



Daniel Strauss (ed.)

Study on the Current Educational Situation of German Sinti and Roma

Documentation and Research Report

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Foreword

Sinti and Roma have been part of our society for centuries. This educational study, the *first* in more than 30 years to deal with *German* Sinti and Roma, focuses on the issue of whether this national minority has equal access to the educational system, particularly at the school level.

The Foundation “Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future” [Foundation EVZ] views its statutory mandate as encompassing more than keeping alive the memory of the victims of National Socialism, including the Sinti and Roma who were threatened by genocide. Today, it also is committed to the task of ensuring that their descendants are no longer discriminated against in our society, that is, that they live in full enjoyment of their civil and human rights. Here there exists an explicit political responsibility, born out of our history.

At the same time, the Foundation EVZ cannot simply suppress economic or sociopolitical dynamics and processes that induce enduring discrimination, but it can prompt examination of them by society.

The guiding principle of the Foundation EVZ in this effort is the empowerment of minorities. Therefore, since 2003 the Foundation has funded a scholarship program to help young Roma in Eastern Europe acquire a university education. In addition, in 2007 the Foundation EVZ facilitated the publication of a UNICEF study dealing with the precarious educational situation of the children of Roma immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe who now live in Germany but lack a secure residence permit.

Against this backdrop, the Foundation has also supported the desire of the German Sinti and Roma to critically examine their own educational situation through research guided by scientific methods, and has sponsored the present study. Thus the present study, though not performed by the Foundation EVZ, was carried out with the Foundation’s support, in particular its financial support.

This initiative disproves the preconceived notion that minorities do not take hands-on action to overcome their situation. Simultaneously, such a study raises various issues related to methodology. They have less to do with the question of whether objective criteria for potential equal or unequal treatment (such as the comparative numbers of specific educational attainments) can be found and applied. Rather, the major methodological problem is identification, *in the living environment of the minority concerned*, of the institutional and individual factors that induce someone to remain in educational poverty or to overcome it. Such methods require that we interview individuals who have completed such (impeded) educational careers. In the case of the Sinti and Roma, however, that is not readily possible. In many cases, their various experiences of persecution and their experiences with the probing questions of researchers have led them to be suspicious of the institutions of the majority society, and of research focused on the minority. Their participation in a scientific survey, therefore, is possible only if the necessary foundation of trust can be established. In this case, such a foundation was prepared by the

unprecedented training of Sinti and Roma as interviewers for this project. As one would expect, the first attempt at such a biographically oriented survey of the educational situation does not provide nationwide coverage of all Germany's municipalities and federal states, nor can every issue deriving from such empirical evidence be conclusively resolved. With this in mind, we regard this study as a pioneering work.

At the same time, one thing has become increasingly clear to the initiators: It is not only the *identification* of the educationally relevant factors in everyday life that requires participation by the minority itself. In addition, the *overcoming* of the ascertained "educational plight" can be contemplated and implemented only in the course of teamwork between the majority and the minority, primarily, of course, within the scope of state-organized educational processes. Here it is noteworthy that the study supplies evidence that a growing readiness for an "educational awakening" already exists among the Sinti and Roma. On that note, the findings presented and the recommendations expressed must be further elaborated in the dialogue between official educational providers and members of the minority. In the process, we also must ensure that cultural autonomy is retained, and that culture-bound educational obstacles on every side are overcome at the same time.

The Foundation EVZ hopes that the study will help to strengthen the responsibility of society as a whole for the educational situation of Sinti and Roma in Germany, and to enhance the insight of the state and the majority society into the situation of this minority, whose members continue to encounter substantial prejudice. The challenge confronts both sides: the educational providers in our federal educational system and the minority. We expect that the underlying conditions, procedures, and tools of our educational system will be examined and readjusted to determine what they can contribute to the creation of educational equality for this minority. And we expect that the Sinti and Roma and their associations will commit themselves to an educational awakening for the generation now growing up. The Foundation EVZ will continue to do its part toward achievement of that goal.

Günter Saathoff

Chairman of the Board of Directors, "Stiftung Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft" [Foundation EVZ]

Preface

Antiziganism is part of Germany's history, but part of its present as well. It is manifested in every walk of life, among those on the right and those on the left, and certainly among those in the center. And it concerns, indeed strongly affects, Sinti and Roma in their everyday reality. Whether the images of "Gypsies" that people hold and spread are distorted ones or romanticized ones, they still are clinging to the notion that the Sinti and Roma are alien and different, even though these groups have lived in Germany for centuries, and in this way they still contribute, and keep on contributing, to the social marginalization of this minority.

The study presented here, to which members of the Gesellschaft für Antiziganismusforschung e.V. [Society for Antiziganism Research] have contributed as well, contains alarming statements that show the difficulty of completing educational processes in these circumstances. In many cases, the traumas of persecution by the authorities and of the National Socialist genocide in particular, which represent state-sponsored antiziganism, have not been overcome.

Thus, Roma and Sinti children were completely thrown off course by remarks from a single teacher, such as "You're a Gypsy, you aren't worth much!" because they lacked the requisite resilience at that point, owing to the discrimination against this minority. But there were also children who completed their school career successfully, thanks to the individual encouragement offered by a teacher or the support provided by a fellow pupil.

The study has not only confirmed the continued presence of the educational plight identified decades ago, but also revealed its causes and the first beginnings of attempts at their solution.

Now programs for the self-confident acquisition of education and for the simultaneous overcoming of antiziganism in society must be launched and translated into sustained activity.

Here it is the task of those who hold political responsibility to get this educational reform underway and thus fulfill the Federal Republic of Germany's self-imposed obligation to protect and further the members of this national minority.

Wilhelm Solms

Chairman of the Gesellschaft für Antiziganismusforschung e.V.

Introduction

Daniel Strauss and Alexander von Plato

In Europe and in Germany, passionate debates are conducted about the “integration,” “assimilation,” and “incorporation” of foreigners and minorities into the majority society. What is remarkable is that these debates most commonly fail to include the largest minority in Europe: the Roma and Sinti. Around 10 to 12 million of them live on this continent, according to a statement by the president of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, on January 27, 2011.¹ In Germany there are about 80,000 to 120,000; in addition, probably 50,000 are here as refugees and so-called economic migrants.² First mentioned in Germany in the fifteenth century, they have been subject to prejudice, animosity, and persecution ever since. The zenith was the National Socialist persecution and genocide of the Sinti and Roma: Between 225,000 and 500,000 were murdered in Central Europe and especially in Eastern Europe during the occupation by the German armies and the SS; around 25,000 of them came from Germany and Austria alone. Not until the 1980s did Federal Chancellors Schmidt and Kohl acknowledge the Sinti and Roma as victims of the Holocaust.

A second point worth noting is that in the integration debates, education is discussed as a prerequisite for participation in the life of society, in the economy and the culture, in politics and economic status in Germany—for immigrants, but not for the national minority of the German Sinti and Roma. And even worse: Little was, and is, known about their educational situation, although political measures in that regard would have been absolutely necessary, because it was well known in the postwar era that the National Socialists had forced children to drop out of school. The enforced dropouts were addressed as early as 1982 in the studies by Hundsatz and later by Widmann in 2001, as well as others.

Intended to fill these gaps is a documentation and research project initiated in 2007 by ROM-NOKHER—A House for Culture, Education, and Antiziganism Research in Mannheim, and presented here to the public. The focus of this study is the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma. Attention is also devoted to the effects of the National Socialist policy of persecution and extermination, as well as to experiences of discrimination and various areas of life.

The stated aim of the initiators of the project was to bridge the gap between the sciences on the one hand and the members of the Sinti and Roma minority on the other hand. The fact that the project succeeded, that Sinti and Roma—despite their mistrust, acquired under National Socialism or developed later, of “German so-called science(s),”³—took an active part, along with

¹ See the press release of the European Parliament on March 15, 2011.

² See the UNICEF report on the Roma refugees in Germany, dated 2006.

³ See the foreword by Romani Rose (at that time a board member of the Verband der Sinti Deutschlands, or Association of Sinti in Germany) for Andreas Hundsatz, with the cooperation of Harald Schaaf: *Soziale Situation der Sinti*

scholars and researchers, as initiators, interviewers, and interviewees, in a scientific survey of their educational situation, makes it sufficiently clear that new ground was broken here.

Thus far there have been impressive studies that dealt in a general way with the history and culture of the Sinti and Roma, such as the work by Katrin Reemtsma,⁴ with National Socialist persecution or the “National Socialist solution of the Gypsy question,” such as the study by Michael Zimmermann,⁵ or with protection of the Sinti and Roma minorities in Europe, such as the report that appeared in 2003, in addition to the previously mentioned publications by Hundsalz and Widmann.⁶ These and other studies have in common the fact that they interpret the relationship between the minority and the majority society as a complex web of ties. To a greater or lesser extent, they place cultural or social or ethnic factors or elements of government and local policy in the foreground: At some times the Sinti and Roma are asked to adapt, and at other times there is a call for their integration without sacrificing their own identity and ways of life. Almost all the studies share the fact that they rarely or never give the Sinti and Roma themselves a chance to speak and to present their own accounts of their schooling and training. This lack of studies and interpretations of the ways in which the Sinti and Roma view and describe themselves was the main reason for taking a different approach in the present study: We wanted to use the available funding and personnel resources to interview Sinti and Roma from various generations and regions about their educational situation, specifically by using a data form that had both blanks for quantifiable data and spaces for independent description of the interviewee’s own educational history and social situation. Additionally, we sought, in the interviewing, to address and interpret developments and experiences from personal, generational, and family history with regard to the relative importance of school and vocational education in the families, and with respect to their career aspirations and the realization or failure of those aspirations. We also wanted to address and interpret their relationship to the majority society, to discrimination, and to the passing on of knowledge of the National Socialists’ extermination policy from one generation to another.

Recruited as interviewers for the study were 14 Sinti and Roma who are associated with the civil rights movement of the German Sinti and Roma; in preparatory seminars, they discussed with academic researchers the possibilities for such interviews with Sinti and Roma, as well as scientific interviewing techniques. A questionnaire was developed. It was standardized and allowed simple marking of the best possible answer (multiple choice method), but was also designed to encourage independent description of the respondent’s overall educational situation, his/her family and personal history, and the family’s way of coming to terms with National Socialism. In

in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Endbericht), Schriftenreihe des Bundesministeriums für Jugend, Familie und Gesundheit, vol. 12 (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz, 1982); also, Peter Widmann: *An den Rändern der Städte. Sinti und Jenische in der deutschen Kommunalpolitik* (Berlin, 2001).

⁴ Katrin Reemtsma: *Sinti und Roma. Geschichte, Kultur, Gegenwart* (Munich, 1966).

⁵ See in particular Michael Zimmermann: *Rassenutopie und Genozid. Die nationalsozialistische “Lösung der Zigeunerfrage”* (Hamburg, 1996). A regional study on Hesse was done by Udo Engbring-Romang: *Die Verfolgung der Sinti und Roma in Hessen zwischen 1870 und 1950* (Frankfurt am Main, 2001).

⁶ “Die Lage der Sinti und Roma in Deutschland,” in: *Monitoring des Minderheitenschutzes in der Europäischen Union 2002* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 78-163; on Hundsalz and Widmann, see Footnote 3.

this way, 275 interviews of a broad distribution of individuals from 35 cities/localities were conducted and evaluated.

Because this procedure was costly, we concentrated on this survey of Sinti and Roma and postponed to a later date the other research we had initially planned, dealing with school and social policy and involving interviews with appropriate experts.

The academic researchers who participated in this project each had specific tasks. First, they were asked to work out the “research design” and the questionnaires or interviewing techniques, and second, they were responsible for analyzing and interpreting the quantitative parts of the questionnaires as well as the open-ended (“qualitative”) parts of the interviews. They all contributed very specific skills and their own perspectives, and the result was a broadly conceived and sophisticated assessment. Below, the presentation of the methodological challenges of this project is followed by the quantitative and qualitative evaluations and a summary of the major findings.

The findings of the study influence the exhibition “Typisch ‘Zigeuner’?—Mythos und Lebenswirklichkeit” [Typical “Gypsy”?—Myth and Everyday Realities], initiated by ROMNOKHER. In the exhibition, antiziganistic “Gypsy” images on 25 panels are contrasted with statements about the life situation and educational situation of the Sinti and Roma interviewees.

At this point, we would like to thank the interviewees and interviewers who so willingly participated in this research. We also want to thank the sponsors without whose help this project could not have been carried out: the Foundation EVZ “Erinnerung, Verantwortung und Zukunft” [Remembrance, Responsibility, and Future], which played a major role in providing support and repeatedly prompted debates leading to self-understanding, as well as the Freudenberg Stiftung, the Lindenstiftung, the Amadeu Antonio Stiftung, the Verband Deutscher Sinti und Roma/Landesverband Baden-Württemberg, and the Gesellschaft für Antiziganismusforschung e.V.

Methodological Challenges of the Project “Educational Situation of German Sinti and Roma”

Alexander von Plato

The Point of Departure

Imagine: Scientists, academic researchers, want to question members of a minority in depth about their educational situation, but the latter decline to participate. They have had bad experiences with such interviews, and they are aware of the prejudices against them; they fear that the findings of such a study will be turned against them; they have their own culture and traditions, and the findings of research on those topics—so they fear—can be misunderstood and incorrectly interpreted by the majority of Germans.

Conversely, those members of this minority who are interested in this project—apart from a few exceptions—have no scientific research experience and have never conducted or evaluated interviews, much less summarized the findings in written form.

A stalemate.

That was precisely the initial situation in the lead-up to the documentation and research project “Studie und Materialsammlung zur aktuellen Bildungssituation deutscher Sinti und Roma” [Study and Collection of Material on the Current Educational Situation of German Sinti and Roma]. So, what was to be done? There actually was only one solution with any prospect of success: Interested Sinti and Roma had to be trained as interviewers. The other suggestion, to send out “Germans”—the term commonly used by the Sinti and Roma, who are also Germans, of course, to denote the members of the majority society—to do the interviewing, would have met with rejection, and the research would have been doomed to failure from the outset, even if the interviewers had been introduced to the everyday realities of Sinti and Roma life.

Therefore, two seminars were conducted with the interested Sinti and Roma, to acquaint them with interviewing methods in the social and historical sciences and their practical implementation. Around 14 Sinti, both men and women, took part. These seminars were a novelty for all the participants—not only for the Sinti. For the other researchers involved, too, many things were new and led to curious, sometimes amusing, or even comical situations, which I will cover below in the discussion of the corresponding issues and problems.¹

In parallel, a questionnaire was developed and suggestions for the free-ranging, qualitative portions of the conversation were discussed. After that, the interviewers started work energeti-

¹ Christoph Leucht compiled the data collection and prepared it for evaluation. From the beginning, I have served as a consulting and accessory researcher, primarily as an expert on interviewing methods in biographical research. Additionally, Michael Klein, Uta Rüchel, Jane Schuch, Egon Schweiger, and Margit Romang were involved in the scientific assessment. The project leader is Daniel Strauß.

cally, and as a result 275 interviews² were conducted within a five-month period. That outcome is, taken by itself, an amazing success, which no one had expected. And the findings of this research are a milestone in the study of the living situation of the Sinti and Roma in Germany.

The following definitions of problems are to be understood against the background of this remarkable work, especially the work done by the interviewers.

Problems

The problems that inevitably emerged in a project with this initial situation are obvious. Some came about because Sinti were interviewing Sinti, while others resulted from lack of experience with the methods. Problems in a third category derived from misunderstandings between the scientific researchers and the interviewers. A fourth group of problems simply had not been considered beforehand, or developed only during the course of the project; such problems arise in every project, even without these difficult initial criteria, but must be enumerated here as well.

Sinti Interviewing Sinti

When Sinti interview Sinti—as some readers of the findings will declare—the result will be mainly propaganda on their own behalf, rather than scholarship. Even though such an assertion can be refuted, thanks to the interview training and the cooperation of academic researchers who are not Sinti or Roma, among other factors, we had in fact expected from the start that the interviewers would be strongly disposed to identify with the problems of their “own” minority. We assumed that this identification would be stronger than would have been the case among interviewers with experience in scientifically based research. This disposition exists also among academically trained interviewers, however, as we can attest from the interviewing of victims of very different kinds, for example, when studying others persecuted by the National Socialists or the SED dictatorship, other minorities, the disabled, and so forth. Therefore we not only defined this problem, but also sought to counteract it.

In this process, the most important tool was the questionnaire. A decision was made to use a “mixed” questionnaire. On the one hand, it was to be used to obtain data, with respondents marking the best possible answer (multiple choice method). On the other hand, both the interviewers and the interviewees were given a chance to formulate their own answers, descriptions, or narratives in “blank” or “open” areas. One reason for this mixture of open-ended and standardized portions in a survey was the wish to have quantifiable parts, especially with regard to the living and educational situation. An additional reason: The standardized parts would, we assumed, give the interviewees a certain sense of security and still bring findings to light, even if no independently formulated accounts were produced.

² A total of 275 interviews were conducted, but the analysis included only 261 (3 are interviews with experts, which will be assessed at a later time, and 11 are not usable).

This assumption proved correct. Of the quantifiable portions of the 261 interviews that were evaluated, almost all were filled out, and in addition there are many open-ended narratives or summarized sections. Even if we can describe only a relatively small part of these interviews as life-history interviews with a freely narrated biography, personal histories are evident nonetheless, and the self-formulated descriptions shed light on the living circumstances and educational situation of the Sinti and Roma in Germany; 30 of these interviews were selected for qualitative evaluation. In these qualitative interviews, specifics are evident, or reasons for a special answer become apparent, and simply marking one of several choices would not have yielded that information. And the standardized parts allow extensive interpretations with regard to education in the families, types of schools, teachers, vocational training, the relationship with non-Sinti, discrimination, and other matters (see the assessments). Further, the questionnaire makes it possible to prevent the anticipated identification with the members of the interviewer's own minority group from becoming dominant, while the free-ranging parts are designed to open the interview to encompass the biographical development and dynamics present in a family's history.

On Preserving Anonymity

Another unusual characteristic, which has to do with the special situation of the Sinti and Roma, is the relatively large number of interviewees who wish to remain anonymous. The quantitative assessment of 261 respondents shows that 161 of the people interviewed (61.8%) would like to remain anonymous, though 94 (36%) forego any attempt at ensuring anonymity. The fact that so many seek no anonymity is just as noteworthy as, on the other hand, the very high proportion of people who do wish to remain anonymous. The share of the latter is higher than I have experienced in any other research project to date. It shows that the concern of the Sinti and Roma interviewers at the start was more than justified: they feared that more than half of the potential interviewees would back out if they were to be mentioned by name in the records. That was also a reason for dispensing with video interviews in this project. The frequent wish for anonymity and the content-based areas of the interviews demonstrate the presence in this minority of **a great mistrust of scientific "research" and "observation" and apprehension regarding every type of "snooping."** In many cases, these reactions are attributable to the persecution or even murder of their relatives in the "war," that is, under the "National Socialists' Gypsy policy." On the other hand, the number of those willing to dispense with any anonymity is substantially higher than both the initiators and the interviewers and researchers had suspected.

Vanished History/Histories?

This problem is connected with another one, one that is startling for me: Before the start of the interviewing, I had assumed that the Sinti and Roma have their own culture of story-telling, of fairy tales and heroic stories, of lullabies and songs for children, that are part and parcel of “formation” or “upbringing” in their milieu and thus could yield other interesting findings for this project with regard to an independent culture in this minority.

Therefore I suggested special questions on this complex. Even at the time, most of the future interviewers were skeptical. From their childhoods, they deduced that this culture and the history of the Sinti and Roma are no longer being passed on to any great extent. That seems to be confirmed in the interviewing. When “stories from (family) history” are told, they are tales of woe from the era of National Socialist persecution. Other stories or songs, tales or fables, with which other German children—at least those from middle-class families—grow up, appear not to exist (anymore) among the Sinti and Roma. Thus far we cannot discern whether this is a phenomenon of membership in a social group or in a minority group, that is, whether outside the middle class, this lack may be more widespread even among the non-Sinti than could be expected.

We also could expect that when Sinti interview Sinti, use of a language mutually understandable by interviewers and interviewees would be revealed. Many speak Romani or German and Romani at home, which also is a key factor in assessing achievement in school. But if at all possible, we wanted German, not Romani, to be spoken in the interviews, for reasons of transcription and evaluation. Nevertheless, on both sides of the microphone a special kind of German was spoken, with a special coloring, with specific grammatical constructions or word choices that may be related either to the language spoken within this minority or to regional dialects. Additionally, many interviewers and interviewees do not speak a “highly aggregated” German. All the more impressive is the performance of the interviewers in particular in their conducting of interviews, as well as in their written summaries of the conversations.

Experiences of Discrimination in School, Training, and Society

One of the alarming findings of this study is the discrimination reported by the vast majority of those interviewed: 66 (25.3%), that is, almost one-fourth of the respondents, feel that they are regularly to very frequently discriminated against, and only 46 (17.6%) say they suffer no discrimination at all. Especially in the qualitative parts of the interviews, there are a great many stories that show, with extreme credibility, the rejection of “Gypsies” in the population as a whole, in neighborhoods, schools, educational institutions, and workplaces. They range from what now is called bullying or harassing, to insults and firings, all the way to acts of violence.

