated by the school, "Gypsy" and "Hungarian" become ethnic categories forming a dichotomy in children's discourse. In this case, the ethnic narrative based on a logic of grievances becomes a determining – or even the most fundamental – frame of interpreting the world, giving sense to various experiences at the school and the world beyond. Hence, the significance of ethnicity is quite different for those not prioritising Roma origin, even if it is self-evident or natural, when engaging in school and recreational activities or creating social relationships around such activities. Instead, Roma identity emerges in a situative manner, frequently in ritualised forms of communication. The most typical manifestation of this is mockery or humorous and funny allusions, mostly referring to phenotypic marks.

The two discursive forms of differentiation – grievance-based or primordial as opposed to situative and elective – are related to different social and cultural practices and relations. In the first case, "Gypsy" refers to a communal situation, approached from the outside, which is linked to the lowest social status, the "Gypsy colony", total economic dependence, and the closed world of the relationships created around large families. Here, the new generation reproduces this outcast situation, basically not at all influenced or even touched by the school, without any chance of breaking out. Quite different is the world of the urban ghetto, where the most important point of reference for young people is the generational group, and where Roma identity is primarily the basis of a counter-culture asserting itself in opposition to the hostile majority society. This counter-culture is associated with anti-racism in a political sense, and certain music genres as well as the cult of masculinity and power in cultural respects. This kind of subculture is rejected by most schools: we have come across only one exception where the relationship of the school and the ghetto has been undisturbed for several decades. The third category is formed by children of socially mobile parents having permanent job and living in urban neighbourhoods populated by the lower middle class. "Being Gypsy" for them is synonymous with suffering grievances inflicted by the majority society, thus standing for an obstacle in the way of individual success, while its communal

contents have completely vanished. Differentiation being associated merely with negative concepts, these people support integrated and colour-blind schools that, in turn, identify this social type as their primary supporters among all children and parents.

In sum, based on the three factors – attitudes towards desegregating school policies, school regimes of differentiation, and teachers' discourse regarding otherness – three types of school were identified:

1. The colour-blind school that, on the one hand, eliminates differences by structural means and, on the other, creates an environment that enforces taboos. As we have seen, this approach provides a chance for a part of minority students, and impetus to help them continue using the strategies of assimilation already employed by their parents. For another part of children, however, this makes school a strange and hostile environment that does not deal with their real problems.

2. The colour-conscious although not necessarily ethnicising school, where otherness is offered as an alternative in a cultural framework – that of Roma culture, – and it is present in the work of teachers also as a possible framework of interpreting everyday problems. Yet this type can not be considered a source of multicultural alternatives. The main reason why it can not, is that this approach does not meet with students' needs (moreover, at the point when it was introduced, it was already too late since the cultural assimilation of the Roma population in question was already advanced by that time).

3. The segregating school where the greatest distances, tensions and mutual fears between the family and the faculty are constrained within the walls of the school. Instead of treating these problems, opening towards new methods that enable teaching by taking into account existing differences, teachers try to maintain the illusion of immovability, for their own acquiescence as well as to serve middle-class parents. Roma students do essentially the same thing when they continue living their life linked to the outside world, that is, to the family, relatives and the ghetto, also when at school.

In our experience, the different social-historical traditions characterising the two sites, the various forms of accepting or rejecting Roma minorities on the part of the institutions and the representatives of institutions of the majority society, and the structural givens and qualitative standards of the schools under investigation, all impact the attitude of Roma students towards school and learning, thus also their aspirations of further education and ideas about the future. As selective mechanisms at schools already reflect on family categories – distinguished by the social background of families, the education of parents, their employment situation and social integration – it was expected that the school performance and career choice of Roma students we examined would also depend on this factor. There were only a very few instances when a career made viable thanks to means of positive discrimination supporting Roma students, promising a university degree sometime in the future, was chosen by our interviewees. In the majority of cases, it is hardly probable that significant changes would take place with respect to their position in the social structure as compared to that occupied by their parents' generation. Neither "colour-conscious", nor "colour-blind" schools have proved capable of removing Roma students from their socially prescribed, second-rate position, severely limited by the majority; instead, in supporting family influences, the schools recommended these children to secondary schools that, at best, try to provide professional knowledge ensuring future livelihood. The fate of Roma students living in a ghetto-like environment and attending segregated schools or low-standard classes formed by intra-school selection seem to be predetermined already at the point of choosing a vocation: when it comes to the worst secondary schools of settlements providing a very narrow range of choices, even acquiring a profession that ensures future livelihood appears to be uncertain, thus their social exclusion will most probably continue.

At the same time, the weak school performance and limited future aspirations of most Roma students are closely connected with a sense of ethnic discrimination, mentioned in nearly

every interview, and felt by our adolescent respondents both in and outside the school, in their relations with their teachers as well as with fellow students. Discrimination threatening minority ethnic identity, sometimes perceived as racist, also determined the identity strategies available for the students. By pushing their Roma identity into the background, most of these children expressed a desire to melt into the social majority, which they wished to realise by giving up the traditions occasionally still followed by the families, and by adopting majority norms. Thus their ethnic identity, still in the process of formation, is predominantly negative in the examined age group, and its most important constituting elements include following another reference group instead of the group of origin and turning away from, or even against, the community provided by the family background, which can also be conceived as a manifestation of self-hatred. The adoption of identity did not seem to entail positive aspects even in cases where the attachment to the group of one's own was maintained more by outside threats than by a strive to preserve the cultural/ethnic inheritance. Even if breaking with, or exclusion from, society appears to be voluntary in the case of ghetto adolescence, it is easy to discover low self-esteem and the lack of self-confidence in their choice, as well as a depressing inability to effect changes.

Our research experiences clearly suggest that, notwithstanding some promising efforts and preliminary steps, the policies of educational integration, in their present form, are unable to stop the process of the social/ethnic dividing of Hungarian society. The residential, social and lifestyle disadvantages of children of Roma origin, making up nationwide about 10 % of the age-group targeted in the research, are not only not diminishing but, instead, are further increasing during school years. Thus, the new generation still does not have much chance of upward social mobility and of reaching an equal status in terms of citizenship.

Therefore, the first thing we need is to reveal the problem in all its aspects and expose it to the public, so that decision makers, professional opinion-formers and the public of Hungarian society itself acknowledge, in a period of economic crisis, the fact that in pushing the Roma, making up a significant proportion of the population, out from the socially beneficial division of labour – which starts, among other things, with sustaining school segregation – the functioning of the majority society is also exposed to danger. We are aware of such developments on the level of scientific research, as economist, sociologists, educational researchers and pedagogues have repeatedly warned, in their publications as well as at professional fora, about the negative consequences of anti-Roma discrimination and social exclusion that impact the society at large. We also know that, to some extent, the further training and sensitisation to the need of Roma integration of the representatives of concerned professions (e.g. of authorities of educational management, pedagogues, social workers, agents of child protection etc.) are already on their way. Steps have been made also in developing the necessary means (like pedagogic methods, training materials) to introduce up-to-date forms of integrated education.

Nevertheless, we are convinced that such attempts can initiate real changes only in case they manage to break out of the limited publicity consisting in a few committed decision makers and professionals, so that they reach great enough dimensions to exert influence on social thought about the Roma not only within the walls of schools but also beyond. As long as "Roma" is synonymous with socially useless, deviant and one who endangers public safety, there is no chance of having the social majority acknowledge the dignity of ethno-cultural difference and make Roma belonging a source of viable identity for the youth.

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