It could be objected that Sinti and Roma pigeonhole every mode of reaction by others in their environment as “discrimination,” and attribute every personal failure to disadvantage and discrimination, and every bad showing in school to rejection of the “Gypsies” by the “German” teachers; in short, that discrimination is more “projected” than “real” and is reinforced in the

findings by the fact that Sinti had interviewed Sinti. We wanted to counter those objections by formulating special questions. One of these questions had to do with ways of reacting to the term “Gypsy.”³ In the answers, both in the standardized part and even more in the open-ended qualitative part, differentiation was revealed: Although 95% of those interviewed defined themselves as Sinti or Roma, 14.9% have no problem with the use of the term Gypsy by others, and another 25.7% think it depends on whether this term is used derogatorily or even as a swear-word. For example, if someone is unaware that the self-imposed term of description is “Sinti” or “Roma,” and therefore uses the term Gypsy in a neutral way, then the person using the word is not simply snubbed. The situation is different when Gypsy is used as an abusive term. The use of “Gypsy” in the majority society is opposed by 57.5%. (On this, see the assessment portions of this study.) In the qualitative evaluation, there is further differentiation of this problem.

This pattern of differentiation argues—as just one example—against an undifferentiated grid of discrimination, to which all life’s difficulties are assigned. Nevertheless, it would be more than astonishing if, after so many experiences of discrimination, other experiences that need not necessarily be classified as discrimination were not perceived as such.

The fact that such experiences of discrimination occur also and especially in **school** would be, besides the social situation, at least an additional explanation for the likewise alarmingly large number of persons among the interviewees who did not attend school at all (13%) or left school without graduating (44%). In the population as a whole, fewer than 1% have not attended school, and 7.5% have no *Hauptschulabschluss* [general education school-leaving certificate].⁴ Even more than the quantitative assessments, the qualitative portions make graphically clear the great extent to which experiences of discrimination or deprecation involving teachers can lead to listlessness or poor performance. The notion that the Sinti and Roma, unlike “German” children, have had no support or have even experienced denigration is widespread among our interviewees. Sometimes there are only remarks such as, “Whenever German children said they hadn’t understood something, the teachers helped right away. That wasn’t the case with me.” Sometimes, however, there are worse statements: “You won’t amount to anything anyway” or “You don’t belong in this school, you know,” or “Why aren’t you going to the special-needs school?” Some did just that, by the way, and there—at the *Förderschule* [special-needs school]—their performance was good, and the attention provided by the teaching staff was more intense or more professional, they reported. In this area, too, there is a pattern of differentiation, for example, when some teachers are praised and others criticized, or when distinctions are drawn between *Förderschulen* and other school types. Nevertheless, there is also an attitude toward school that is to be derived from their own tradition or the behavior of their parents.

In a generational comparison, quite a clear connection is apparent between the school attendance of parents or grandparents and the school success of children. The better educated the parents and grandparents, the greater was the children’s success in school. That not only

³ Gypsy is not the appropriate translation of the German term “Zigeuner”. This term is significantly more pejorative in the German language than in other countries. The etymology as well as the meaning of the term are different.

⁴ See the quantitative evaluation of the project by Michael Klein.

shows what devastating implications a lack of family support in school-related matters can have for present-day pupils from this minority, but also indicates that time bombs for the future are being laid here. A similar generational connection is evident between completed training on the part of parents or grandparents and readiness for completion of a vocational education program.

Methodological Inexperience

In the evaluation of the interviews, various errors, large and small, are evident, and they can be attributed to inexperience and thus are due to the initial situation of the project:

In the preliminary seminars, special emphasis was placed on not asking questions in the free-ranging parts of the interview in such a way as to obtain only "Yes" or "No" answers, but instead on encouraging the respondents to talk, describe people, workplaces, or daily routines, recount stories and episodes, etc. This "art of encouragement" was successful only in parts of the interviews.

Not infrequently, leading questions are posed. This is a real problem, even if one can usually deduce, especially in the free-ranging parts, what the actual intention of the interviewees was or is.

The interviewers tend to ask questions about the negative conditions of Sinti and Roma life, rather than about the positive ones, or even about successes.

The interviewers sometimes forget to ask certain questions; from a sociological standpoint, for example, the frequent omission of the occupation of the father or mother is a real shortcoming in terms of the evaluation.

Actually, record logs of the conversations were supposed to be prepared, with something written about the acquisition of the address, the atmosphere of the conversation, the home, the neighborhood, and the focal points and pitfalls of the interview. These records were indeed written in the majority of cases, but they do not always contain the information sought.

It is not always clear who is participating in the conversation or was quietly present.

The length of the conversations is shorter than average.

As mentioned, at least portions of interviews dealing with personal history were requested, if not extensive and intense life-history interviews; however, in only a few interviews is a life history recounted in a cohesive way, even if it becomes evident from other parts.

Nevertheless: The true strengths of these interviews are based on the interviewers' knowledge and understanding of everything concerning the living conditions, the difficulties of life for this minority in Germany, the special efforts one had to make as a "Gypsy" to find recognition, the hostility, the shame and rage in childhood after the first experiences of rejection, and similar matters. Here, in the preparatory seminars as well, there emerged an enormous vivacity, self-

deprecating in part. One example: The prospective interviewers asked themselves whether they had ever kept it a secret that they were Sinti or Roma. Almost all, at some time in their lives, had developed strategies for avoiding identification as “Gypsies.” The loudest applause, accompanied by great laughter, was garnered by this reply: “I said at school that I’m from India. And it’s true, isn’t it?”

It is understandable that this knowledge, these personal experiences as members of this minority, also resulted in overidentification or in leading questions. In my opinion, however, the positive aspects of the interviewers’ membership in the Sinti and Roma group clearly predominate. Without this affiliation and without the great achievement of the interviewers, the project could not have had this success.

Problems That Arose in the Course of the Project

There were also problems in the collaboration between the initiators of this project and the academic researchers. It is obvious that the initiators were or are of two minds: On the one hand, they wanted to scientifically prove and document (at long last) the catastrophic educational situation and the distinctly inferior educational circumstances of the Sinti and Roma in Germany and their causes. On the other hand, they were and are familiar with this minority’s sensitivities, whose causes are seen primarily in the history of persecution and in the hostilities of the “Germans.” These sensitivities not infrequently were an obstacle to the scientific methods and the scientific requirement for self-critical verifiability.

Conversely, the researchers did indeed have above-average knowledge of the difficult position of this minority, and of the mistrust present there, but professional considerations alone required them to hold high the banner of scientific procedure and verifiability. In my case, there had even been an explicit request from the Foundation EVZ, one of the project’s sponsors, that I assist the project as a consultant precisely on questions of methodology.⁵

Initially it seemed as if we might get rid of many of these problems by preserving the anonymity of the interviewees. But that was only partially true: For one thing, preservation of anonymity was intended to be so thorough that subsequent individual inquiries or even subsequent more-extensive comparative surveys would be impossible or could operate only through the project manager.

For another thing, despite the extensive anonymization, other conflicts remained. One example: We academic researchers took it for granted that both the standardized and the open-ended parts of the interviews must contain questions intended to reveal the circumstances of the chil-

⁵ Presumably because I had already done projects with Sinti and Roma for the Heidelberg Central Council of the Sinti and Roma or, for the Foundation EVZ, another project funded by that Foundation: an international survey project on forced labor, for which some of the forced laborers interviewed were Sinti and Roma. See Alexander von Plato, Almut Leh, and Christoph Thonfeld, eds.: *Hitlers Sklaven. Lebensgeschichtliche Analysen zur Zwangsarbeit im internationalen Vergleich* (Vienna, Cologne, Weimar, 2008).

dren and adolescents and, in particular, the family background during the years of school and training. Therefore a corresponding question was scheduled for inclusion in the standardized part; the possible answers to be marked dealt with whether the respondents grew up mainly at home with their parents, with relatives, with friends, in institutional homes, or elsewhere. This question and the corresponding answers were connected with another question, regarding the frequency of changes of school, which naturally was linked with the question about parents' "travels." "Travels" refers mostly to journeys made with the entire family to earn a living. These questions and these possible answers met with rejection, the intensity of which remained incomprehensible to me or led to questions on my part: Were people unwilling to disclose that they were "institutionalized children" because that was connected with a negative family situation?

Or was it because the families had memories of forced institutionalization, especially in the "Third Reich"? Or because they were "travelers' children"? Or did they even fear, as one of the interviewers told me, that the institutionalized children might have had better schooling and training than the children who grew up at home?

In this case, there was no agreement, but we were able to eliminate this question, and in any event the qualitative parts include discussion of the school and training background, as well as the family situation. The situation is similar with regard to questions about the financial situation of the interviewees. In hindsight, it can be established that the tabooing of the family constellations among the majority of those interviewed was less strong than the initiators and interviewers had assumed.

In this section, too, I would like to return to the question of a separate culture, of the fairy tales and children's songs of the Sinti and Roma. It could be that this narrative and song culture really is missing, as ascertained; it could also be that the National Socialist persecution caused abandonment of this culture, or at least dominated or interfered with other stories. But it could also be that this issue, which I see as an essential part of any investigation of education and cultural development, is based on a further misunderstanding: According to information from Daniel Strauss and others familiar with the Sinti culture, the stories or "fairy tales," which were indeed told at home, had been updated in each generation to fit current circumstances.⁶ In this updating, after the persecution and killing of Sinti and Roma, the old stories were told in such a way that grandparents or great-grandparents became the main characters in them. And it was just such updating that led to the tales of suffering and horror in the National Socialist era—that would be, at least, a hypothesis with cognizance of the qualitative evaluation. For the songs, the situation appears somewhat different, as Sinti and Roma music groups do take pains to play "their" music.

In any event, this detected lack should be an incentive for the representatives of the Sinti and Roma, stimulating them to take renewed possession of this earlier culture, including that of pre-National Socialist times, and not to devalue it from the start as an element of the romanticizing "Gypsy culture."

⁶ Daniel Strauss, ed.: *Die Sinti/Roma Erzählkunst* (Heidelberg, 1992).

In the gender ratio, we had aimed for a 1:1 sampling, and we came close to that, too: Slightly more than half of the interviewees are women, a pleasant fact that we had hardly expected. The composition of the generational sampling differed to some extent from what was desired, so that scarcely more than 40% of the respondents are in the 14-25 age group, 42.5% in the 26-50 age group, and 16.5% in the over-50 group. Fewer than planned are in the older groups; that could not be rectified—and perhaps that was just as well. If members of this minority were surveyed at all, then until now those interviewed were those who had experienced National Socialism, and they naturally were the older ones.

The greatest problem, however, arose in the regional sampling. To sum it up roughly: The project is a “West project,” and the new federal states, the former GDR, are almost completely absent. That is a fundamental shortcoming, which was not planned and is due to the backing out of interviewers; it was no longer possible to correct it.⁷ It is regrettable, because we thus could learn nothing about the varying effects on the minority’s life circumstances and educational situation in the two German postwar systems. For the old Federal Republic, however, there is a wide distribution.

An additional fundamental shortcoming: Although the preparatory seminars for the project and the literature included the topic of religion or religious communities, and although membership, especially in “free church” denominations or Jehovah’s Witnesses, is mentioned in the interviews, we did not enlarge upon religiosity, devoutness, or the specifics of community work, especially that of the free-church communities. Nevertheless, here too the interviews provide material for evaluation. Thus we learn that the level of trust in the Protestant or Catholic national churches is low, but the level of trust in the respondents’ own community is extremely high. Therefore one wonders whether the special, sometimes Presbyterian, forms of the free-church communities with their services in more private premises and their relatively strong cohesion may not fit in with the needs of the Sinti and Roma and their life as a minority; or whether the free-church denominations put forth greater efforts for the Sinti and Roma than the national churches.

Sometimes books are mentioned, such as dictionaries, the Bible, or a hymnal—overall, however, we did not concentrate on asking about books in the respondents’ homes.

⁷ In the qualitative evaluation, however, some of the interviews with Sinti from the new federal states were also taken into account.

Conclusion

In every respect, the project on the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma can be regarded as a pioneering work: first, because of the findings of this research on the living situation in general and the educational situation or relationship of this minority to the majority society in particular; second, because of the new avenues revealed through the collaboration of Sinti and Roma as key players in the research. But if one takes into account that the new federal states are not represented in this study, there is, on the other hand, a broad spectrum in the new federal states from the regional, local, and social point of view.

To be sure, we do not know—sociologically speaking—the exact data for the “base” of the Sinti and Roma in Germany, so that we cannot speak of a **representative survey** in the strict sense. But the interviews are so broadly distributed in terms of social position, gender, age, residential area, and educational situation and so diverse, that we can say with great plausibility that a picture of this minority based on this study would need only minor changes, even if a representative survey were to be made. It creates a basis for policy both in Berlin and the federal states and for the representatives of the Sinti and Roma. The qualitative parts of the interviews give this picture a richness that will hold great significance for educational work in the majority society as well.

Overall, it became clear in this project that the level of school and vocational education of the Sinti and Roma in Germany is far lower than that of the population as a whole, and that the educational level of the parents and grandparents is a major determinant of the success of the children in school. It also becomes clear that illiteracy among the Sinti and Roma must be greater than in the population as a whole,⁸ and that the proportion of “travelers” among the Sinti and Roma is still relatively large. Understandably, these are the aspects of this research that touch the sensibilities of the Sinti and Roma. Conversely, however, it is the findings that primarily have to do with the still-widespread prejudices, rejection, and hostility toward the Sinti and Roma in school and in society.

With relative infrequency, we encountered among our interviewees the attitude that education could be interpreted as a “weapon” for self-assertion with regard to the majority—an attitude that sees the struggle, including the minority’s own struggle, for a better education as an essential element in the self-confidence and self-determination of the Sinti and Roma in German society. The majority of our interviewees do not hold this attitude yet. That may have various causes: One might be that they see themselves as victims, victims of educational policy as well. There is also a task here for the representatives of the Sinti and Roma themselves.

Thus, after this project, after the revelation of the alarming discrimination, the wretched educational situation, and the high rate of school drop-outs and truancy among the Sinti and Roma, the demands on German educational policy for improvement of the social situation and espe-

⁸ Illiteracy is not easy to inquire about, but indications that grandparents, parents, or close relatives cannot read and write are not infrequent in the interviews. And the number of those who have never attended school also argues in favor of this assumption.

cially of the schooling and vocational training of this minority are even clearer and, above all, better documented than ever before.

Evaluation of Quantitative Data for the Survey

Michael Klein

In our knowledge and information society, education is seen with some reason as a decisive factor both for individual self-actualization and personality development and for the finding of a secure position in society. Education, therefore, is one of the central control mechanisms in society: Through it, opportunities are dealt out or withheld.

Now, when it has been known for quite some time—from the scanty research on Sinti and Roma in Germany, but even more from the projects in Mannheim, Kiel, Hamburg, Cologne, or elsewhere involving families of the German Sinti and Roma, a recognized minority in Germany—that there is a great educational problem here, this message must be viewed as alarming: For generations, social opportunities have been denied to an entire group of people long resident in Germany, and their social integration has been made impossible.

So it is surprising that the topics of educational situation and educational status are not made the focal point of inquiry, even in the scientifically profound studies on the stigmatization, marginalization, and social disadvantage of Sinti and Roma in Germany. Instead, these topics are more apt to crop up peripherally, at times not at all (among others, Koch, 2005). One exception is the work by Wurr/Träbing-Butzmann (1998), which focuses more on social pedagogy, and the recent case study by Frese (2011).

The research done almost 30 years ago at the behest of the German Federal Ministry of Youth, Family, and Health (Hundsalsz, 1982) produced not only evidence that reservations and resistance toward scientific investigations were present among the Sinti who were studied (pp. 11/12), reactions that are well justified by their dreadful experiences years ago in Germany and persisting in their everyday life, but also disturbing findings of insufficient schooling, illiteracy, a shifting of pupils into *Sonderschulen* [special schools] (above all, pp. 57-82), unemployment, economic distress, and dependence on social welfare (above all, pp. 83-106).

Hundsalsz also points, however, to the internal differentiation of the Sinti group into “poorer” and “financially better-off” families, by systematically making, in the data preparation and the tables, a categorical distinction between those who are “independent” and “dependent on social assistance benefits (HLZ).” For both the groups thus differentiated, however, the study makes clear the extent to which deficits in education and the educational plight are caused internally and externally, and are socially reproduced anew on an ongoing basis.

“The explanation for the decline in school attendance with increasing age could lie in the special family constellation of the Sinti. The adolescent children are integrated into family life far more strongly than is the case, for example, among non-Sinti children of the same age. Older children

often not only assume responsibility for their younger siblings, but also contribute to the livelihood of the families by supporting the father or mother in their gainful activities. This appears to apply equally to boys and girls, as we found, in a corresponding differentiation based on the children's gender, no differences with regard to school attendance" (Hundsatz, 1982, p. 61).

The educational trajectories and the related social reproduction of educational deficits, therefore, frequently form a loop: Because the children are discriminated against, marginalized, and left behind in the school and training systems as well as in the labor market, activities and skills are passed on to them by their parents, which in turn links them back to the social and cultural systems of value and action of the parent generation. Thus surges in education like those that have occurred, for example, in the FRG as a whole since the 1970s are rather unlikely.

Therefore, a study that systematically relates the educational situation of the Sinti in Germany to the historical experiences of the Sinti as a whole, their personal experiences with discrimination and exclusion, and their current living situation in the family, on the job, at school, and in the activities of daily living, is well overdue.

First, however, two short interpolations are appropriate, to specify the theory and methodology underlying the study, before going into the findings themselves.

Explanatory Approaches

a.

When individuals have a precarious educational status or entire groups have substantial educational problems, the literature generally speaks of "**educational poverty**" (see, among others, Allmendinger/Leibfried, 2002, 2003). This categorization was adopted by the German Federal Government in a first attempt to see educational and social policy in combination and relate them to one another in actions to be taken (see Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Sozialordnung [Federal Ministry for Labor and Social Affairs], 2001).

It is advisable to follow this concept, because its use enables the best comparisons to be made in empirical studies, and the most comprehensive follow-up opportunities to be provided in theoretical explanations for precarious or failed educational careers, both on the personal level and in terms of the institutional conditions at educational establishments.

Further, there arises an opportunity to build bridges between educational policy tasks and social policy tasks.

The connection of the two areas is relevant:

Lopsidedness in education leads to substantially reduced social opportunities, extending all the way to social dislocations or even social exclusion from the ways of integration viewed as "normal" in the dominant society, which entail completion of at least the *Hauptschule* [lower secondary general education school] and participation in the dual training system. Deficits in the area

of education that cross the threshold into “educational poverty” entrench themselves deeply in social contexts and are easily passed on in the generational sequence. Therefore, it must also be a central sociopolitical task to counteract educational deficits, especially where they affect entire groups of people, to prevent the exclusion of those groups from basic opportunities in life.

Just what is “educational poverty”?

“One could proceed as with other *individual* situations of poverty (inadequate housing, poor health, and insufficient income) and apply an *absolute* yardstick to the distribution of educational resources: a sheer minimum standard. This minimum could be determined by literacy, fulfillment of the requirement for attendance at a *Hauptschule* or a *Berufsschule* [vocational school], or by the achievement of certain competencies. A *relative* yardstick would emphasize the entire educational-resource structure, would emphasize positioning in a distribution spectrum” (Allmendinger/Leibfried, 2003, p. 13).

This could be broken down in terms of *certificates* and *competencies*.

With regard to *absolute educational poverty*, as in the case of falling below the minimum wage (in Anglo-Saxon countries) or the minimum economic existence (welfare standard rate), failure to complete *Hauptschule* or vocational education would be a solid and unambiguous earmark of lack of schooling.

“In the case of *relative* educational poverty, certificate-oriented reporting would expand to cover the group that—measured in terms of certificates, that is, proofs of examination—exhibits less education than the average German” (Allmendinger/Leibfried, 2003, p. 13).

This is especially important for Germany, because a broad, general, average qualification (through the dual vocational training system) is regarded as the minimum prerequisite for a satisfactory livelihood and a corresponding social position.

As the comprehensive educational studies from years ago (especially PISA, the Program for International Student Assessment) attest, the groups of people regarded as educationally impoverished according to a certificate-based measurement are not completely coextensive with those who would be described as competency-poor. Among the Sinti, this might be different: Although no competency-oriented surveys are available thus far, it is to be assumed that widespread educational poverty in terms of schooling is present here, because the school itself very rapidly separates this group from the general educational system.

This carries special weight because Germany performs extremely poorly overall in the international comparison of the educational landscape with regard to *differentiation* (those systems that produce high inequality are *differentiating*, because the gap between the top 5% and the bottom 5% is quite large) and *level* (that is, the differentiation effects, especially for the lower region, are at a low or high level on average).

“The *differentiation effect* comes primarily from the three-tier school system with its early, hard-to-reverse screening of pupils into three different ‘educational classes.’

The *level effect* might be connected primarily with the comparatively low German rate of spending on education” (Allmendinger/Leibfried, 2003, p. 14).

In Germany, investment in education goes primarily to higher education and to training for mid-level and upper professional positions, according to parallel findings by educational researchers. Investments in the lower school sector and assistance for the educationally deprived are completely inadequate. In addition, the potential of kindergarten as a learning landscape is (still) entirely neglected, according to these same findings.

Thus the educational level of the individual in Germany is determined mostly by social origin, and there is a danger, not only for social minorities, that those students from uneducated, relatively inarticulate, and competency-poor milieus are being completely left behind.

b.

The available information on the situation of low-qualified youths in the job market and in **vocational training** is abysmal. Of course, the basic statistical data are available, but there are no data on social conditions and social origin, no scientific studies on biographical courses of events. A sole exception is the relatively old study by Alheit/Glass (1986), which focuses directly on the phenomenon of *unemployment*, however. At the same time, the situation of youths who have no *Schulabschluss* [secondary-level general school certificate] is well known to be precarious, and it is equally well known that both the system in the job market and the system of vocational training for groups are systematically disadvantaged (see below).

Without further differentiation according to social or ethnic origin or biographical background, it can be established that the percentage share of youths with no *Schulabschluss* in Germany has continually increased since the 1960s: In 1965 around 20% of the persons leaving school had neither a simple *Hauptschule* certificate nor one qualifying them to continue their schooling, while the proportion since the early 1980s has consistently hovered around 10%; in 2008, the share was 7% for girls, 12% for boys.

Thus Germany does very well in the international comparison: Only Sweden and the Netherlands recorded a lower percentage.

“Despite this success, the social marginalization of youths with no school-leaving certificate has continued in Germany. Their lack of a certificate is regarded as evidence that they cannot meet the increased performance requirements in school—and this comes at a time when, amid high basic unemployment, competition for training slots and jobs has increased markedly” (Solga, 2003, p. 19).

Steady reduction in the numbers of persons leaving school without a *Hauptschule* certificate is linked with the “paradoxical effect” of intensified social marginalization for those individuals:

“After leaving school, members of this group, just like young people who do have a school-leaving certificate, are expected to organize their lives ‘with a certain biographical vanishing point in mind’—that is, with an eye on obtaining open-ended, full-time gainful employment at the first job market” (Solga, 2003, p. 21).

Inferior performances at school now are more apt to be interpreted as “individual failure” and lack of a school-leaving certificate is generally regarded as a “sign of inability for equal participation in the job market” (because in the overall prejudiced interpretations, the pupil can fail in school, but the school cannot fail the pupil), while difficulties in transitioning into the working world are being explained to an even greater degree as individual performance and motivation deficits, both in the scholarly literature and in expert opinions and educational and social reports. Thus, mere participation in vocational training or vocational support arrangements is effectively tantamount to submitting to self-stigmatization.

As mentioned above, however, *systematic* (that is, not individually substantiated) discrimination against groups in the job and apprenticeship market is at a high. To take one example, there has indeed been a clear decrease in the last years in the percentage of youths with no school-leaving certificate who possessed no training by the age of 25, but “despite this decline, the relative gap between them and youths with a school-leaving certificate has increased. In the 1930 birth cohort, young men with no school-leaving certificate also lacked a training qualification about 1.5 times as frequently as those with a *Hauptschule* certificate. In the 1964-1971 birth cohorts, however, the risk was 5.5 times as high. For *young women* with no school-leaving certificate, the picture is different, owing to the general increase in young women’s participation in education. In absolute terms, the share of women with no training qualification dropped in this group from 80% to around 32%. Nevertheless, in relative terms the gap between them and young women with a school-leaving certificate increased marginally; then, as today, the risk that women with no school-leaving certificate will fail to obtain a training qualification is about twice as high as for young women with a *Hauptschule* certificate. This slight gap between women with and women without a *Hauptschule* certificate, however, reflects the well-known fact that girls with a *Hauptschule* certificate have distinctly worse training opportunities than boys with a comparable education, and thus it is not a manifestation of success on the part of young women with no school-leaving certificate” (Solga, 2003, p. 23).

Therefore, it must be declared:

- that marginalization and exclusion in the job market and in the vocational education system is attributed to individual failure to an even greater extent than in the school context, and therefore must be averted in subjective experience by compensatory explanations and strategies
- that these marginalizations, however, can be ascribed only partly to individual causes; instead, *systemic effects* (that is, causes within the labor system and vocational education system) must be assumed to be responsible, and therefore must be brought to bear to achieve changes in this context as well

c.

Differences in the German system that are based on ethnic origin and educational deficits among social and ethnic minorities are generally dealt with by allocating the different nationality groups to the various educational trajectories. Because it is easiest and probably also most emphatic, it is the most recently achieved educational attainments that usually are the focus here; therefore the process is *certificate-oriented* (see above). Both in systematic research on the German educational system and in educational reports, the children of non-native population groups (the so-called children and youths with an immigrant background) are a topic of discussion; children from indigenous minority groups seldom come to the fore.

Ever since the PISA study, it has been generally known that the German school system ranks near the bottom of the OECD countries with regard to the disadvantage of social and ethnic minorities.

“Migrant children exhibit, on average, poorer learning patterns in the general school system than Germans of the same age. They more frequently attend the *Hauptschule*, while they are under-represented in the more advanced educational settings such as the *Realschule* [a type of secondary school leading to higher-education entrance qualification] or the *Gymnasium* [academic high school]. Around 20% of the foreign children leave the school system each year without obtaining a certificate, while only 8% of the Germans do so” (Kristen, 2003, p. 26).

Here, among other factors, the *differentiation effect* of the German school breaks through completely: Children with educational deficits or learning difficulties are insufficiently nurtured and are screened out quite early on, assigned to inferior educational trajectories or simply regarded as only “practically educable.”

“Once adopted (or assigned), educational trajectories cannot be modified or reversed at will; as a rule, they are largely determined at the institutionally designated transition points for the next stage” (Kristen, in the place cited). What is decisive here is mostly the first transition after the fourth year of *Grundschule* [elementary school].

The unequal assignments and thus disadvantages and deficits of ethnic minorities in the vocational education system and later in the first job market are, in general, even more severe than in the general school system.

The concepts used to explain these clear differences with regard to ethnic groups are most commonly on the personal level:

- the *resource-based approach*
- the *acculturation stress* approach, developed in the context of *acculturation theory*

The resource-based approach broadly differentiates three significant aspects or levels:

- First, reference is made to the significance of the *biographical background*. It is important here that continuous and regular attendance at school is in evidence, and that edu-

cational development has been accepted in the milieu of origin and in accordance with biographical experiences as something that is also personally important and valuable.

- With regard to the *family resources*, it depends on the parents' active support for their children in the school context, on their so-called educational investments.

"This includes, above all, continuous encouragement, as well as timely recognition and elimination of any difficulties that appear" (Kristen, 2003, p. 31).

That includes (1) regular assistance with homework and preparation for class tests, (2) the family's knowledge about the educational system, in order to facilitate opportunities for strategically appropriate or adroit behavior.

As has been proven, these resources are extremely important in the German school system, but they are not available if it was impossible to obtain this knowledge through personal experiences (on this, see the quantitative data below).

Here the resource-based approach's penchant for interethnic explanations is shown as well.

"For the sake of simplicity, it is assumed here that all families are equally interested in a good education for their children, that is, they all pursue the same goal in this regard" (Kristen, 2003, p. 30). This assumption definitely cannot be made for every cultural context, however, and certainly not for "uneducated" families, much less in families where state institutions—whatever their nature—have been experienced as a massive endangerment of the cultural context or even as a threat.

The third significant level of resources has to do with the *learning field of the school* itself.

Here, various aspects have a massive effect: poor ability to deal with ethnic differences, pressure to segregate, insufficient financial and/or personal resources for support programs, prejudices on the part of teaching staff, inadequate knowledge of opportunities for integration, and many other aspects.

Even the concept of *acculturation stress*, developed as part of acculturation theory (see Berry et al., 1992, 1997), is best researched and implemented in the case of migrants, but it can be productively applied in every context including ethnic, linguistic, and/or religious minorities.

Acculturation stress denotes feelings of stress that are triggered by an origin-based rejection, which is determined by the interplay of racism, prejudice, and discrimination. This rejection finds expression in the placement of limitations on opportunities for development and in the denial of (school or vocational) career paths, and it is reflected in the questioning of competencies, refusal of recognition, social devaluation, and discrimination with respect to all forms of just and equal treatment. Acculturation stress leads to massive impairment not only of physical and mental health, but also of intellectual development.

Acculturation stress, however, can also be triggered intrinsically, by the presence of profound experiences of discrepancy simultaneously with pressure to succeed and/or perform.

This is in keeping with the basic findings of the educational and developmental psychology of Jean Piaget (and others, 1974, 1975, but also: Aebli, 1968, Keller, 1976). Accordingly, cognitive development takes place in the interaction between *accommodation* and *assimilation*, that is, in the apprehension and processing of new information and its integration into something familiar and already known. Thus progress in development and learning is best made when the matters that are accommodated and assimilated are not overly discrepant, but at least refer to and complement one another: That is, the new material can pick up on familiar material and fit into it, and the new material expands and enriches what is already familiar.

For children from minorities, however, typically the actual experiences of childhood differ from the expectations of the majority society; the traditions and values within the ethnic group can differ from those of the institutions; and distances are determined as much by actual experiences as by preconceived expectations based on family tradition and lore, that is, there is a well-underlaid and experience-saturated sense that something is not consistent.

For development in such constellations to occur, encouragement and assistance—or at least approval and acceptance—are indispensable.

This is in keeping with the lessons of the *salutogenesis concept* (see Antonovsky, 1988, and elsewhere), which is extremely important for educational contexts of all types.

According to this concept, the sense of coherence is central for personality development, formative processes, and health. And such a stable attitude toward life is influenced by three aspects:

- the conviction and experience that the events in one's own life are fundamentally understandable
- the conviction and experience that risks and burdens in life can potentially be overcome
- the conviction that experiences in life can be interpreted as meaningful and significant

Supplementary Methodology-Related Comments on the Study

In the section written by Alexander von Plato, the most important things have already been said regarding the fundamental methodological problems, as well as the challenges. Here I will briefly address those areas again and supplement them by arranging the information in a systematic way.

- There are methodological weaknesses and empirical weak points that have consciously been accepted in advance.
- There are also problems that have become evident only in hindsight and also are energized in part by the communication breakdowns between the initiators/supporters of the project and the academic researchers.
- There are problems that became evident only in the course of the empirical procedure during the project and could no longer be corrected.

- And finally, some weaknesses result from the methodological inexperience of the interviewers, who could not be sufficiently evaluated beforehand.

These problems of methodology have a great effect particularly on a quantitative analysis of the data, as they can no longer be “cured” here after the fact.

For a qualitative analysis, narrative texts are available that can be subjected to interpretive operations, so that a latent or intended meaning can be reconstructed “behind” the obvious content. Not in the sense that “the scientific researcher” knows “better” than the narrator or, vice versa, that the everyday actor in principle would know the score better than the person analyzing the material, but rather in this sense: that when the various approaches or levels of meaning are mutually correlated, deeper insights can suddenly appear.

For a quantitative analysis, the first problem posed is the question of the potential validity and scope of the empirical statements.

Of course, the study is not “representative”; that was clear from the start.

The selection of interviewees took place within the networks of the interviewers, almost in a kind of “snowball system.” That also means, however, that no systematic and/or random selection of interviewees took place. But because the basic population as a whole is also unknown, something approaching representativeness cannot be construed either, at least mathematically, after the fact, by using the statistical device of contingency intervals. Therefore, one can only trust that such a numerically large number of persons and such a variety of individual cases are represented in the study that the statements are plausible and well-founded, as well as empirically substantiated.

For the study overall, of course, both the association representatives and the interviewers constitute a kind of “pre-filter.” In the meantime it has become clear that some questions met with disapproval prior to the interview process, but not among the interviewees themselves.

Because the interviewers themselves come from a submilieu of the Sinti that does not see educational institutions as alien or even disapprove of them, and it was these people in turn who recruited the interviewees predominantly from their familiar environment, it may well be that the overall situation of the Sinti in Germany with regard to their educational plight is far more precarious than portrayed in this study.

On the other hand, it is also apparent that not infrequently, leading questions were asked, and the interviewers had a tendency to ask questions about the negative conditions of Sinti and Roma life rather than about the positive conditions or even the successes. So it may well be, conversely, that entire facets of positive aspects or of “success” never came into focus at all in this study. Thus it would be thoroughly advisable to make a partial analysis of Sinti who were especially “successful” in terms of a continuous educational or occupational career, for it may well be that “failure” and “success” are based on entirely different conditions. That was attempted at least to some extent in the qualitative analysis, by means of selection of interviews and typification. However, here the question arises with greater inten-

sity: What is “success”? Is it success as it is understood within the family, or is it present where educational processes are successfully translated into certificates?

In any event, however, such partial analyses could potentially help to weaken the concern that complete integration into the school system would alienate the Sinti from their milieu of origin and especially from their traditional culture.

Starting with the individual, four feature characteristics appear, in a two-dimensional classification system, with regard to the reciprocal relationship between the majority group and the culture of the minority group:

		Relationship to one's own (minority) group	
		<i>positive</i>	<i>negative</i>
Relationship to the majority society	<i>positive</i>	integration	assimilation
	<i>negative</i>	segregation	marginalization

(based on Berry et al., 1992)

The empirical category “integration,” at least, has been underexposed thus far in the studies available. Illumination of this phenomenon, however, could even include an opportunity along the lines of a revitalization of the Sinti culture overall.

Of course, the traditions and experiences of the culture of the Sinti would have to be taken into account in the course of the study.

That would mean, for one thing, that numerical data generally should not be gathered, “to avoid any parallels with the registration of members of minorities under National Socialism.”

But even weightier is the fact that consideration, founded on respect, was to be shown for a culture of asking questions. That also means, however, that the position of the other person is recognized, not probed into in inquisitorial fashion, and that contradictions or improbabilities are not pointed out.

Therefore, above all, the information on the interviewee's educational career also was

- in part, directly requested
- in part, concluded from the information or indications in the life-history narratives,
- in part, marked by the interviewer based on statements by the interviewee, without making sure that both parties meant the same thing

Thus, for information about the type of school, it cannot be unambiguously clarified in retrospect in all cases whether this school was only *attended* or also *completed*.

For a certificate-based analysis, which asks primarily about *completed schooling*, the present data thus are not adequate in any event.

Therefore, overall, the *heterogeneity* of the quality of the data for a quantitative analysis is especially problematic.

Not least for that reason, in the evaluation for the quantitative part, only simple tables were compiled, in which only the relationships of two variables are presented, in order to arrive at empirically substantiated and verifiable statements. Thus, no use was made of elaborate multivariate evaluation procedures—such as cohort analyses, time series analyses, or event analyses—which would indeed have been entirely appropriate for the investigation and would even have had great explanatory value for it (see Baur, 2005, especially pp. 182-219), but could not be justified on the basis of the empirical data.

Quantitative Analysis

In total, 275 interviews were conducted; about half of the questionnaires were completely filled out, and for the remaining short records there is no information available for some categories.* Here too, information for all categories is by no means available from all the interview or record forms, but they still can be regarded as so complete that they can be used for a correlation analysis.

For the age groups (14-25, 26-50, 51 and older), the desired distribution goal could not be attained. However, the distribution of the age groups for description of *the current situation* even appears to be more favorable now than would have been the case for that originally targeted. In some of the following tables, however, spurious correlations may appear as a result of the age distribution:

The group of those 51 and older is more apt in general to give “no information,” or with far greater frequency, the interviewers failed to mark this category. For some questions, it is clear that for this age group during their years in school, the existing circumstances were quite different from those of the other two age groups, partly because of structural givens, but predominantly because of the persecution situation. For other questions, however, it can no longer be ascertained in retrospect whether the interviewees actually gave no answer, or gave relatively unclear information that the interviewers could not classify otherwise, or whether this results from different conversational strategies (see the factor “respect”).

Besides categories such as “did not attend *Grundschule*,” this holds true primarily for “travel during schooltime,” “help with homework,” and “discrimination in school.”

* For the quantitative evaluation, therefore, the total number of interviews was reduced to **N = 261**.

The age-group distribution now presents itself as follows:

Table 1: Distribution of Interviewees by Age Group

	Number	Percentage
14-25 years old	106	40.61%
26-50 years old	112	42.91%
51 and older	43	16.48%
Total	261	100%

The distribution by *gender*, however, is almost identical:

Table 2: Distribution of Interviewees by Gender

	Number	Percentage
Male	122	46.74%
Female	139	53.26%
Total	261	100%

The distribution of the sexes within the three age groups is satisfying, as the distribution is almost equal:

Table 3: Distribution of Interviewees by Age Group and Gender

	Male	Female	Total
14-25 years old	51	55	106
	48.1%	51.9%	100%
26-50 years old	52	60	112
	46.4%	53.6%	100%
51 and older	19	24	43
	44.2%	55.8%	100%
Total	122	139	261
	46.7%	53.3%	100%

Because of the procedure used for the sampling and the survey, substantial *regional clusters* result, such as these around

Mannheim (47)

Offenburg (44)

Bremerhaven (17)

Karlsruhe (17)

Munich (16)

Berlin (12)

Stade (10)

This presents no further problems. It is regrettable, however, that in the end it was purely a “West German project.”

The territories of the new federal states and thus of the former GDR are entirely absent, which makes it impossible to shed light on the conceivably different effects of the two German postwar systems. The only exception is the two interviewees from the Berlin cluster, who grew up in East Berlin.

Because the two German states had not only different political systems, but also different educational systems and school configurations, this is a not inconsiderable shortcoming for an educational study.

Educational Participation

First, *participation in education* is presented on the basis of the types of schools attended.

Here too, a short preliminary remark is in order.

School attendance, and here the feature “highest educational qualification achieved,” is the classic example in statistical textbooks for presentation in an *ordinal scale*.

That is, the items (in this case: *Grundschule*, *Hauptschule*, *Realschule*, *Gymnasium*) are rank-ordered, because the follow-on type of school is always “higher in value” than the preceding one. That says nothing, however, about the intervals between the neighboring categories (that is, whether the interval between *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* is the same size as that between *Realschule* and *Gymnasium*, or is smaller or larger).

Nonetheless, because of the unclear classifications in some cases in the present study—that is, the previously cited unclear separation between “type of school attended” and “type of school completed”—a lower level of measurement is chosen here: presentation in a nominal scale.

This means that, for the objects or characteristics of the analysis, by means of a comparison, a decision is made only about the similarity or dissimilarity of the characteristic values (in this case, “attended *Grundschule*” or “did not attend,” or “attended *Hauptschule*” or “did not attend”).

On this lower measurement level of the nominal scale, the correlations are in any event weaker than on the higher level of the ordinal scale; nevertheless, in a comparison of the interviewed group of Sinti with the data for the rest of the population, they are just as blatantly obvious as in the internal comparison of the different age groups.

Grundschule

Table 4: Grundschule Attendance of the Interviewees by Age Group

	Attended Grundschule	Did not attend Grundschule	Total
14-25 years old	96	10	106
	90.6%	9.4%	100%
26-50 years old	91	21	112
	81.3%	18.8%	100%
51 and older	26	17	43
	60.5%	39.5%	100%
Total	213	48	261
	81.6%	18.4%	100%

In this table, it becomes clear that in the comparison of the age groups of those 14-25 years old with those 26-50 years old, there has at least occurred a halving of 18.8% of those who did not attend a *Grundschule*, to 9.4%. The comparison with the over-51 age group, in which almost 40% have not attended a *Grundschule*, is dramatic, however.

Hauptschule

Even more distinct is the correlation with regard to attendance at a *Hauptschule*. Here a continuous increase in school attendance is to be registered in the comparison of age cohorts: From 25.6% in the over-51 age group, to 50.9% of the 26-50 age group, to 78.3% of the 14-25 age group, who have attended or are attending a *Hauptschule*.

Table 5: Hauptschule Attendance of the Interviewees by Age Group

	Attended Hauptschule	Total
14-25 years old	83	106
	78.3%	100%
26-50 years old	57	112
	50.9%	100%
51 and older	11	43
	25.6%	100%
Total	151	261
	57.9%	100%

Compulsory school attendance, which in the meantime was enforced and controlled, is surely reflected in these findings, along with the minority's increased interest in attending school; that says nothing, however, about the stability and regularity of such attendance, or about successful completion. In addition, the gap between the minority and the population as a whole is still dramatic.

Educational participation by the general population is shown in the table below. Although the discrepancy between the data for the Sinti and Roma interviewees and the data in the educational report on the entire population is impressive, the numbers themselves are not necessarily conclusive, as the data in the educational report, too, are full of flaws: In some federal states, two different certificates are awarded at the conclusion of the *Hauptschule* program: an *Ab-schlusszeugnis*, or diploma, when the formal requirements for graduation have been met, and an *Abgangszeugnis*, or leaving certificate, when that is not the case. In the microcensus, a clear distinction is not always drawn between the two. One result is the different percentages for persons with a *Hauptschule* certificate.

Realschule

The precarious educational situation of the Sinti becomes blatantly obvious, however, in the case of attendance at schools that lead to qualification for higher education. No difference is evident any longer between the 26-50 age group (13.4% have attended a *Realschule*) and the 14-25 age group (12.3%).

Table 6: *Realschule* Attendance of the Interviewees by Age Group

	Attended <i>Realschule</i>	Total
14-25 years old	13	106
	12.3%	100%
26-50 years old	15	112
	13.4%	100%
51 and older	2	43
	4.7%	100%
Total	30	261
	11.5%	100%

Gender distribution, too, is roughly equal, with 10.8% of the females who have attended/are attending a *Realschule*, in comparison with 12.3% of the males.

Table 7: *Realschule* Attendance of the Interviewees by Gender

	Attended <i>Realschule</i>	Total
Male	15	122
	12.3%	100%
Female	15	139
	10.8%	100%
Total	30	261
	11.5%	100%

Overall, however, the school attendance of the Sinti and Roma who were interviewed in the present study is somewhat more favorably depicted than is the case in older research (see Hundsatz, 1982, pp. 70ff.), and is thoroughly plausible, in this increase as well, when the respective age groups are considered. There still exists a dramatic gap, however, between the Sinti and Roma interviewees and the population as a whole with regard to attendance at the *Realschule* and *Gymnasium* levels (see table below), and that needs explanation on the one hand, and on the other calls for prompt political action (see, among others, Steinig, 2009; Kuhs/Steinig, 1998).

With only 6 persons indicating attendance at a *Gymnasium* (academic high school, preparatory for university), presentation in a table or preparation of statistics would be pointless.

Lastly, attendance at a *Förderschule*, or special-needs school, is shown below in percentage terms:

Table 8: *Förderschule* Attendance of Interviewees by Age Group

	Attended <i>Förderschule</i>	Total
14-25 years old	10	106
	9.4%	100%
26-50 years old	15	112
	13.4%	100%
51 and older	3	43
	7%	100%
Total	28	261
	10.7%	100%

At this point, it is time to ask also about the Sinti and Roma who have left school *without a school-leaving certificate*.

As mentioned above, for reasons inherent in the research, a clear distinction cannot always be drawn among the interviewees in this study between those who have *attended* the type of school in question and those who acquired a *school-leaving certificate* or diploma there. Reconstruction based on the questionnaires, however, indicates that in the population of interviewees (N = 261), at least 34 (= 13%) have attended no school at all and at least 115 others (= 44%) have no certificate of completion.

Comparison with the population as a whole is extremely difficult; the difficulty, however, is not due to methodological weaknesses in this study.

The most recent expert reports regarding the number of those leaving general-education schools without a *Hauptschule* certificate determine that these youths “(are) altogether inadequately prepared for their further life and for entering a vocational training program. They are unlikely to find an apprenticeship position and will, throughout their entire working life, be sub-

ject to a high risk of unemployment. If they are employed, they must expect to receive a low income throughout the length of their employment history. Thus the findings indicate that these youths are also clearly limited with regard to their opportunities for participation in society” (Klemm, 2011, p. 8). Nevertheless, it is also stated that the data available are meager, overall. For age cohorts from years back, there are scarcely any solid findings, and for the most recent cohorts of school-leavers, the regional differences are enormous:

In summer 2008, around 65,000 young people left the general-education schools without a graduation certificate. “The proportion of young people with no *Hauptschule* certificate averages 7.5% of an age cohort nationwide, but varies distinctly from one federal state to another. Thus the range extends from 5.6% in Baden-Württemberg to 17.9% in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Overall, the proportions in eastern Germany are markedly higher than those in the western federal states” (Klemm, 2011, p. 8).

But even within the individual federal states, the differences from region to region are quite large:

For example, in Bavaria, where around 10% still lacked a school-leaving certificate in 2001, by 2009 only 6% have no certificate. But there are differences within this federal state: In Kempten, 20.2% lack a certificate, in Straubing, 18.3%, in Hof, 17.6%, in the Würzburg administrative district, only 1.3%, in the district of Bayreuth, 1.9%, but in the city of Bayreuth, 12.3%.

There are traditional explanations for these differences, such as

- low unemployment in the region’s population
- structure of the population (predominantly members of the middle class, who help with homework and in case of doubt arrange for private tutoring)

These explanations, however, break down. Thus there are no explanations for the fact that in Hesse, the situation is almost universally worsening, but has distinctly improved elsewhere. Also unexplained is the increase in the number of youths in Flensburg with no school-leaving certificate, while all around that town in Schleswig-Holstein, a clear decline in this number is recorded.

In addition to reasons of regional policy, there obviously must be other causes that lie in the school district in question, in the municipality, or even in the individual schools.

Thus, apart from comparison between relatively homogeneous population groups, a comparison with regard to mean values appears to be out of the question. For explanation, as well as for steps to effect change and approaches to reform, one must go back to much smaller units.

Obviously, however, it has been confirmed again that of those persons leaving school without completing *Hauptschule*, 54.6% come from *Förderschulen*, 26.5% from *Hauptschulen*, and 19% from other types of schools: schools with several educational programs (7%), *Gesamtschulen*, or comprehensive schools (5.4%), *Realschulen* (4.7%), and *Gymnasien* (1.4%).

Thus there evidently exists in the population a hard core that is systematically marginalized in education and left behind in society. It is equally obvious that the German Sinti and Roma have been included in that core for decades.

Accordingly, the expert report's central demands for the first beginnings of reforms are applicable to these groups as well. The demands include, for example:

- "Introduction of a consistent policy of inclusion, so that pupils are removed from the low-stimulus environment of the *Förderschulen* and included in joint classes at general-education schools"
- "Incorporation of extracurricular learning venues into school classes by opening the school to the working world"
- "Intensified support for children and youths, in particular by means of ongoing language instruction"
- "Timely introduction of constructive measures—beginning in day-care facilities and day nurseries, where early educational opportunities exist, and in *Grundschule*, but also by upgrading opportunities at all-day schools" (Klemm, 2011, p. 10)

Educational Participation in the Population on Average

At this point, for purposes of comparison we will include a table showing the educational participation of the population on average (Source: *Bildung in Deutschland 2001*, "Grundinformationen zu Bildung in Deutschland," Table B3-1A, p. 227):

Table B3-1A: Population in 2008, by Completion of General Education, Age Group, and Gender (in %) (Source: Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, Mikrozensus 2008)

From ... to under ... years of age	Total ¹⁾	Still in school	Completed general education					No com- pleted general education ⁴⁾
			Hauptschule certificate ²⁾	Polytechnic secondary school certificate	Secondary school certificate	University entrance qualification ³⁾	No informa- tion on type of certificate	
	in %							
Total								
15-20	100	54.8	14.2	--	19.8	5.1	0.2	5.7
20-25	100	2.1	20.2	--	32.9	40.8	0.4	3.3
25-30	100	0.2	21.1	--	31.9	42.9	0.3	3.3
30-35	100	/	23.6	2.3	30.4	38.8	0.4	4.1
35-40	100	/	25.2	11.9	25.6	32.6	0.4	3.9
40-45	100	/	27.8	12.9	25.0	29.7	0.4	3.8
45-50	100	/	32.0	14.0	22.8	26.5	0.5	3.8
50-55	100	/	37.4	14.1	19.2	24.7	0.5	3.6
55-60	100	/	45.1	13.2	15.9	21.4	0.4	3.5
60-65	100	--	52.2	7.4	16.3	19.1	0.5	4.0
65 and older	100	/	65.5	1.1	12.0	12.0	0.6	3.8
Total	100	3.8	39.3	6.6	21.1	24.4	0.4	3.9
Men								
15-20	100	53.3	16.8	--	19.5	4.1	0.2	5.9
20-25	100	2.2	24.6	--	32.0	36.9	0.4	3.6
25-30	100	0.2	25.1	--	30.4	40.4	0.4	3.4
30-35	100	/	27.2	2.3	28.0	37.9	0.4	3.8
35-40	100	/	28.4	11.7	21.7	33.7	0.4	3.7
40-45	100	/	31.0	12.8	20.6	31.0	0.4	3.8
45-50	100	/	34.6	13.9	18.4	28.6	0.5	3.6
50-55	100	/	38.4	13.7	15.8	27.7	0.5	3.5
55-60	100	/	44.1	12.6	13.0	26.2	0.4	3.2
60-65	100	--	50.5	7.1	13.3	24.3	0.5	3.8
65 and older	100	/	65.5	1.2	10.3	18.4	0.5	3.4
Total	100	3.9	39.0	6.7	18.9	27,0	0.4	3.7
Women								
15-20	100	56.5	11.3	--	20.2	6.2	0.3	5.4
20-25	100	2.0	15.6	--	33.9	45.0	0.4	3.0
25-30	100	0.2	17.1	--	33.4	45.5	0.3	3.2
30-35	100	/	20.0	2.2	32.8	39.8	0.4	4.4
35-40	100	/	21.8	12.1	29.7	31.5	0.4	4.2
40-45	100	/	24.4	13.1	29.6	28.3	0.4	3.7
45-50	100	/	29.4	14.1	27.2	24.4	0.5	4.0
50-55	100	/	36.5	14.4	22.6	21.8	0.5	3.8
55-60	100	/	46.1	13.8	18.8	16.7	0.4	3.9
60-65	100	--	53.9	7.6	19.2	14.1	0.5	4.3
65 and older	100	/	72.5	1.0	13.3	7.2	0.6	4.1
Total	100	3.6	39.6	6.5	23.3	22.0	0.5	4.0

¹⁾ Including 345,000 persons who provided no information about general school education.

²⁾ Including completion of *Volksschule* (grade school).

³⁾ Including *Fachhochschulreife* [advanced technical certificate].

⁴⁾ Including completion after seven years of school attendance at most.

As the federal government's educational report shows the age groups in a far more differentiated breakdown than was possible and intended in the present study, we will summarize the findings below in terms of the age groups we defined:

Have completed *Hauptschule*

In the 14 – 25 age group:	Less than 20% (women: less than 15%)
In the 26 – 50 age group:	26% (women: 22.6%)
In the 51 and older age group:	More than 50%

Have a secondary-school leaving certificate (*mittlerer Abschluss*)

In the 14 – 25 age group:	More than 30% (women: about 32%)
In the 26 – 50 age group:	27% (women: 30.6%)
In the 51 and older age group:	15% (women: about 12.5%)

Have higher education entrance qualification (*Hochschulreife*) (or will have, if they are still attending school)

In the 14 – 25 age group:	More than 40% (women: more than 45%)
In the 26 – 50 age group:	34% (women: 34%)
In the 51 and older age group:	18% (women: about 13,5%)

Explanations for Lack of Education

Within the educational establishment, the explanatory factors “kindergarten attendance” and “help with homework” were introduced to account for “educational deficits.”

In the case of *kindergarten attendance*, a clear connection is immediately apparent.

Among the interviewees who did not attend a *Grundschule*, only 12.5% attended a kindergarten (87.5% did not). By contrast, among those who did attend a *Grundschule*, 30% also mention attendance at a kindergarten (70% do not).

Table 10: Correlation between Kindergarten Attendance and *Grundschule* Attendance

	Attended kindergarten	Did not attend kindergarten	Total
Attended <i>Grundschule</i>	64	149	213
	30.0%	70.0%	100.0%
Did not attend <i>Grundschule</i>	6	42	48
	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Total	70	191	261
	26.8%	73.2%	100.0%

This may be a spurious correlation, in the sense that in chronological terms, kindergarten attendance became common and possible only at the time when compulsory school attendance was firmly enforced and monitored.

No spurious correlation is present, however, in the case of the connection between *Realschule* attendance and kindergarten attendance.

Table 11: Correlation between Kindergarten Attendance and *Realschule* Attendance

	Attended kindergarten	Did not attend kindergarten	Total
Attended <i>Realschule</i>	12	18	30
	40%	60%	100%
Did not attend <i>Realschule</i>	58	173	231
	25.1%	74.9%	100%
Total	70	191	261
	26.8%	73.2%	100%

Of the interviewees who indicate attendance at a *Realschule*, 40% also attended kindergarten (60% did not), while of those who did not attend a *Realschule*, only 25.1% mention attending kindergarten (74.9% do not).

But because *Realschule* attendance overall is very low in percentage terms, there need not be a *causal relationship*; instead, both can be based on a third factor (such as “economic circumstances”), which cannot be verified from the available data.

In the case of the factor “*help with homework*,” one clearly sees the very limited extent to which Sinti children and adolescents can rely on family support, and the degree to which that determines school attendance and success in school. Accordingly, *family resources*, a very decisive factor in educational participation, are absent in 50% of the cases.

Table 12: Help with Homework from Parents/Siblings

	Number	Percentage
No information	22	8.43%
Yes	120	45.98%
No, with no reasons given	26	9.96%
No, with explanation	93	35.63%
Total	261	100%

Apparently, a key factor for *Grundschule* attendance is present here:

Of the interviewees who attended a *Grundschule*, 51.6% receive/received help with homework (45.1% did/do not, and sometimes indicate the reasons); of those who did not attend a *Grundschule*, only 20.8% note such help—because there was no school attendance, we interpret this information as the provision of educational support in some sense.

Table 13: Help with Homework from Parents/Siblings

	No information	Yes	No, with no reasons given	No, with reasons given	Total
Attended <i>Grundschule</i>	7	110	21	75	213
	3.3%	51.6%	9.9%	35.2%	100%
Did not attend <i>Grundschule</i>	15	10	5	18	48
	31.3%	20.8%	10.4%	37.5%	100%

Even more distinct is the correlation with regard to *Hauptschule* attendance:

Of those who indicate attendance at a *Hauptschule*, 58.3% received/receive help with homework (38.4% did/dp not, and sometimes state the reasons) whereas only 29.1% of those who did not attend a *Hauptschule* received such assistance.

Table 14: Help with Homework from Parents/Siblings

	No informa- tion	Yes	No, with no rea- sons given	No, with rea- sons given	Total
Attended <i>Haupt- schule</i>	5	88	13	45	151
	3.3%	58.3%	8.6%	29.8%	100%
Did not attend <i>Hauptschule</i>	17	32	13	48	110
	15.5%	29.1%	11.8%	43.6%	100%

Or in the case of *Realschule* attendance: 63.3% received help while attending a *Realschule* (33.4% did not).

Table 15: Help with Homework from Parents/Siblings

	No informa- tion	Yes	No, with no rea- sons given	No, with rea- sons given	Total
Attended <i>Real- schule</i>	1	19	5	5	30
	3.3%	63.3%	16.7%	16.7%	100%
Did not attend <i>Realschule</i>	21	101	21	88	231
	9.1%	43.7%	9.1%	38.1%	100%

It is quite enlightening whenever reasons are named for failure to provide help with homework. Among the 93 interviewees who mentioned such reasons, 72 alone listed the following: “parents

themselves had no school education,” “only limited education themselves,” “too little schooling,” “can neither read nor write,” or the like. Eighteen other interviewees explicitly mentioned “persecution” or “ban on school attendance” in the National Socialist era.

The educational deficits in the parental generation, therefore, are a decisive causative factor for the deficits in the subsequent generations(s), where the persecution of the Sinti and Roma in the era of National Socialism continues to have quite a massive effect.

At this point, it becomes clear to what extent the avenues even for *intentional* (= *deliberate*) action in institutionalized educational contexts are blocked for Sinti and Roma. Here, as elsewhere, in the patterns of educational participation and of behavior in educational institutions, the majority of the decisions and actions are by no means intentional, but rather are *prereflective*. In other words: The meaning of actions and decisions emerges from the “logic of the situation” through participation in what is unquestioningly taken for granted in the everyday context of a culture. In the framework of culturally transmitted, deeply rooted interpretive patterns, meaning is assigned to the ways of behavior that are taken for granted, and thus they are legitimated (see Klein, 1978, pp. 396ff.): Anything that has not yet penetrated into the mind or has not yet become established in the realm of perception is not even considered at all, much less regarded as possible.

If educational participation by Sinti and Roma is to be steady, uninterrupted, and purposeful, they would have to experience it as relevant, meaningful, and valuable and interpret it as such in cultural terms.

Let us assume, in a universalistic postulate, that all human beings have the same *basic needs*. Thus, for children and adolescents, these needs can be assumed:

- overcome challenges (need for meaningful tasks)
- experience a sense of community
- achieve recognition by significant persons
- experience self-efficacy
- accomplish growth and development

These basic needs differ in content, of course, in accordance with biographical experiences, social origin and position, and the internalized cultural background. Accordingly, the explanations to be sought for the educational trajectories of Sinti and Roma children and adolescents are the same as those sought for the trajectories of other children and adolescents as well: They too will prefer and assign relevance to situations and institutions that enable them to satisfy their basic needs, and will adopt a negative attitude toward and avoid, if at all possible, situations and institutions

- that exhibit reservations or rejection in dealing with them

- that allow them no realistic opportunities in life
- that bring them routine and constant frustration, while labeling this as their personal failure
- and that, moreover, are not assigned positive patterns of meaning in the contexts of their daily life and cultural tradition

Accordingly, educational institutions and the learning situations in them would have to offer Sinti children and adolescents familiar or at least recognizable opportunity structures for

- responsibility
- success
- affirmation
- recognition
- challenges

Because, in addition to that, every person (according to the aforementioned universalistic postulate), has a basic need for *consistency*, he or she will naturally draw on familiar patterns (that is, patterns that are generated by daily participation and taken for granted in a prereflective fashion) when dissonance is experienced.

Accordingly, a need to connect the learning milieus with social contexts arises precisely when there is cultural unfamiliarity and inadequate social support.

“Going Traveling”

A frequently encountered suspicion assumes that the “travels” of the families exert an influence on education-related behavior in general and on school attendance in particular.

For this purpose, we evaluated the answers to the questions about whether the family went or now goes on “travel” during the school years.

Table 16: “Traveling” during the School Years, by Age Group

	No information	Yes	No	Total
14 – 25 years old	0	49	57	106
	0%	46.2%	53.8%	100%
26 – 50 years old	7	69	36	112
	6.3%	61.6%	32.1%	100%
51 and older	9	22	12	43
	20.9%	51.2%	27.9%	100%
Total	16	140	105	261
	6.1%	53.6%	40.2%	100%

Table 17: “Traveling” Today, by Age Group

	No information	Yes	No	Total
14 – 25 years old	0	26	80	106
	0%	24.5%	75.5%	100%
26 – 50 years old	1	36	75	112
	0.9%	32.1%	67%	100%
51 and older	0	11	32	43
	0%	25.6%	74.4%	100%
Total	1	73	187	261
	0.4%	28%	71.6%	100%

In the youngest age group, a decrease in “traveling” during the school years is already apparent in the quantitative data. But there is an added factor: In biographic narratives, it becomes evident that in the youngest age group, “traveling” has a meaning quite different from the one it had in previous times. Only in rare cases is trading and doing business—because one engages in

“itinerant trade,” that is—the primary reason for “traveling.” Today, the much-shorter trips are probably made mainly to attend meetings of the religious community (“free churches” and the like) or to meet family members who live farther away. Occasionally it is even clear that reference is being made only to a vacation trip to a campground, although the familiar term from Sinti tradition is employed.

School Friends

The question as to whether the *interviewee had school friends* who were not Sinti or Roma was posed and evaluated, first, because it was assumed that this has a positive effect on educational participation, and second, because this could be a minor indicator for propensity to integrate.

In the case of both assumptions, however, it must remain open whether a causal connection exists and in which direction; whether, for example, the Sinti and Roma who have school friends who are not Sinti or Roma are more likely to achieve higher educational participation, or whether, conversely, the Sinti and Roma with higher educational participation are more likely to have school friends who are not Sinti or Roma.

In an initial overview, there are distinct differences here between the three age groups. While 86.8% of those in the 14 – 25 age group mention such friends, “only” 70.5% of those in the 26 – 50 age group and 52.2% of those in the oldest group have school friends who are not Sinti or Roma. Again, very high in this age group is the percentage of respondents who provided no information about this, which surely is attributable to the high percentage of those who have not attended school.

Table 18: Non-Sinti as School Friends

	No information	Yes	No	Total
14 – 25 years old	1	92	13	106
	0.9%	86.8%	12.3%	100.0%
26 – 50 years old	10	79	23	112
	8.9%	70.5%	20.5%	100.0%
51 and older	12	22	9	43
	27.9%	51.2%	20.9%	100.0%
Total	23	193	45	261
	8.8%	73.9%	17.2%	100.0%

The correlations with the type of school attended (*Grundschule, Hauptschule, Realschule, or Förderschule*) are only weak, however; thus no correlation can be determined in the material used in the present study.

Vocational Training

Vocational training is a especially sore point for the national minority group of German Sinti and Roma.

In the German population as a whole, an average of around 85% take part in vocational training of some kind and only about 15% do not. The situation of the Sinti and Roma is almost the reverse.

Table 19: Training of Interviewees, by Age Group

	No information	Yes	No	Total
14 – 25 years old	29	23	54	106
	27.4%	21.7%	50.9%	100%
26 – 50 years old	2	20	90	112
	1.8%	17.9%	80.4%	100%
51 and older	1	6	36	43
	2.3%	14%	83.7%	100%
Total	32	49	180	261
	12.3%	18.8%	69%	100%

Because the percentage of persons engaged in a training program is small anyway, the gender-specific differences are not significant either:

Table 20: Training of Interviewees, by Gender

	No information	Yes	No	Total
Male	9	26	87	122
	7.4%	21.3%	71.3%	100%
Female	23	23	93	139
	16.5%	16.5%	66.9%	100%
Total	32	49	180	261
	12.3%	18.8%	69%	100%

Thus, by comparison with the time 30 years ago, the situation is indeed somewhat improved (see Hundsalz, 1982, p. 77), but it remains remarkably bad. This means that a life characterized by high risk of unemployment and low income is preprogrammed.

Various reasons for this situation probably converge:

First, most of the Sinti in the job market continue to experience themselves as discriminated against, marginalized, and at a disadvantage.

For many, then, it is difficult to obtain an apprenticeship or trainee position because of their low level of formal schooling (see “Educational Poverty”) or lack of a school-leaving certificate.

In the German majority population, a “successful work history” generally is interpreted as successfully embarking upon employment in a usually wage-dependent activity and pursuing a career in that field. For that, of course, the prerequisite is qualifying vocational training. This, however, conflicts massively with the Sinti’s repeatedly reported need to remain independent and autonomous. A satisfying and successful vocation can exist in a stable work relationship if the exercise of the vocation allows for a certain degree of autonomy. This, in interaction with the previous school career, shapes the inclination to go through a firmly institutionalized vocational training program.

Alternatively, there remains only the opportunity for some form of independence—frequently within the limits of the family tradition.

Thus fluid crossovers between independent occupation and unemployment are preprogrammed.

Experiences of Discrimination

In a next step, we reviewed the responses to the question asking whether *substantial experiences of discrimination* had occurred during the school years.

Here, to begin with, there are distinct differences in the various age groups:

Table 21: Interviewees' Experience of Discrimination in School, by Age Group

	No information	Yes	No	Total
14 – 25 years old	1	40	65	106
	0.9%	37.7%	61.3%	100%
26 – 50 years old	12	50	50	112
	10.7%	44.6%	44.6%	100%
51 and older	13	19	11	43
	30.2%	44.2%	25.6%	100%
Total	26	109	126	261
	10%	41.8%	48.4%	100%

Apparently there are no significant differences in the answer category “Yes, there were such experiences,” whereas in the answer category “No,” substantial differences make themselves known: at least, 61.3% in the youngest age group in comparison with 25.6% in the oldest. In the oldest age group, however, 30.2% give no information in this regard (in the middle group: 10.7%). One can conjecture that at least in the oldest age group, in which persecution and genocide were experienced in some cases, discrimination is so taken for granted that there is no need to make special mention of it—then “No information” would have to be added to the “Yes” category.

There are slight differences based on the types of schools attended:

Table 22: Interviewees' Experience of Discrimination in the Individual Types of Schools

	No information	Yes	No	Total
Attended <i>Grundschule</i>	5	102	106	213
	2.3%	47.9%	49.8%	100%
Attended <i>Hauptschule</i>	3	66	82	151
	2%	43.7%	54.3%	100%
Attended <i>Realschule</i>	1	9	20	30
	3.3%	30%	66.7%	100%
Attended <i>Förderschule</i>	1	13	14	28
	3.6%	46.4%	50.0%	100%

Just what specifically is interpreted as “discrimination,” of course, is not revealed by the quantitative data and must be examined in a qualitative evaluation (see below). Discrimination need not be expressed massively and overtly, as Hundsalz (1982, p. 66) points out. Often discrimination takes a subtle form, is apparently banal, or is expressed in nuances. The biographical narratives contain many reports that in school, the other person often spontaneously distanced him/herself or exhibited reluctant amazement, saying something along the lines of “that just can’t be true” or “that just isn’t possible,” whenever the interviewee’s membership in the minority was “openly” revealed.

In reaction to outright and overt discrimination, one can fight back, protest, or “rectify.” Subtle, indirect discrimination often has a deeper, more enduring effect, because it draws attention to the fact that something is “not right” or that one is “out of place.”

In the qualitative evaluation, it is pointed out that there are gender-specific differences in the experiences of discrimination. Therefore, the question about the frequency of discrimination was quantitatively evaluated by age group and gender:

Table 23: Frequency of Interviewees' Experiences of Discrimination, by Age Group

	No information	Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently	Very frequently	Total
14 – 25 years old	1	25	64	9	6	1	106
	0.9%	23.6%	60.4%	8.5%	5.7%	0.9%	100%
26 - 50 years old	1	16	59	9	19	8	112
	0.9%	14.3%	52.7%	8%	17%	7.1%	100%
51 and older	1	5	23	4	7	3	43
	2.3%	11.6%	53.5%	9.3%	16.3%	7%	100%
Total	3	46	146	22	32	12	261
	1.1%	17.6%	55.9%	8.4%	12.3%	4.6%	100%

Table 24: Frequency of Men's and Women's Experiences of Discrimination

	No information	Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Frequently	Very frequently	Total
Males	0	15	75	14	13	5	122
	0%	12.3%	61.5%	11.5%	10.7%	4.1%	100%
Females	3	31	71	8	19	7	139
	2.2%	22.3%	51.5%	5.8%	13.7%	5%	100%
Total	3	46	146	22	32	12	261
	1.1%	17.6%	55.9%	8.4%	12.3%	4.6%	100%

Thus the conjecture mentioned above could not be confirmed, but it may be that women more frequently mark the extreme responses (“Never” at one extreme, and “Frequently” or “Very frequently” at the other), because they really are discriminated against less often but feel it more keenly when it does occur, or that in the case of women, discrimination is also assigned sexist components.

It is clear, however, that the youngest age group more rarely chooses the categories “Frequently” and “Very frequently” (together: 6.6%), but is more apt to mark the category “Never” (23.6%, in comparison with 14.3% and 11.6%) than the other two age groups.

Table 25: Emotional State of Interviewees When in Contact with Authorities

	Number	Percentage
No information	16	6.13%
Normal	105	40.23%
Slight problems	35	13.41%
Highly problematic	105	40.23%
Total	261	100%

Among the interviewees who speak of slight problems or even a “highly problematic” relationship, the statements range from “feel bad,” “queasy feeling,” “unpleasant,” “feel stressed,” or “can’t sleep the night before” to “feel intimidated,” “treated condescendingly,” “not taken seriously,” “not appreciated,” “badly treated,” “panicky,” “treated like dirt,” “feel discriminated against,” and the like.

However, based on school education, there is a slight variation in the interviewees’ feelings during contact with the authorities:

Table 26: Emotional State of Interviewees When in Contact with Authorities, by Type of School

	No informa- tion	Normal	Slight prob- lems	Highly prob- lematic	Total
Attended <i>Hauptschule</i>	12	75	21	41	149
	8.1%	50.3%	14.1%	27.5%	100%
Did not attend <i>Haupt- schule</i>	1	30	14	64	109
	0,9%	27.5%	12.8%	58.7%	100%
Attended <i>Realschule</i>	0	15	2	12	29
	0%	51.7%	6.9%	41.4%	100%

Whether persons with better schooling are treated better and more considerately by representatives of the authorities, or whether they are more confident and less easily unnerved, cannot be deduced from the available material.

In light of the frequently experienced and surely always expected discrimination against Sinti and Roma in daily life, it is hardly surprising that a still-substantial portion of the interviewees avoid publicly identifying themselves as Sinti or Roma on many occasions.

Acknowledgement of Minority Affiliation and Self-Description

Table 27: Are There Situations without Acknowledgement of Sinti/Roma Affiliation?

	Frequency	Percentage
No information	6	2.30%
Yes	116	44.44%
No	139	53.26%
Total	261	100%

Table 28: Did Interviewee Acknowledge Sinti/Roma Affiliation in School?

	Number	Percentage
No information	30	11.49%
Yes	186	71.26%
No	37	14.18%
Yes and no	8	3%
Total	261	100%

Table 29: No Acknowledgement of Sinti/Roma Affiliation during Vocational Training

	Number	Percentage
No information	3	1.04%
Yes	54	20.69%
No	205	78.54%
Total	261	100%

Table 30: No Acknowledgement of Sinti/Roma Affiliation in Search for Work

	Number	Percentage
No information	2	0.76%
Yes	42	16.09%
No	217	83.14%
Total	261	100%

Table 31: No Acknowledgement of Sinti/Roma Affiliation in Housing Search

	Number	Percentage
No information	2	0.76%
Yes	58	22.22%
No	201	77.1%
Total	261	100%

Also unambiguous is the almost unanimous self-designation as “Sinti” or “Roma” and the rejection of the term “Gypsy.”

Table 32: Interviewees’ Information on Self-Description as Sinti/Roma

	Number	Percentage
Yes	247	94.64%
No	14	5.36%
Total	261	100%

Table 33: Interviewees’ Information on Self-Description as “Gypsy”

	Number	Percentage
Yes	18	6.90%
No	243	93.10%
Total	261	100%

There is great variation, however, in the intensity of the sense of discrimination felt by the interviewees when other people label them “Gypsy,” and in their ways of dealing with the situation when such a term is used.

Table 34: Evaluation of Interviewees' Information on Imposition of the Term "Gypsy" by Others

	Number	Percentage
No information	5	1.92%
No problem	39	14.94%
Depends	67	25.67%
Always a problem	150	57.47%
Total	261	100%

This will be discussed in the qualitative analysis.

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"I would have liked to keep on with school.

I would have liked to take advantage

of everything that was to be learned,

*and of the opportunity."*¹

Educational Paths of German Sinti and Roma

Uta Rüchel/Jane Schuch

1. Introduction

"The educational trajectory of the subject"² becomes apparent and available only in subjective, personal testimonials. Of the various sources that are possibilities in this regard, the interview has gained acceptance as an independent mode of inquiry that, if methodically conducted, reveals new perspectives for the posing of questions.³ In this study, to take the side of those concerned into account to a greater degree, and to bring to light the individual experiences, motives, and contexts of justification, as well as the general tendencies, 30 of the 261 interviews conducted were selected for a qualitative analysis.

The biographical factors that were worked out for individual educational paths decisively enriched the formation of hypotheses for the entire project and illustrated both the heterogeneity within the minority and the complexity of the sad state of education. Among other things, one can discern how educational ambitions are dealt with individually and in families, and can observe what consequences experiences of discrimination, as well as support by individual teach-

¹ T.W., male, around 45 years old, attended *Grundschule* and then dropped out, businessman, married, 5 children.

² This is the title of a supplement to the *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, dealing with sources, methods, and theories of autobiographies, personal testimonies, and "ego-documents" [autobiographical writings] in the discipline of education. Sonja Häder and Heinz-Elmar Tenorth, eds.: *Der Bildungsgang des Subjekts. Zeitschrift für Pädagogik*, supplement 48 (Weinheim/Basel, 2004).

³ This applies directly to historical research, where until now the subjective aspect has received less attention; this situation has radically changed as a result of contemporary-witness research and oral history. Here, see, among others, Alexander von Plato: "Zeitzeugen und die historische Zukunft. Erinnerung, kommunikative Tradierung und kollektives Gedächtnis in der qualitative Geschichtswissenschaft – ein Problemaufriss." In: *BIOS*, vol. 13 (2000), no. 1, pp. 5-29.

ers at the institution/school, can have for the individual. In addition, aspects of orally transmitted stories and generational dynamics within the minority become evident, such as the way of dealing with the experience of trauma. At this point, to some extent, it is possible to put a name to the implications of the National Socialist persecution and murder of family members for the everyday lives of families, and thus for individual educational histories as well.

We also can see what potential lies in the narratives, even though, for reasons related to the organization of the project, we had to restrict ourselves to the level of content analysis, and additional research topics can only be hinted at. Therefore, in this portion of the analysis of the interviews, the material is presented in its diversity and polarity, and hence primarily in its breadth. It is beyond debate, however, that it would be thoroughly worthwhile to enlarge upon and refine the findings thus far, using methods of case-by-case analysis and decidedly biographical evaluation to gain further-reaching insights.

The interviews were conducted by members of the minority, who obtained their qualifications for such work in two workshops (Plato, see above). The intention was to encourage a life-history narrative with a follow-up portion. This succeeded only in part; mostly, the interviewers worked through the questions in the guideline they all received. Therefore, the majority of the conversations are semi-structured guided interviews. These questions dealt with the overarching topics of education, living conditions, domestic economy/work, traumatization, and integration. Thus, besides questions about personal attitudes toward education and about experiences in educational institutions, inquiries were made also about the interviewees' sense of ethnic identity, the family's history of persecution, and the appraisal of Germany's compensation and commemoration policies.

The method chosen for evaluating the 30 interviews was qualitative analysis of content, as it is well suited for relatively large volumes of data and systematic processing. This procedure was supplemented by watching out for latent and concealed structures, on the basis of the processors' prior knowledge.⁴

From the 261 interviews, 140 interviews more than 30 minutes in length were selected, because lengthier narrative passages were likelier in those cases. Finally, from those, we put together the sample of 30 interviews, so that the reference collection of the 261 interviews was portrayed appropriately in terms of its hard items—age and gender—and was depicted in its diversity in

⁴ Philipp Mayring: *Qualitative Inhaltsanalyse: Grundlagen und Techniken* (Weinheim, 2010).

terms of the other items studied, such as type of school attended, experience of discrimination, region, and others.⁵

A team was formed for the evaluation, to ensure intersubjective verifiability. That applied both to the definition of categories and to the task of evaluating the material itself. By means of inductive category information, six comprehensive categories were defined and then further refined and expanded. These categories are guided by the overarching topic of education, but also contain aspects of the lifeworld⁶ of the Sinti and Roma that are revealed in the interviews as relevant to the present issue: individual and family significance of education (1), individual and family experiences in educational institutions (2), role of the family (3), ethnic self-identity (4), family history narratives (5), and experiences in the majority society (6).

Implicit in the very survey design for the study was a broadly defined concept of education that goes beyond formal educational attainments. In the qualitative analysis of the interviews, education was made explicit in a total of three dimensions:

Education as Self-Education (1): Here, the drive of the individual for new experiences is at the forefront, whether they involve acquiring knowledge (for example, learning to read and write, expanding one's general knowledge) or becoming acquainted with and seeking new perspectives, such as political or religious involvement. Thus education refers here to the sum of all the things and experiences that shape a personality. The process of education describes here the "appropriation of the world."

Education Connected with Institutions, Certificates, and Graduation (2): This dimension of education is the one usually associated with this concept by the general public. Here we are concerned with the completion of educational programs at educational institutions such as schools, companies that take on trainees, vocational schools, etc.

Education as a Cultural Value (3): This dimension of education involves the self-concept of a society, in this case a minority, which hands down skills and cultural values through intergenerational transfer of knowledge in families.

⁵ On the structure of the reference collection, see Michael Klein's quantitative analysis, above.

⁶ The "lifeworld" [*Lebenswelt*] concept comes from sociological theory and denotes, among other things, the realm of everyday experience. See also Alfred Schütz (with Thomas Luckmann): *Die Strukturen der Lebenswelt* (Neuwied-Darmstadt, 1975).

Overall, the interviews offer a multifaceted insight into the educational situation and, in part, the living situation of the national minority of German Sinti and Roma. Against the backdrop of the National Socialist persecution—in the combination of scientific research, police surveillance, and murder of human beings—but also against that of the initially absent or very haltingly initiated compensation in the FRG⁷--the trust shown by those interviewees from the minority who granted us glimpses into their life situation in the scope of this study cannot be prized too highly. At the same time, the idea for the project as well as its execution was suggested by members of the minority themselves, and also largely implemented by them. In the process, as explained above in the text by Alexander von Plato, new methodological avenues were pursued, such as the surveying of the minority by members of that same minority. In conclusion, it must also be noted that in some cases, when important topics were raised in the interview, the interviewers did not go farther and deeper in their inquiries; perhaps the explanation for this is that respect for the interviewees did not allow more penetrating or in-depth questioning. This is regrettable, particularly in the case of life-history interviews.

2. Results

The results of the qualitative analysis of 30 interviews are presented below on the basis of the six scoring categories, with anchor examples for each. In addition, selected biographical sketches were included in the text; they are intended to make the findings comprehensible by way of example in the overall context of a life history as well. These sketches are attempts at an educational biography of the person in question.⁸

The results of the analysis were always based on the 30 interviews selected, and were tested to determine survey weightings, conspicuous trends with respect to gender and the three generations.⁹ Even though not all the questions were asked or followed up in all the interviews, that is, not all the interviews contained answers to all the questions, when there was agreement among answers we proceeded on the assumption of plausible trends for the reference collection.

⁷ Here, compare, among others, Romani Rose, ed.: *Bürgerrechte für Sinti und Roma. Das Buch zum Rassismus in Deutschland* (Heidelberg, 1987), and also Michael Zimmermann, ed.: *Zwischen Erziehung und Vernichtung. Zigeunerpolitik und Zigeunerforschung im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 2007).

⁸ At this point, it must be emphasized that many social facts regarding the individual interviewees are not available, for the reasons described, so that reconstruction of the educational biography was extremely difficult in some cases.

⁹ The generations were defined as follows, analogously to the quantitative analysis: first generation = over the age of 50, second generation = 26-50 years of age, and third generation = 14-25 years of age.

2.1. Relative Importance of Education

To determine the significance of education,¹⁰ we interpreted statements and narratives that refer to educational motivation, support from the family, the educational histories of the families and the interviewees themselves, their particular educational efforts, and the intrafamilial and personal assessment of formal and informal education.

2.1.1 Personal Educational Efforts and Support within the Family

About one-third of the 30 interviewees¹¹ describe personal commitment and efforts to pursue educational efforts of their own. In this context, there are multiple reports of autodidactic learning with regard to reading and writing, but also of attempts to achieve a higher-level school-leaving certificate or catch up on training programs that had been abandoned.

*"I went from Grundschule to the Realschule. They didn't want me at the Realschule, of course, but I wanted to go there all the same."*¹²

*"That's why I started going to evening school then, and then I went to Frankfurt, got my small-trader [nonregistered merchant] status, took an examination given by the Chamber of Commerce, took up a career as a freight forwarder, and then tried to earn my business, my money in the transport-company sector, in the trucking field."*¹³

Some interviewees sought, with great tenacity, to successfully complete school or vocational training, without receiving any support from their families. One self-taught woman obtained an advanced technical certificate (*Fachhochschulreife*), without having attended a regular school

¹⁰ In this section, the focus is primarily on formal schooling and training.

¹¹ All interviewees' names were anonymized: the initials used for the names are purely pseudonymous. That applies also to persons, cities, and institutions in the anchor examples and biographical sketches that are used.

¹² U.H., male, Roma, late 20's, half a year of *Realschule*, then attendance at a *Hauptschule*, works with his father in his business, primarily disassemblies.

¹³ B.F., male, Sinti, 57 years old, attended *Grundschule*, then dropped out, obtained school-leaving certificate through evening classes, vocational training as management assistant in freight forwarding, successful businessman, owns his own transport company with 60 employees, married, two sons.

and without being urged by her family to do so.¹⁴ With regard to generational distribution, a clear weighting in the second and third generations is discernible.

More than half of the 30 interviewees, who have children of their own, support(ed) their educational efforts although, or precisely because, they themselves have no school-leaving certificate.

*"Maybe I would have done better in school. Maybe I somehow would have done an apprenticeship or the like, you know. Because I think, that is, now, with my children, I think kindergarten is very important. Just like preschool is also very important, and in my case they just missed the boat, and somehow I really do regret it."*¹⁵

*"Yes, most certainly I want them to finish school. I want them to do an apprenticeship. My daughter probably wants to study for a college degree, and my other daughter wants to become a hairdresser."*¹⁶

About half of the interviewees indicate that they were motivated and supported by their parents or other family members with regard to schooling. Here too, it is seen that assistance in support of education is in part independent of whether the parents themselves had a successful school career. Some were greatly encouraged by their parents to get an education so that they would have better opportunities in the workforce. Striking in this context is a significant clustering in the third generation.

*"No help at all from home because my mother couldn't read and write, my grandma couldn't read and write. They weren't allowed to go to school, of course, and then I went to the after-school care center. My mother signed me up at school to go to the care center afterwards, so that I would have help with homework. (...) They were very much in favor of my going to school. So that I would improve and do everything better and have an opportunity, not like it was for them. My mother grew up without any formal education, without a trade, and because of that she could only be a 'cleaning lady' all her life, that is, the whole time she worked."*¹⁷

"Well, in the first place, because I wasn't doing well at school and because I was often absent, the school things were just lacking. And then I had the tutor, my mother arranged for that. He

¹⁴ See biographical sketch for L.H. and Footnote 24.

¹⁵ M.S., female, Sinti, 45 years old, single mother, 3 children, attended *Grundschule* until 3rd grade, attended *Förderschule* until 8th grade.

¹⁶ G.G., male, Sinti, 37 years old, left *Hauptschule* after 8th grade, businessman, married, two daughters.

¹⁷ K.L., female, Sinti, 62 years old, grew up in the GDR, finished 8th grade, moved to the FRG in the 1970s.

cost DM 15 per month, those were still the days of the Deutschmark. Yes, and he came two or three times a week.”¹⁸

Some interviewees report that on one hand they were motivated and supported by parents or grandparents, but that on the other hand, family obligations or traditions ultimately were regarded as more important. Also, lack of formal education on the part of the parents or grandparents set narrow limits to potential support.

“And then whenever I was at my wits’ end, I just went to my grandma and she explained it to me. And she always said, too, whenever something is wrong or you don’t understand something, come to me, and I’ll help you. And that was the help I got. Nothing else was possible. Because we had different, how should I say, different schoolwork from what she had in her school days. And then besides that, it was a difference of I don’t know how many years. And then there were many things she didn’t understand, either, things that we were assigned now as homework.”¹⁹

A young Roma woman whose mother is illiterate reports that she and her sister initially received help with homework from a private tutor, that later on she was assisted in part also by her sister and in arithmetic sometimes by her mother, but that once she reached puberty she was prevented from attending school by her mother, who feared a loss of honor.

“She said: ‘Look how early it is. You can’t see anything at all. It’s dark outside, you know.’ Then I said: ‘I want to go to school.’ I didn’t go to school for half a year on account of my mother, she didn’t let me. And then there was a fine, and then I went back to school. (Interviewer: Can you imagine why she responded that way?) Because of the boys.”²⁰

¹⁸ A.N., male, Sinti, 21 years old, dropped out of *Hauptschule*.

¹⁹ M.S., female, Sinti, 45 years old, see Footnote 15.

²⁰ B.I., female, Sinti, 19 years old, attended *Förderschule*, dropped out in the 10th grade.

2.1.2. Educational Attainments of the Parents

One of the most eye-catching findings regarding the educational attainments of the parents is that around half of the interviewees indicate that their parents had no formal schooling or only very rudimentary schooling. In most cases, one or both parents were not even literate.

In the over-50 generation, in the majority of cases, reference was made to the persecution under the National Socialists or to the parents' vocation, which did not require a school education. Even in the second and third generations, some interviewees still indicate that their parents had no formal education or left school early. To the extent that the reasons for this are mentioned, the interviewees indicate that the family itself was regarded as a sufficient educational authority, that experiences of discrimination played a role, or that the parents had to contribute to the family income at an early age.

"As I said, my father didn't go to school, and my cousin went to school for only four grades. Then he was taken out again, and they were opposed to that. The parents were not grounded in the custom, they didn't want to accept it, not that easily. Most of them are also afraid that their children will be discriminated against, beaten, etc. My cousin also had nothing but problems in school, his color, his customs and language didn't suit, nothing about him suited. Everything about him was wrong."²¹

"Quite honestly, not much is said about it, but my father went and my mother went, too, and both went for a short time. They both can read and write, and went to school. (...) My father was 11 years old when my grandpa died, and so my father, as the eldest son, had to assume the responsibility in the family and go to work, so he doesn't like to talk about the past, because he went through a lot."²²

Evident in this context are the generational effects of the history of persecution of the Sinti and Roma, also and above all in connection with the policy of extermination in the National Socialist era. Thus, profound fears and mistrust within the family in connection with the school attendance of the interviewees or their parents and grandparents are a topic of discussion in several interviews. These emotional burdens based on specific family experiences are passed on intergenerationally and are present even in the third generation, those 14-25 years old.

²¹ S.J., male, Sinti, early 40's, *Hauptschule* certificate, discontinued his apprenticeship as retail salesman on account of discrimination.

²² T.W., male, Roma, around 45 years old, see Footnote 1.

“Yes, but I had a close bond with my mother, which had to do with the fact that my mother was persecuted until 1945. And for that reason there was no trust in the Germans, and that’s also why my mother didn’t send me to kindergarten, just because of that. So in practical terms, she never let go of me. She was afraid, from those days, and the fear was transferred to me, too. (...) I started school at the age of 7. But I had problems staying at school by myself. I was afraid, and for that reason my mother had to stay with me in school. But she was given permission, and she was allowed to sit in the classroom at the back, in the last row. The school principal granted permission. That wore off a bit later, but I still had to see my mother at all times, and then she sat downstairs in the courtyard later on, and then I was allowed to look out of the window from time to time, to see that she was still there. Until it finally all went away, and then it was okay.”²³

“My mother really didn’t go to school at all. My father didn’t go to school, either. (...) My grandmother was persecuted in the war, and she witnessed the children, the Sinti and Roma children, being deported from the schools, and the children were never seen again, and then, based on that memory, she never sent her children to school at all, out of fear that the children could be taken away and she would never see her children again.”²⁴

“Yes, because my parents didn’t send me there. That’s because they were afraid they would be giving me away. They had the idea that they wouldn’t get their child back again. They had a lot of anxiety, because the way it was during the war, people’s children were taken away and then the children were killed in the gas chamber. And there was still this fear in my parents, so that they didn’t want to let go of their child and not even send it to kindergarten, because of this fear.”²⁵

Several interviewees indicate that their parents attended the *Förderschule* and/or left school after the 7th or 8th grade.²⁶ Some interviewees, especially members of the third generation, report that one or both parents have a *Hauptschule* certificate.

²³ K.L., female, Sinti, 62 years old, see Footnote 17.

²⁴ L.H., female, Roma, 32 years old, obtained advanced technical certificate through evening classes, active as a volunteer in the Social and Educational Association for Sinti and Roma [Sozial- und Bildungsverein für Sinti und Roma].

²⁵ D.M., female, Roma, mid-20’s, completed *Realschule*, two years at *Abitur* level [*Abiturstufe*, preparatory to qualification for college entrance], then dropped out of school, at present catching up on the requirements for graduation from *Hauptschule*.

²⁶ Here it must be taken into account that even into the 1960s, school attendance in the FRG was compulsory only until completion of the 8th grade.

In comparison with the frequently uncertain formal educational situation of the parents, obvious developments are apparent among the interviewees themselves. Only a few of those in the 26-50 age group and one of those under the age of 25 note that their schooling ended upon completion of *Grundschule*.

It is striking that learning to read and write was regarded in some cases as sufficient formal education, especially for girls, and that taking up the role in the family system overlay the value of formal education. The increase in the relative importance of education in the families is clearly demonstrated by the fact that the above-mentioned young Roma woman—also at the wish of her father—is now attending a course to obtain her *Hauptschule* certificate and wants to prepare for training as a hotel manager.

“It was important that the children could read and write; that really was important. So that they could do their work. But mostly, the Sinti, especially in the case of women, they married, and that was the end, because they didn’t go out to work anyway. Then, most of the time, they only said, oh, they’ll get married and their husbands will take care of them, you know. And that’s why the girls didn’t attach any great value at all to it. And the boys just went. If the boys went to school, that was good. But nobody put any emphasis on an apprenticeship or anything of that kind, that didn’t happen.”²⁷

*“It was so decided. Among us, going to school is not customary anyway, and so it was decided from the outset that we would only complete the *Grundschule* level. (...) Girls don’t need such a thing.”²⁸*

2.1.3. Regrets about Interrupted Educational Careers

Today, regrets are emphatically expressed by the vast majority of those who dropped out of their own school or vocational training program or, despite efforts of their own, failed to earn the educational qualifications they sought.

²⁷ I.P., female, Sinti, 36 years old, attended *Grundschule*, then dropped out of school, lives with her mother and sister in the mother’s home.

²⁸ M.J., female, Roma, around 20 years old. attended *Grundschule*, then dropped out of school, currently returning to earn her *Hauptschule* certificate.

Cited as reasons for discontinuing school attendance are the necessity of, or interest in, taking on a function within the family system, be it in support of the parents' work outside or inside the family; experiences of discrimination at school; and the high unemployment rate, coupled with the expectation, as a member of a minority, of having little chance of obtaining a job or a training position.

*"The reason for it was because I (thought it over) when I was 13 or 14, and I started working. And also, I didn't feel like going to school anymore, and my parents didn't encourage it anymore, either. They didn't want it either; they were more interested in my earning money. I started working when I was 13."*²⁹

*"Sometimes, when something was fun for me, then I also watched out to make sure I got a good grade, but in math I really wasn't so good. And then I didn't enjoy it at all, and at some point I just didn't care. But I must add that at home, they always said: You don't need school once you're able to get out of it! School is only a requirement, and you have your work at home. You'll get married, have children of your own someday, and then that will be your life! That's what they told me in those days. Today, whenever I think about it, I think, oh, crap. I would have liked to train for something good, too. Maybe, who knows, I wouldn't have had any children at all, would have become a career woman or, what I really would have enjoyed and what I dreamed of, a hairdresser."*³⁰

*"After 8th grade, that is, my teachers really wanted me to keep on through the 10th grade. But I couldn't, because my mother didn't earn much at all. She cleaned stairwells and hallways. We weren't doing well. We were quite poor, and there was no unemployment benefit. There was no social assistance. There wasn't anything like that, and that's why I had to leave school, to go to work and support my mother, so that we could live. And as a result, I never learned a trade."*³¹

Most of the interviews base their sense of regret on their relevant experiences. Thus they perceive that without a completed school and vocational education, they have only slender opportunities in the job market, that communication with social institutions is difficult, and that the potential for supporting their own children on their educational path is insufficient.

²⁹ T.W., male, Roma, around 45 years old, see Footnote 1.

³⁰ M.S., female, Sinti, 45 years old, see Footnote 15.

³¹ K.L., female, age 62, see Footnote 17.

*"Because it's very important these days to have an education. (...) I'd like to do it over again now, be glad to do it over again, to recover the time. (...) We don't really know the ropes, don't know where we can ask what we're entitled to, and it's always a little difficult for us. Just as a result of our schooling, which we unfortunately have too little of. And it's always better if somebody's there who has been to school. (..) We've experienced it in our own lives; without formal education, there's nothing, and that was true even in those days. Nowadays you simply have to have it. And the children who are coming up now, they need it even more. (...) There are already difficulties, too, because we can't help our grandchildren in the right way, because the schoolwork they're assigned is just too hard."*³²

"And that's also how it came about that I got on well again and again, because I taught myself quite a lot."

I.P., female, Sinti, age 36

Until she was 15, I.P. spent several months of each year traveling with her family and her relatives. She has an older brother and three younger sisters. The youngest was born when I.P. was 16. At the age of 8, when she was sent to a *Grundschule* with her brother, she was not particularly motivated: *"And as for school, actually they wanted us to go, but we didn't feel any need. (...) Maybe also as a result of being together with too many children. Because the German children usually start kindergarten while they're little. They're used to this sequence of kindergarten, school, and work. We weren't familiar with that as children. We were always together, we were traveling. So only a very few children went to school. Only the older ones, they went now and then. Whenever we stopped at campsites, whenever we were there a bit longer."*

Her mother did not attend school at all, because for a long time she was the only girl in the family and had to do housework and take care of her brothers. Her father had a short period of formal schooling. I.P. herself recalls today that the main interest of her parents was in having her learn to read and write: *"They wanted us to read and write in any event, but an apprenticeship or something of that sort, no, they really weren't very interested in that."*

At school, which she attended mainly in wintertime, she and her brother were the only Sinti. Her father, too, had attended the same school. Because she frequently was out of school for long periods, for example, because of travels, it was hard for her to keep turning up again. Then, however, she was encouraged and supported by the teachers, so that in general she has positive memories of school. *"I never had problems at school. Not at all, so I didn't experience any. No racist experiences of any kind, and people never said 'you two are Sinti,' or anything like that."* She had two good friends, both non-Sinti, at school. In the afternoons, she spent her time with her cousins. When they were traveling, she practiced reading and writing of her own accord, until she finally mastered it. She received no assistance with the process from her parents.

"Well, I've always been interested in books. And I made a stab at the first few letters and sentences, whatever I had learned in school; when we were traveling, I simply always worked on books. And at some point I realized that I could do it. So I always read and read. Always tried to piece it together, not even with school books, but with ordinary magazines. And as a result, when I went to school again seven months later, I could read and write a few sentences. And

³² L.P., male, Sinti, age 59, see Footnote 27.

that's also how it came about that I got on well again and again, because I taught myself quite a lot. Because I had nobody who could help me along those lines, who could give me major help with compositions. My father also had too little schooling to do that. He couldn't write so well himself. He could read, but writing was a problem for him. And that's why I did a great deal by myself."

Education in the broader sense was important to the parents. On their travels, the family visited museums, cultural monuments, and memorial sites. I.P.'s maternal grandparents and other relatives had been imprisoned in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, where many of them perished.

It was less important to the parents for their daughter to earn a formal school-leaving certificate. Instead, she had a fixed place in the family system, which she took up after *Grundschule*. She left the school at the age of 12. At the time, her father was working as a peat dealer and occasionally took her along on his business trips, which she greatly enjoyed. Otherwise, she helped with the household work. When she was 15, her youngest sister was born, and she played a major role in her care. *"I think that's how it is among most Sinti anyway, that the bigger ones look after the little ones. And it was something novel, too. Especially when you're 14 or 15, and then there's suddenly a baby. It was like a toy. I didn't want to let her go, I took her, and then all I wanted to do was take care of her."*

A short time later, her family stopped its traveling. After that, her younger sisters attended school on a more regular basis and completed the 8th grade. Her youngest sister, however, attended school for only a few years, as she apparently had a special role as the baby of the family. Today she is looking for work and living with her mother and her youngest sister; her father is deceased. In retrospect, I.P. regrets that she has no educational attainments sufficient for a second chance at vocational training or for finding a job: *"Yes, you regret it, because in many situations, for example, when you're looking for work and you're asked to fill out an application or write something, you have nothing to show. You left Grundschule when you were 11 or 12. And who really wants to work, you can't get a good job, so you can forget it. So that's why I would have liked to do an apprenticeship."*

2.1.4. Educational Motivations

The strongest motivation for obtaining formal schooling and vocational training lies in the prospect of a financially secure existence, that is, being able to learn an occupation that guarantees a satisfactory income. It is cited by about half of the 30 interviewees. Most of them are men. One might conjecture that they have a more central function in securing the family's income as a result of gainful employment.

*"Well, I'd prefer to learn a trade, so that you still have something, let's say, even if the business really can't continue anymore, so that you still have another alternative somehow."*³³

³³ A.N., male, Sinti, age 21, see Footnote 18.

*"Yes, and then it was easy to say, well, a trade, I grew up with scrap. But I didn't want to be a scrap dealer. I didn't see a future for myself personally, because as things still were then, it went from hand to mouth, today a king, tomorrow a beggar. (...) I couldn't deal with this worry, not knowing in the evening what I would have to do the next day. It wore me out, because there was one thing I always knew, that the next morning I had to pay the rent, but I didn't know how. That's why I started going to evening school then, and then I went to Frankfurt, got my small-trader [nonregistered merchant] status, took an examination given by the Chamber of Commerce, took up the occupation of freight forwarder, and then tried to earn my business, my money in the transport-company sector, in the trucking field."*³⁴

Several interviewees who belong to the second and third generations were able to generate an adequate income even without completing school and vocational training, but today they see an increased need for their children to get an education, in order to achieve better social integration, among other things.

*"Because I also have a responsibility toward my children. I have to try to integrate my children, try to give my children their footing, enable them to have an apprenticeship, so that they enjoy working. I have three sons. I want them to really get some training someday, and formal education is very, very important, yes."*³⁵

For several respondents, education is also an opportunity for self-education, which enables them to circulate more naturally and above all more self-confidently in society. They saw, and still see, it as a way of strengthening their self-esteem, explicitly with regard to the majority society as well.

"Well, that wasn't it anymore, and for me personally, it was easy to go to the German school then. I did as well there as I was able, but at the age of 18 or 19 I also noticed right away that it was much too little, that living requires far more education than what we had at the moment. Yes, reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, blah blah blah, that was much, much too little. You noticed it in every conversation. Every foreign word or alien concept that I heard, I ran home, looked it up in the Duden dictionary to see what kind of word it was, and what it meant, what does relative mean, what does subjective mean, and and and. I wanted to know it, because

³⁴ B.F., male, Sinti, age 57 years old, see Footnote 13.

³⁵ E.F., male, Sinti, age 31, Hauptschule certificate, no vocational training, licensed for roof surfacing, owns his own firm, married, three sons.

*whenever I was sitting at a table with other people and they were talking, I felt stupid, and that was a sense of inferiority for me, I certainly didn't want that.*³⁶

In connection with the question about educational motivation, it must be pointed out that success or failure with regard to a satisfying occupation, based on the interviewees' experiences, need not necessarily go hand in hand with formal educational attainments. For one thing, as mentioned previously, there are several male interviewees who are successful in business even without a school-leaving certificate. It must be noted, however, that in some cases, experiences of discrimination are cited as the reason for dropping out of school. For another thing, there are several interviewees of both genders who are dependent on state-provided benefits in spite of their school and training qualifications. Because they found no job, some of them perceive this as a consequence of antiziganism in the majority society.

*"Yes, I have a secondary-school certificate (Realschulabschluss), but it's of no use to me, because I can't find a job. When I introduce myself somewhere and then also say that I'm a Roma, then they say: 'Well, we'll think about it some more and you'll be hearing from us.' Nothing doing, nothing at all. I'm unemployed. The Realschulabschluss doesn't help me. If you're a Gypsy, you can't do anything with the certificate, you're labeled."*³⁷

2.1.5. Kindergarten Attendance

Barely one-third of those interviewed have attended kindergarten.³⁸ Striking here is a shift within the generations. Particularly in the first generation, only a few interviewees have attended kindergarten. Of the younger respondents, almost half spent one year or more in kindergarten. Most of those who attended no kindergarten point out that it was not a necessity for their parents, because someone was available at home to look after the children. In these families, kindergarten was regarded primarily as a child-care offering and not as an educational offering. Some interviewees indicate that their parents rejected kindergarten as an institution that is tailored to the needs, values, and standards

³⁶ B.F., male, Sinti, age 57, see Footnote 13.

³⁷ D.M., female, Roma, mid-20's, see Footnote 25.

³⁸ Because the term "kindergarten" was used exclusively in the interviews, and there were no questions asked by the interviewees to make sure they had understood, the same term is used in the following material, and we proceed on the assumption that attendance at daycare centers is also included here.

of the majority society. Members of the youngest generation, the 14-25 age group, tend to have a positive attitude toward kindergarten with regard to their own children.

“Yes, that can be explained in a few words. My parents simply were against it. They said, that’s now how we do things, and among us the children don’t go to kindergarten. So I went immediately into school. There was no kindergarten, because Mama was at home, or my father. Somebody was always home, and then we were just with that person. So we didn’t need kindergarten.”³⁹

“Because my mother was of the opinion that I didn’t need to go to kindergarten, and that taking the children to kindergarten is only something the Germans do. We Sinti don’t need it, she said, and just going to the playground would be enough for me. She had children too, she said, and I didn’t need kindergarten, because I would just be trained to be German, and she just wanted to avoid that.”⁴⁰

“No, of course I would send my children to kindergarten, even sooner, of course. (...) They need to learn something, I think, and I also want them to get to know people they’ve never seen, never seen before in their lives. So sure, I’ll send the children to kindergarten, and to school too.”⁴¹

2.1.6. Change of School

Some interviewees tell of learning conditions made more difficult by frequent traveling or multiple moves of the family during the school years. They also mention in negative terms the frequent change of school associated with that. Currently, the vast majority travel for religious occasions, exclusively outside of school time. Some interviewees say that their parents put a stop to traveling in order to allow them to attend school or vocational training on a regular basis. Overall, traveling during school time barely plays a role anymore, especially in the third generation, in connection with the use of educational opportunities.

³⁹ K.K., male, Sinti, early 20’s, born in Austria, grew up in Germany, *Hauptschule* certificate, completed vocational training as an office management assistant, married, one child.

⁴⁰ K.E., female, Sinti, second generation, *Realschule* certificate and trained retail saleswoman, worked as branch office manager in various areas of the fashion industry, married, one son.

⁴¹ L.O., female, Sinti, age 20, *Förderschule*, then vocational school for home economics, *Hauptschule* certificate, vocational training: retail saleswoman (dropped out owing to discrimination), currently working as office management assistant.

2.1.7. Summary of the Relative Importance of Education

The findings presented here for the qualitative evaluation of 30 interviews demonstrate that the significance of formal educational qualifications varies among individuals and families. Besides formal education, education/training within the family and assumption of family duties continue to be of importance. Without doubt, however, it can be stated that within the family and for the individual, the relative importance of formal education has increased over the past decades and is likely to continue to grow.

Personal commitment to education, too, has demonstrably risen in the second and third generations. Further, especially in the third generation, an increasing level of family support for educational efforts is observable, in connection with a higher level of formal education in the parents' generation. Overall, it is to be noted that family support is exceedingly important to a successful educational trajectory, but in most of the life histories evaluated here, the support was insufficient, or was not sufficiently supplemented with extrafamilial offerings, to bring the interviewees to the point of completing a certificate.

Here it must be pointed out that the interviewees live and grow up in an especially difficult educational situation. Defining here, in addition to the ongoing experiences of discrimination in educational institutions (which are portrayed in the following chapter), are the educational histories of the interviewees' parents and grandparents, as well as the extreme lack of motivational educational careers in the family setting, coupled with the lack of opportunity and prospects experienced in the job market. Many educational histories of the interviewees' parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents are shaped by the experiences of the National Socialist policies of persecution and extermination. Fears and mistrust of the majority society and its educational institutions continue to be present, and they perceive their own potential for supporting the formal education of the children as extremely limited. Further, the family educational histories are characterized by economic and family structures rooted in tradition, which have functioned or continue to function independently of formal educational attainments. Against this backdrop, the acquisition of basic cultural techniques such as reading and writing is viewed in the families as sufficient in some cases.

Nonetheless, the findings presented here demonstrate that awareness of the necessity of educational and vocational qualifications as a prerequisite for an adequate earned income has

grown in the past decades. From a present-day perspective, dropping out of school or training is regretted by a majority. Besides its significance for employment history, education is a prerequisite for self-assertion in the majority for individuals as well.

“We had no problems at school, because there always were so many of us.”

D.C., female, Sinti, age 19

She is the oldest of seven siblings and grew up together with several other Sinti families in her immediate environment. She did not attend kindergarten, because *“from our area, nobody went to kindergarten.”* Both in *Grundschule* and in secondary school, she was always together with many other Sinti. *“That was always nice, too, we had no problems at school, because there always were so many of us.”* At the *Grundschule*, she definitely had casual friendships with non-Sinti as well, but did not spend free time with them outside of school. Basically she has very positive memories of her school years. Help with homework was provided in the family.

In the secondary school, D.C. felt that she, as a Sintizza, in some cases was differently treated than her fellow pupils. *“As it was, whenever we Sinti all stood together in the break hall, there were at least 20 of us at all times, then two or three teachers always arranged that they would pay special attention to us, and whenever 10 non-Sinti were standing in the other corner, nobody paid them any attention at all.”* When asked whether she was discriminated against in school, however, she says No.

She did not need, or was unwilling to make use of, support offerings on the part of the school, such as help with homework in the afternoon. She preferred to spend time at home with her family members, who continue to be of great importance to her.

She attended a vocational school. One year later, however, she left this school and obtained her *Realschule* certificate. Actually, she wanted to work in a kindergarten in those days, *“but because we live here in the village, I would have had to do the training for two more years, and then I didn’t do it anymore after all.”* Since then she has been working in a store owned by a large grocery chain near her residence, and in the near future she wants to begin training as a retail saleswoman. The initial contact for her present job was made during a six-week internship for school students.

With regard to the formal school education of her parents, D.C. knows only that they went to school together with many other Sinti, but irregularly, *“not necessarily always,”* and have no school-leaving qualifications. Her father is self-employed, *“does all kinds of jobs around the house, gardening, and the like.”* Her mother is a housewife.

Family life is very important to her. Early on, she had to help out at home and look out for her siblings, which she regards as a matter of course and does willingly. Once a year the entire family goes on a trip, to which she looks forward every time: *“Traveling is always something very, very beautiful, we go each year, with everybody together, and we all look forward to it all year long. Then we all go together with our cars. There are usually ten families of us, sometimes more, at these times.”*

2.2. Experiences in Educational Institutions

In this section, the overall findings will be presented and illustrated with examples drawn from the 30 interviews describing experiences in the various educational institutions. Specifically, questions were asked about experiences in kindergarten, in school, and in vocational training. Unfortunately, only a very few statements about the last category are available, because only a few of the respondents have begun or completed a vocational training program.

2.2.1. Kindergarten

To the extent that the interviewees can recall their time in kindergarten, they report positive experiences. Only one girl from the third generation says that she left kindergarten after a few weeks because she preferred to stay with her mother. Another exception is a man in the second generation, who, as a Sinto, felt out of place there and as a result left kindergarten.

“Yes, maybe only one week, I think, and then I was out of there. I couldn’t cope with the customs, because it all was unfamiliar to me. Away from my family, into a strange world with other people, with other children, and then the daily routine and napping, naps for the children, I always bolted when it was time to nap, I was afraid, I was shy and had complexes, inferiority complexes. How do I fit in there, I was always that way, and there was also the feeling that, as a Sinto, you’re always poorly regarded, well, I don’t know, you’re just different.”⁴²

2.2.2. School

The statements about school present a picture strikingly different from that of kindergarten. More than two-thirds of those interviewed report individual discrimination, prejudices against the minority, and a sense of being treated differently than the majority. In a very few cases, these experiences did not begin until after the *Grundschule* period. Regardless of that, all types of schools are affected, with the *Förderschule* occupying a special position, which will be described in greater detail below. It is striking that distinctly more men than women report individ-

⁴² B.F., male, age 57, see Footnote 13.

ual experiences of discrimination.⁴³ Most commonly, the interviewees were/are subject to verbal put-downs associated with prejudices against “Gypsies” and to antiziganistic insults ranging all the way to far-right extremist statements on the part of their classmates, as a consequence of which even actual assaults and altercations occur in some instances.

“Actually it happened many times. It’s almost the same thing every time; people come when they hear that we’re Sinti, they say, ‘You dirty Gypsy.’ Then we both got into it, I fought back again and again and again, and then the teachers usually intervened and pulled us apart and really didn’t concern themselves with who was at fault and who was not. Actually they just pulled us apart and told us we should go sit down somewhere or stop fighting.”⁴⁴

“So then I just had the problem, now the children in my class knew that I was a Sintizza, and then they baited me, of course. {...} Well, they just always said, the ‘Gypsies are dirty, and they steal,’ and ‘they never would have thought that I was one,’ and it was just really bad for me, because I didn’t want that.”⁴⁵

“Well, one time there was an incident, there was a boy, and we were playing soccer. And just because I was a better player, he said, ‘Gypsy bastard and here and committing a foul and everything.’ I didn’t pay any attention at first, but then he went too far and wouldn’t stop. We quarreled a little and mixed it up a little. I was still little then. Yes, and even though he was at fault, I got the blame, just because he was blond and I was dark. That’s the story.”⁴⁶

“I did relatively well at school, but I still was the victim of discrimination. Especially in the Grundschule, 1st through 4th grades. You just weren’t as highly regarded among the Germans if it came out that you were a Sinto or Gypsy, and then they baited you and also made stupid remarks. For example, they say we didn’t have houses, that we slept in squalor, and that we were just inferior.”⁴⁷

In the interviews, about half of the respondents speak about discrimination, prejudices, or different treatment of the minority on the part of the teaching staff. In contrast to the student body, this is a slightly weaker finding, though a no less alarming one, in view of the role and function

⁴³ On the basis of the present analysis, we have no clues that would help explain this unequal distribution between the sexes.

⁴⁴ G.G., male, Sinti, age 37, see Footnote 16.

⁴⁵ K.E., female, Sinti, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

⁴⁶ A.N., male, Sinti, age 21, see Footnote 18.

⁴⁷ K.K., male, Sinti, early 20’s, see Footnote 39.

of the teachers. The interviewees from the first generation, who went to school in the 1950s and 1960s, mainly report pejorative statements about intelligence and achievement potential, ranging all the way to blows⁴⁸ and unfair grading, which provided negative confirmation of the already-present mistrust of the German majority society.

“At school I had a homeroom teacher whose name was, I still remember, P., Mrs. P., and she said to me loud and clear in those days, ‘You’re a Gypsy, you’re not worth much. She told me to wash my ears, clean myself up, and tell my parents that they should dress me decently, and said that I would never amount to anything anyway. That happened again later, when I was in 8th grade; then my teacher said, ‘You’re a Gypsy, you won’t amount to anything, none of you will ever amount to anything anyway.’”⁴⁹

“Yes, at school anyway, I was discriminated against by the teachers. One teacher locked my sister in a cupboard. To punish her. And the teacher slung the whipping cane at me and hit me in the eye. Then I got my mama, and then we hounded the teacher and the principal. (...) We were all handicapped anyway, in my generation. By the old folks, you know, who always told us about the concentration camp and what they went through with the Germans. So we were always wary anyway, and kept a sharp eye out to make sure nothing happened to us.”⁵⁰

Those interviewees from the second generation who were affected by discrimination still tell in some cases of antiziganistic slurs, disadvantage, and prejudice on the part of the teachers:

“(...) and after that, the teacher was just so mean to me that she even badmouthed Sinti in class and said, ‘the Gypsies stink, and they’re dirty’. And then I didn’t want to go to school anymore, because it hurt me so much that I just sat and cried.”⁵¹

“It was just fairly often the case at the school that, whenever there was any trouble or the like, then we heard right away from outside: Now you have to be careful. Once another teacher said, ‘Now you have to watch out. If he gets annoyed, he’ll bring all his relatives here, and then 100 armed men will be standing here.’” And that’s the kind of thing they said at school.”⁵²

⁴⁸ Here it must be kept in mind that in the FRG, so-called corporal punishment in the schools was only gradually banned, starting in the early 1970s, and until then was definitely used as a means of education in the daily school routine.

⁴⁹ B.F., male, Sinti, age 57, see Footnote 13.

⁵⁰ D.D., male, Sinti, age 59, dropped out of school at age 14, businessman, involved in civil rights work.

⁵¹ K.E., female, Sinti, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

⁵² U.H., male, Roma, late 20’s, see Footnote 12.

In the third generation, the picture changes slightly. Here, a very few interviewees are indeed also affected by antiziganistic insults on the part of teachers, but the majority report strong demotivation by certain teachers or a general and elusive sense of being treated differently and of being emotionally rejected.

"Yes, well, the most that I can think of now, in hindsight, is that whenever anything was the matter, then it was always my brother and I, I don't know now whether it was only because we were Sinti, that they first came to my brother and me right away, although it was others who were involved in it, and my brother and I had nothing to do with the things."⁵³

"Well, there was something, whenever non-Sinti asked something in class, whenever they were talking in the middle of class, the teachers weren't so quick to scold as when I said something."⁵⁴

"So, a couple of teachers actually dealt with it well. They were well informed about the Sinti. But on the other hand, there were some who were, who had a bias, a real aversion. It was noticeable, too. True, they didn't say it directly, but you just noticed it. The teacher preferred other students. Then you just noticed that."⁵⁵

Individuals from all the generations tell of intense inner conflicts whenever their membership in the minority was not known at school, but the "Gypsy" stereotype nonetheless was mentioned in class, especially in derogatory statements. Here, adolescents are under intense psychological pressure to react to an unquestioned, hence almost overpowering, stereotypical image of a group of people to which they belong.

"Once there was a situation in 6th or 7th grade, where the topic of Gypsies came up. Of course, from literature it's known that there were always Gypsies or witches or magicians in those days, that is, always something negative, Gypsy children steal, etc. etc., that was being talked about in class. Now I knew that I was a Sinti. I also knew something about what was meant by "Gypsy," but somehow, as a child, I had never really come to grips with it. But I noticed that I suddenly felt very depressed in this class. I saw myself as the focus, even though nobody knew that I was Sinti. But I thought, now, at some point, they'll surely find out about you, and then I

⁵³ S.J., male, Sinti, early 20's, see Footnote 21.

⁵⁴ D.C., female, Sinti, age 19, completed *Realschule*, worked in retail sales, and has a chance for training as a qualified retail saleswoman.

⁵⁵ A.N., male, Sinti, age 21, see Footnote 18.

*became withdrawn. (...) So, I noticed that I really didn't want to identify with this bad thing that was being taught about at the front of the classroom.*⁵⁶

Even so, barely one-third of the interviewees cite experiences of discrimination or demotivation as grounds for dropping out of school. Several, against this backdrop, became so-called problem students and never managed to get out of the loop of action and reaction again.

*"That's right, for example, I also studied at a Gymnasium for two years and I could still have gotten my Abitur certificate. But because of one teacher, I couldn't do it, because he always had an eye on me (...). And then he said, 'You're not capable of getting the Abitur certificate.' Well, and then I had to drop out. I was there for two years and then dropped out, because of this teacher, who terrorized me and put me in a bad light in the whole class."*⁵⁷

*"I went to the 6th grade. I was there until I got into a fight with the teacher's son. The son constantly baited me, too, (...). Well, 'Gypsy,' and 'dirty,' and such things. So then I slapped him one. Then the teacher slapped me. Then I waited until recess, went back in the classroom, got my book, took myself out of school, got the paperwork stamped, left, and went home. So I was at home."*⁵⁸

*"Yes, I can even say 'very well,' too, for example, in English class. (...) I had been butting in and screwing things up, just the way teenage boys do, and then she suddenly turned around and said, 'Now that I think about it, Hitler did the right thing.' And then I just snapped. Honestly, I didn't regret slapping her and I didn't regret flunking out of school, because you just don't say that, it shows a lack of respect for our forebears, a lack of respect for Sinti and Roma, and I think that's simply not decent."*⁵⁹

About one-third of the interviewees mention individual understanding teachers who motivated and encouraged them and also sided with them, and who in some cases had a decisive influence on the subsequent educational trajectory. In individual cases, there were also fellow classmates who played such roles.

⁵⁶ M.S., male, Sinti, age 58, see Footnote 15

⁵⁷ D.M., female, Roma, mid-20's, see Footnote 25.

⁵⁸ S.I., male, Sinti, around 70 years old, attended *Grundschule*, worked as truck driver, musician, and construction worker, married, three children, involved in civil rights work.

⁵⁹ S.J., male, Sinti, early 20's, see Footnote 21.

*"Once I didn't feel like it one day, and it was during the English lesson, and the teacher insisted that I go to the blackboard and write something, and I baulked. Then she got up and started shouting that I should do it now, that I didn't have any say in the matter and was only a student. And I got up and gave the Hitler salute and called out in a loud voice, 'Heil Hitler.' I still remember it clearly. That's a situation I've held in my head. Funnily enough, the teacher took it with a sense of humor, and ever after that situation I had a very good relationship with her, I ran into her not along ago. Once she also really helped me get out of a jam."*⁶⁰

*"I had a teacher there that I'm still in contact with to this day. So we write each other, and she was a very nice teacher. She also knew it [that the interviewee was a Sinti], and I didn't feel discriminated against by her at all. Quite the opposite, she even gave me extra help with math, and from her I didn't get the feeling [of being discriminated against] at all. And she always told me, You've always had such a hard time because of your origin, and you've always had to struggle so much."*⁶¹

The narratives presented here make it clear how motivating and invigorating the support provided by teachers is, and how well it is received. That such support does not lead to a formal graduation in every case, however, is an indication of the complexity of the educational problems.

Unfortunately, there are almost no statements concerning support offerings outside the family or outside of school that were/are taken advantage of. Only one girl from the third generation, who is attending a *Förderschule* and receiving free tutoring at a neighborhood center in the afternoons, reports how much the tutoring sessions have helped her to improve in individual school subjects. It can be assumed that exactly such offerings could help fill the gap that, according to the reports, neither the families nor the educational institutions are able to close.

"She decides, I accept."

B.I., female, Roma, age 19

This young Roma woman, now aged 19, did not attend kindergarten. At first she attended *Grundschule*, but after one year was sent to the *Förderschule*. There she met other Sinti. She had a good relationship with her fellow classmates and teachers. When the schoolwork sometimes was too difficult, she received help from her homeroom teacher. At home, she took advantage of her sister's private lessons for a time, to get assistance. Her mother is illiterate and could give her almost no help, apart from some assistance with arithmetic. She does not know her

⁶⁰ K.K., male, Sinti, early 20's, see Footnote 39.

⁶¹ K.E., female, Sinti, second generation, see Footnote 40.

father, as her parents have been separated since she was an infant.

She likes to remember her schooldays: *"My time in school really was very good. I can't complain about my schooldays. It was really nice. If I could turn back the clock, I'd still enjoy going to school today."*

In puberty, her mother was concerned about her and preferred in part to have her stay home, rather than go to school. *"Sometimes she told me not to go to school. (Interviewer: And why not?) Interviewee: I don't know. She said, 'Look how early it is. You can't see anything at all. It's dark outside, you know.' Then I said, 'I want to go to school.' I didn't go to school for half a year on account of my mother, she didn't let me. And then there was a fine, and then I went back to school. (Interviewer: And can you imagine why your mother didn't let you go to school?) Interviewee: Because of the boys."*

Nevertheless, she went to school until 10th grade and felt happy there, by her own account, until she came into conflict with a teacher; that resulted in her being expelled from school half a year before graduating: *"Because the teacher didn't like me, and I wrote such funny stuff on the blackboard all the time. (Interviewer: And what did you write, for example?) Interviewee: 'Fuck You' [in English] (Interviewer: Oh, I see. And the teacher wasn't amused?) Interviewee: He provoked me too, quite often. For example, I wasn't allowed to talk in class, for example, when I asked the girl next to me what was going on, because sometimes I didn't catch on, and he grumbled the whole time, claiming that I was disrupting the class. (Interviewer: And so you have no certificate?) Interviewee: No."*

The conflict at school seems to be due to a situation of double overload. First, she was confronted with her mother's anxieties, and second, with performance-related and behavioral requirements that put pressure on her. She regrets on the one hand that she lacks a certificate, but on the other she accepts it as a given: *"It was a pity. But now it can't be changed any longer."* She does not question her mother's decisions with regard to her school attendance: *"(Interviewer: Do you think that your mother was right to do as she did? Do you think that it was okay?) Interviewee: Yes, that's her decision. (Interviewer: And you simply had to accept it?) Interviewee: Yes. She decides, I accept."*

2.2.3. *Förderschule*

Of 30 interviewees, two report that they were placed directly in a *Förderschule*⁶² when they started school. In both cases, a man from the first generation and a girl from the third generation, one parent had attended the same school.

*"All right, this is how it was: My father, I was supposed to go to the regular school the normal way, but I don't know, he probably didn't want that, because it also was so far away. As far as I know, he said, 'No, then let him go to the school near us instead, to the school for the backward, because it's closer to where we live,' and that's how he wanted it."*⁶³

⁶² In the material below, reference is always made to schools with a special educational focus on "learning."

⁶³ L.P., male, Sinti, age 59, see Footnote 27.

“Yes, well, in her [the mother’s] case, it was just the way it was with me. Everything was all right, too. She got along well with the teachers, she was also at the S.-E.-Schule, she got on very well with the teachers there too, and with her friends, everything was okay as well. They were best friends!”⁶⁴

In the case of both families, various fears concerning the children were a major topic in the narratives. Because both *Förderschulen* conveyed a sense of trust and security to their children, one can conjecture that the decision of the school authorities was not placed in question by the parents or was interpreted in a positive way.

Three interviewees say that they were transferred from the *Grundschule* to the *Förderschule* after one or more years. While the decision in two cases was based on the children’s performance and learning difficulties, one woman from the second generation attributed the transfer to an assault by a female *Grundschule* teacher and the altercation between the grandmother and the teacher.

“I have to add that we had another teacher in the Grundschule, her name was, let me see, Frau G. And it was, she was, dreadful, that woman: She was, I can’t even explain to you what kind of a woman she was. She also, that is, one time I held up my hand and wanted to say something, and I accidentally interrupted her, and she still had a bamboo cane, a really long one. Yes, and then I had to put my hands on the table, like this. (...) Then she came over and kept hitting my hands with her hands, with the cane. (...) So the welts were visible, and my grandma saw it and flipped out, of course! ‘What’s the meaning of this? Are we back in the war, or just what’s going on here?’ At any rate, she went with me to this school the next day. (...) And then my grandma, yes, she was a little temperamental, she slapped her, and that was the end of the 3rd grade. She didn’t send me back again, and that’s why I went to the Förderschule.”⁶⁵

What is striking is that four of the five interviewees who attended a *Förderschule*⁶⁶ are female. No explanation for that could be inferred from the interviews. Further, it is to be noted that in particular the three interviewees from the third generation report positive experiences in *Förderschule*. They felt discriminated against by neither their fellow classmates nor their teachers, and in some cases they received special assistance.

⁶⁴ L.O., female, Sinti, age 20, see Footnote 41.

⁶⁵ M.S., female, Sinti, age 45, see Footnote 15.

⁶⁶ Additional interviewees may have gone to a *Förderschule* without that having come up explicitly in the interview, so that one could possibly assume a higher proportion of *Förderschule* attendees.

*"But I wasn't at the Grundschule, instead I went to the Förderschule. I was at the Förderschule. That was here at the B.-W.-Schule. I was there until the 5th grade, and I really liked it there with them. Everything was okay with them. I had no discrimination, no nothing. I had friends. The teacher was super, too. They were very nice. They took me just as I was, trusted me, I trusted them. It was all okay."*⁶⁷

A man from the first generation reports that he was supported by the teachers, but was the object of "Gypsy" slurs from his classmates, while a woman from the second generation says that prejudices against the Sinti definitely existed among the other students, as well as on the part of some teachers.

2.2.4. Vocational Training and Evening Classes

One other thing is striking: Only very few of the interviewees have vocational training. In the interviews, they speak only in passing about their experiences during this time. Two interviewees obtained their certificates with no problems; however, during their vocational training they also did not identify themselves as members of the minority. Two other interviewees report that they suffered such severe discrimination due to their ethnic identity that they dropped out of the training.

*"No, that's not how it was. That is, I did my work. It was all finished. I just went to the boss and said, 'I don't have any more work, what am I supposed to do?' And he said, 'The Gypsies never know what they're supposed to do. They have no country, let them go back to their country. Let them go where they belong, the Gypsy bastards.' They said all that right to my face."*⁶⁸

Several interviewees obtained educational qualifications through second-chance programs. One female interviewee obtained her *Fachhochschulreife* in night school, which she attended with her aunt. She was in a class with a very heterogeneous composition and reports positive experiences.

"I went to night school as an adult. And night school, that was a maximum of 10 people, 10 adults. There were a few foreigners, there were a few from the majority population, and I was studying there along with my aunt. We basically, we all felt we were on the same level some-

⁶⁷ L.O., female, Sinti, age 20, see Footnote 41.

⁶⁸ L.O., see Footnote 57.

*how. (...) No, at night school anyway, there was no situation where I felt discriminated against.*⁶⁹

2.2.5. Summary of Experiences in Educational Institutions

With regard to kindergarten, positive experiences predominate. Nonetheless, some of the interviewees regard this arrangement as primarily a child-care offering, which is not embraced because of the realities of their family life. In isolated instances, there are also prejudices toward kindergarten as an institution of the majority society.

Experiences in school are to a large extent determined by overt and covert discrimination in the form of daily antiziganistic slurs and prejudices on the part of individual students. The teachers frequently seem not to intervene professionally here. It is alarming that antiziganism obviously continues to be present, among the teachers as well, and is openly articulated in everyday school life. A number of times, that bias was cited in the interviews as the reason for dropping out of school or training. But even if such prejudices are not articulated, the interviewees often felt “differently treated” than their non-Sinti classmates.

In addition, there are individual teachers and fellow students who act in a supportive way and in some cases have such a motivational effect that they can exert a positive influence on the school career.

The largely positive experiences at *Förderschulen*, especially among the younger age groups, can possibly be ascribed to the special situation at these schools. Besides smaller classes, the teachers are specially trained to be responsive to a heterogeneous student body and to nurture children individually, as their needs require. Interestingly, attendance at a *Förderschule* apparently is not rendered problematic within the families concerned. In most cases, the interfamilial clustering and generational continuation of *Förderschule* attendance is portrayed without any value judgment. But even on the part of the professionals at the state institutions, there presumably is no sensitivity to this topic, because interventions were not described in any of the 30 interviews. Quite the contrary, one father reports that currently two of his three children have been assigned to the *Förderschule*, with no attempt made to involve him expressly in this process.

⁶⁹ L.H., female, Roma, age 32, see Footnote 24.

“And then one student, a girl, stood up: No, let him sit next to me!”

E.F., male, Sinti, age 31

The interviewee did not attend kindergarten, because his parents worked as traveling performers in various locations. The family spent only the winter at home. When he was old enough to be required to attend school, he became, like his six siblings, a “migratory student” (*“Wanderschüler”*) and attended the *Grundschule* at each respective location. When the family was at home, he went to the local *Grundschule* there. In his childhood, his father was on the road quite a lot, and his mother was fully engaged with taking care of the six children. He has no information about the school education of his mother. His father went to school, because that was very important to his grandfather as a result of his experiences of persecution. *“Because he lived through that time, you know, so I know that it was very important to him for his children to get a school education.”*

His very first day at school is associated in his memories with a painful experience: *“And when I came into the classroom, my teacher, her name was Mrs. K., asked me, ‘Well, E., where would you like to sit?’ These are the memories I have and will never forget, either. And then I looked around, there were two or three boys, and I didn’t necessarily want to sit next to a girl, so then I said ‘Right there,’ and then he said, ‘No, no, I’m not allowed to sit next to Gypsies!’ And I was a little sad about it, and then I said, ‘Fine, then I’ll just sit over there,’ and then the other boy said, ‘No, Gypsies stink!’”* This humiliating situation was somewhat mitigated by the brave intervention of a fellow student: *“And then one student, a girl, stood up, I’m still on good terms with her to-day, she’s a schoolteacher in B., and she stood up: ‘No, let him sit next to me!’”* This girl became a confidante for him throughout his entire time at school. She did homework with him and protected him in class. E.F. maintains good contact with her to this very day.

The teacher, too, made the discrimination a subject of discussion in the class and approached E.F. impartially and understandingly. Evidently with little success, unfortunately, because the daily antiziganistic slurs and provocations led repeatedly to verbal and physical altercations with fellow students. This situation did not change at the next school level, a *Hauptschule*, either.

His grandparents and great-grandparents were persecuted under National Socialism, and many relatives lost their lives in concentration camps. Personally, he particularly regrets that he never had a chance to know his grandmother. Against this background, E.F. reacted aggressively to the antiziganistic insults, which in some cases even culminated in right-wing extremist statements: *“Really, I had a fight almost every recess period. And you always look to blame the others, that’s clear, but at some point I had gotten tough too, of course, because people said to me, ‘they forgot to gas you,’ and we knew the stories about our grandfather, about our grandmother, I never knew a grandmother, I have no grandmother, I would have liked to have one.”*

With teachers, he had both positive and negative experiences that directly affected his grades in the subjects concerned. For example, in *Grundschule* he got a grade of 6 [the lowest possible grade] in music, although he is very musical, while later on, at the *Hauptschule* level, he got a grade of 1 [the highest possible].

During his time as a “migratory student,” he sometimes attempted to conceal his ethnic identity and passed himself off as a circus child, because whenever he and his siblings were outed as “Gypsies,” problems frequently were the result, and in some cases the children were even turned away in the first place, by the school principal. At some point his sister was so frightened that instead of staying at his own grade level, he always kept her company in her class, at least while traveling, although she is two years younger. To his parents, too, it was important to keep ethnic labeling from occurring in the majority society immediately. They strongly urged him and

his siblings to speak German outside the home, to avoid being identified as Sinti.

After obtaining his *Hauptschule* certificate, he was supposed to train as a salesman, at his father's wish. But because E.F. had in mind the example of his brother, who is unemployed despite his *Abitur* and completion of vocational training, and observed other relatives in the same situation, he decided to become self-employed. His uncle gave him informal training in industrial cleaning, roof coating, and lumber and building protection, so that he was able to open his own firm at the age of 18. It provides him with an assured income to this very day. In workshops, he acquired the training expertise he lacked, and ultimately obtained an exception permit from the roofers' association allowing him to work as a roofer.

His hobby is singing at private events. After training as a tenor with a professional singer, he could have gotten a booking at a theater, but regarded this career as incompatible with family life, and opted for the family.

With respect to formal education, he has changed his opinion since his youth and now would tackle his training directly: *"I would have done my apprenticeship as a roofer. I would have gone into training, certainly, would have just tried to learn to handle this discrimination at some point."*

2.3. Role of the Family

This section will pursue the question of which educational experiences the interviewees had within the family itself, in terms of a transfer of knowledge between generations. This topic was closely related to the individual significance of family in general, as well as its importance in each interviewee's own educational career.

Almost all the interviewees state that the family was, and remains, a significant agent of socialization for them. In the family and in the extended family circle, an intergenerational transfer of knowledge takes place, a process that includes both the passing on of cultural values and standards and Romanes, the Romani language, as well as the acquisition of housekeeping skills and manual, business, and artistic skills. Some learned a trade in their families in this way, and it enabled them to pursue gainful activity later on, mostly by founding their own firm or becoming self-employed. Here, however, inner conflicts were indicated whenever the family or family demands determined the educational path of the interviewees. Thus, several respondents say that they actually had different educational ambitions, but nonetheless assumed the family/cultural position assigned to them. For example, two men reports that they had to assume the role of family provider on account of family problems and gave up their own career aspirations to do so.

"My goal was that I wanted to learn a trade, too, but could never do so on account of the circumstances, because my father had other plans for me, my father got sick, my father died. Then

I followed in his footsteps, more or less, whether I wanted to or not. And because of that, my goals were different. Yes, I had to rethink things, rethink them altogether. And hence an era was created when I had to be there for my family for the time being. Four brothers, one was older, the others were younger, but the older one couldn't hack it, and there was Mama, so then I was responsible for them for the time being.”⁷⁰

This shelving of one's own needs in favor of the family's was not regarded as problematic or even questioned by the interviewees in any interview, nor was there any mention of altercations within the family as a result of such self-sacrifice. For example, one interviewee said, in response to an interviewer's insistent questioning about her reasons for staying out of school for half a year at her mother's wish, “Yes, she [the mother] decides, I accept.”⁷¹ These dynamics point to the great significance of family and a close bonding of the individual to the family, as became clear at other points in the conversations as well. Thus, all the respondents state that the family had, and still has, an essential role in their lives. It is described as a place of trust, safety, security, dependability, and support in all situations of life. Therefore it is not surprising, though it is striking, that there was almost no mention in the interviews of pivotal family conflicts when the respondent's own educational ambitions failed to jibe with the traditional family roles or the wishes of parents.

“My family, family, means: safety, trust, being there when things are bad for somebody or being there when things are good for somebody, too. Family is simply sticking together.”⁷²

“So, I couldn't have lived without my grandma or without my mother, either, and the reverse was true as well. They couldn't have done without me, and we lived, all three of us, together in a kitchen and one room, and it was wonderful, wonderful, a real family.”⁷³

Bilingualism is taken for granted in almost all the families. The children grow up with Romanes as their mother tongue and for the most part learn German as a second language. Almost no mention is made of associated problems when learning to read at school, or the like. In two families, only German was spoken, no Romanes, in an effort to avoid ethnic labeling in the majority society. Here, grandparents and/or parents interrupted the generational transmission of

⁷⁰ B.F., male, Sinti, age 57, see Footnote 13.

⁷¹ B.I., female, Sinti, age 19, see Footnote 20

⁷² L.P., male, Sinti, age 59, see Footnote 27.

⁷³ K.L., female, Sinti, age 62, see Footnote 17.

the minority language owing to their persecution under National Socialism and the anxieties related to that.

“That was the only thing I’ve achieved in my life, otherwise, zilch.”

S.J., male, Sinti, early 20’s

S.J. attended a kindergarten with a relatively large share of foreigners and does not recall any problems there. Next he went to a *Grundschule*, where he felt out of place because he and his brother were the only Sinti: *“The biggest problem I had was that because of our tradition, I just didn’t like going. There were only Germans there, and I didn’t get along so well with them, down there. And I wanted to be with our people more.”* In school, he encountered prejudice against him and his brother on the part of some teachers, and it was reflected in various ways, including prejudgment of the boys as Sinti: *“For example, when people were hit and weren’t willing to say the names, people immediately claimed we had done it. Or when something got broken or something was stolen, then we were blamed right away. Everything that was negative in any way was blamed on either me or my brother.”*

S.J. received no assistance at school or from his parents. Because his father had not attended school at all and his mother had little active knowledge acquired at school, they could give him little help in school-related matters. Both parents spoke mainly Romanes with him at home. He feels most at ease in the presence of his family and relatives, who seem to have a very strong bond and to convey a sense of safety: *“You feel more comfortable than with Germans. You can speak your native language, you find understanding for what you say, because many people understand it the way you say it, and that’s the nice thing. No rivalry, no hatred, no blather, nothing.”*

Even after *Grundschule* he encountered, in some cases, teachers who exhibited prejudice toward him as a Sinto and were *“standoffish with foreigners.”* At the second *Hauptschule* he attended, the problems escalated to such an extent that he had to fend off right-wing extremist comments from a female teacher. *“I know I was defiant toward the teacher then, but at the time the teacher said to me, ‘Hitler did the right thing with you people at times,’ and then I stood up, lost my patience, slapped her, and then I was kicked out of school. Because at that moment I didn’t care, because somebody like that, a teacher, who was educated and supposed to be a caring person, mustn’t say that, that won’t do. No matter how insolent you are, no matter what you had gotten up to, a teacher or social worker who’s trained doesn’t have the right to say something like that.”*

His father’s complaint to the principal had no apparent effects. Quite the contrary, he himself was first suspended from school for two weeks and then expelled from school. After that, S.J. stayed home for half a year and then began a year of vocational preparation to make up the requirements for his *Hauptschule* certificate. There, as in kindergarten, he met primarily “foreigners” and had no problems.

After completing *Hauptschule*, he began an apprenticeship as a retail salesman. He got on well there until, after a year, a new branch manager arrived. When his new boss refused to give him a day off to attend his grandmother’s funeral, he dropped out after 2.5 years in the training program. He fought back in court and won. Now the branch manager is no longer permitted to train apprentices, but that regrettably had no further consequences for his own educational career. *“That was the only thing I’ve achieved in my life, otherwise, zilch. That was the only success I’ve had against discrimination. But even that came only with a struggle, where others would have had an easier time. I was at the lawyer’s more than once. I really had to apply pres-*

sure until something finally happened.”

By now he has given up his dream of being a trained retail salesman. S.J. has moved into an apartment of his own in a neighborhood where predominantly “foreigners” live, people by whom—in contrast to the majority society—he feels respected and understood. *“When most people see scrap on a truck, it’s all over. All they do then is talk and run you down. You’re left looking like an antisocial type. That’s why I went where foreigners are. They know what we’re like, how we live, and I know how they live, and we respect each other.”*

2.4. Self-Imposed Terms and Ethnic Self-Concept

This section contains a summary of the statements that refer to the interviewees’ concept of themselves as Sinti or Roma. In the interview, questions were asked about the respondents’ personal attitude toward the term “Gypsy” and their way of dealing with the concept in the majority society. Also of interest was the respondents’ assessment of the media with regard to reporting on Sinti and Roma. A further subject of discussion was the person’s way of dealing with his/her ethnicity in the majority society.

2.4.1. Ethnic Self-Designation and Attitude toward the Term “Gypsy”

With one exception, all the interviewees identified themselves as Sinti or Roma. The only respondent who referred to herself as a “Gypsy” uses this term with a negative connotation:

“I grew up with it, and by now I’ve accepted that they call me that. (...) I’m just a Gypsy and you have to live with it.”⁷⁴

The term “Gypsy” is rejected by almost all. The reasons for that range from the claim that “Gypsy” is a name imposed by others, associated with established clichés and antiziganistic stereotypes, and a slur, to the explicit linking of the term with the history of persecution by the National Socialists. It is interesting that in the third generation, the 14-25 age group, a focus on the linking of the term “Gypsy” with clichés or racist stereotypes is discernible. Here, the in-

⁷⁴ B.I., female, Sinti, age 19, see Footnote 20.

creasing civil-rights, academic, and media preoccupation with the genesis, form, and consequences of the “Gypsy” stereotype may be having an effect.⁷⁵

“I call myself, among Roma we use the term Rom for ourselves, or Sinto, Sinti, among Sinti, and why should we be called anything but what we call ourselves. I mean, the Germans, too, say that they’re Germans and don’t want to be called anything else.”⁷⁶

About one-third of the interviewees, when answering this question, say that they tolerate the use of the term, depending on the context, and do not necessarily perceive it as detrimental, for example, in the case of a nonpejorative usage based on ignorance or in a private social context. Also, they themselves use the term “Gypsy,” depending on the situation; however, the right to self-definition is repeatedly emphasized. Moreover, it serves as a term for communication between minority and majority, as the interviewees assume that members of the majority are unable to mentally classify the self-imposed term “Sinti” or “Roma.”

“So, let’s say it depends on the way it’s said. If somebody on the street comes up and says ‘Gypsy bastard,’ that’s not good, of course. If somebody says, ‘You’re a Gypsy, well, of course, why not. Then I converse with him in a completely normal way, and may try to explain it to him if there’s something he doesn’t understand.’”⁷⁷

“Well, if it’s said in a discriminating way I think that’s really bad. Because I think that if somebody does something, regardless of whether he’s a Sinto or a German or an Arab or something else, he really should be called by his name, and you should use Mr. Such-and-such then, or the name, and say he did this and that. But if a Sinto does it, then you read in the newspaper, ‘Gypsy has,’ or if it’s several, the headline is, ‘Gypsies have done this and that.’ And I think that’s really not good, because that’s how the name was tacked onto us, though actually we don’t commit to it ourselves or call ourselves that, and so everybody gets tarred with the same brush.”⁷⁸

Almost all the interviews express themselves negatively on the subject of reporting in the media. In most cases, they perceive a cliché-dominated treatment of the subject of Sinti and Roma.

⁷⁵ See the homepage of the Gesellschaft für Antiziganismusforschung e.V. (www.antiziganismus.de). Academics of various provenances work jointly in this association in an interdisciplinary way and, among other things, publish the journal *Antiziganismuskritik*.

⁷⁶ T.W., male, Roma, around 45 years of age, see Footnote 1.

⁷⁷ A.N., male, Sinti, age 21, see Footnote 18.

⁷⁸ G.G., male, Sinti, age 37, Footnote 16.

Further, they criticize the use of the term “Gypsy” despite its rejection by the Sinti and Roma themselves. In this context, the interviewees express a sense of powerlessness, because they cannot opt for direct confrontation, as is otherwise possible in social contexts, but instead feel helplessly at the mercy of the images presented.

“No, I think it’s much worse in the public media, because there I can’t justify myself. I can’t clarify it. If, for example, in the restaurant, as I said, where I sing or play, the owner of the restaurant, he used the term ‘Gypsy’ at that time, ‘You all are Gypsies, aren’t you?’ To him, I can explain it and say: ‘Hey, I don’t want you to call me a Gypsy, a Gypsy is a vagabond hustler, for me that’s an insult! I know you don’t mean it in a bad way, but it’s an insult! I have a name, my name is A.! What’s your name? And that’s how you introduce yourself, and I’m no Gypsy! If you like, I’m a Sinto, I’m a member of a minority in Germany!’ I can explain that to him, and since then he doesn’t do it anymore. And he told all his employees never to say ‘Gypsy ensemble’ about our group. ‘This is our Sinti ensemble,’ he says when he announces us, from F. or from H. I accomplished that because he’s standing in front of me, but when it comes over the TV: ‘The Gypsies here, or the Gypsies there,’ you can’t explain yourself, you can’t do anything to stop it. So you just sit in front of the TV and get riled.”⁷⁹

2.4.2. Dealing with Ethnicity

Another key point in the survey was the way interviewees dealt with their ethnicity in the majority society. Here the 30 interviews produce a highly diverse and differentiated picture.

More than one-third of those interviewed say that they take an offensive, rather than defensive, approach to their ethnicity in the majority society. They report that they make no attempt at concealment when someone inquires, and they are well able to deal with the reactions to their ethnic affiliation. Here, a weighting in the second and third generations is discernible; it may be attributable to a heightened ethnic self-awareness and to the overall slightly increased social sensitivity toward Sinti and Roma.

“No, they didn’t know what that was. Then I explained it to them, actually one doesn’t say this, but I told them then that I was a Gypsy. Only then did they know what was going on, who I was,

⁷⁹ E.F., male, Sinti, age 31, see Footnote 35.

what it was. So I explained it to them a little, telling where we really came from, and since then, actually, I've always said it openly."⁸⁰

Several interviewees go on the offensive when dealing with their ethnicity in the majority society, but do not conceal it, though they simultaneously suffer from the experienced rejection of their ethnicity.

*"It's sad and discouraging. I'm sorry, but it's the truth, that's how it is. When I look at myself in the mirror, I'm not white, I'm black. ... I'm sorry, that's how it is. And I don't deny it, I'm proud to be a Gypsy, a Roma woman, that's so."*⁸¹

When this subject was under discussion in the conversations, it became clear that the respondents are repeatedly forced to run up against the clichés and stereotypes that have become rigidified and traditional in the majority society.

*"So, as I said, I'm surely old enough now, and whenever they ask me what I am, then I say I'm a Sinto, of course. I don't care, either, what they say or what they think. I think I don't come across as insolent. I come across as civilized and quite normal, and polite, at any rate. Then, I think, they just see it as completely contradictory in any event. Or whatever they say. Mostly, people get quite a different image then, too. Because they have quite different images in their head, and then when some Sinti, let's say I, come and then talk quite normally and speak good German and all, and know how to behave, then you can see that the people are astonished, at any rate, that Sinti are moving with the times nowadays, or at least are trying to."*⁸²

In contrast to the ways of dealing with ethnicity described above, a few of the 30 interviewees reported negative experiences resulting from revelation of their ethnicity that were so serious that they no longer identify themselves as Sinti or Roma outside of the minority, and even when specifically asked about their ethnicity, they deny it and claim a different ethnic origin, such as India or Spain.

"(...) I said from that point in time on that never again in my life would I say I'm a Sintizza, and I've stuck to that to this very day, because I simply don't want to admit it, for me it's something

⁸⁰ G.S., male, Sinti, age 19, dropped out of school in 7th grade, then attended a vocational school, left because of expulsion from school for absenteeism.

⁸¹ D.M., female, Roma, mid-20's, see Footnote 25

⁸² A.N., male, Sinti, age 21, see Footnote 18.

*really bad. And I've kept that attitude, too. Since then, I've always said I was of Spanish ancestry or Hungarian ancestry, and that's how it is to this day.*⁸³

Thus the most common strategy for dealing with their own ethnicity in the majority population appears to be handling it on the basis of the context and the situation. More than half of the interviewees do not deny their ethnicity when an inquiry is made, but show great flexibility when deciding whether they will own up to their ethnicity. This depends on the context and on the discrimination expected as a result. For example, when the interviewee is looking for a job and a place to live, ethnicity is more likely to be concealed, while in the music industry, it is acknowledged. Moreover, "outing" is also linked to the individual's own state of mind at the moment: Some interviewees say they identify themselves as Sinto or Roma when they feel strong enough to deal constructively with the anticipated reaction. In the case of other interviewees, this strategy also includes claiming a different ethnic origin, depending on the context and their personal state of mind.

*"When I go shopping and a total stranger just looks at me and asks me right out of the blue, 'What are you?' and I already can see from the face that it's somehow an insolent question, and I don't want to ill-treat this person and I say, 'Don't you see that I'm German? What are you?' And when I see such people, where I don't want to quarrel, people who are simply so stupid and rude and outrageous, then I just don't feel like [explaining] it, it's a waste of time."*⁸⁴

*"In business life, I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm a Roma. Because people get a prejudice. Anyway, it's known [that I'm a Roma] where I live, and it's known in the case of my brothers, too, it's not a problem. But why should I noise it around? I'd rather not."*⁸⁵

"(...) mostly, let's say, my wife is a little bit blond, I'd send her first if there were an apartment to be rented or something, so that people don't even see me at first, and later, after the contract, then (...)." ⁸⁶

⁸³ The "point in time" mentioned here was the ethnic discrimination experienced in school. K.E., female, Sinti, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

⁸⁴ H.J., female, Roma, age 32, obtained advanced technical certificate through evening classes, active as a volunteer in the Sozial- und Bildungsverein für Sinti und Roma.

⁸⁵ T.W., male, Roma, around 45 years old, see Footnote 1.

⁸⁶ G.G., male, Sinti, age 37, see Footnote 16.

“They can’t, for example, just put me in any occupational slot.”

K.K., male, Sinti, age 21

K.K. was born in Austria, but grew up in Germany, living with his grandfather and parents; he was their eldest son. Because there was always someone at home, he did not go to kindergarten. As the only Sinto in the *Grundschule*, he was insulted, called a “Gypsy,” and baited. Then, at the next school level, he kept silent about being a Sinto and presented himself as an Austrian. In 8th grade, when disparaging remarks about “Gypsies” were made in his presence, he acknowledged his ethnic identity. That changed nothing regarding his relationship with teachers and fellow students. His memories of his school years are primarily positive. Even at the *Grundschule*, there was a female teacher with whom K.K. had an especially good relationship, and at the *Hauptschule* level there was a male teacher. There were other teachers, however, with whom he frequently clashed: *“I wasn’t their favorite student, let’s put it that way.”*

He usually did not need help with respect to school, but if necessary he could ask his parents or his grandfather. His mother went to school until 7th grade, and his father has a *Hauptschule* certificate and now deals in jewelry and textiles. His mother is a housewife. Several family members are quite musical, and he himself prefers to play soccer.

For some period of time, the family quite often went on mission trips. After finishing *Hauptschule*, when he began vocational training as an office administrator, the family discontinued these trips. *“After 2002, we didn’t go away anymore, because I started my apprenticeship and my parents stayed here.”* In vocational training, too, he kept silent about his ethnic identity, to be on the safe side. *“Because when a Sinto is working there, it’s never as good. No matter what a Sinto does, it’s always bad, however well he does it.”*

K.K. married at the age of 19, and he and his wife moved into an apartment of their own. They have one child. In his residential area, he sees himself as repeatedly subject to prejudice and discrimination. *“And here, again, things really got going with regard to prejudice and discrimination and everything associated with it. Here on my street and in my building, they know that I’m a Sinto. Shortly afterward my car was demolished, mirror gone, Mercedes star ripped off, the side torn open, attempted burglary, what else can I think of? Scraped in front, on the side, anyway, they really took my car completely apart.”*

After his apprenticeship, he started looking for a job as an office administrator, but has found no work yet and has been dependent on unemployment benefits for a year. In the administrative offices, his origin is not known. Because K.K. has completed an apprenticeship, however, he can circulate there with confidence. *“And because I’ve completed my apprenticeship, you know, I get a little preferential treatment there, I must honestly say, better than the people who don’t have anything to show. That’s what I hear in my surroundings or my family, whatever, that the others get different treatment. They can’t, for example, just put me in any occupational slot or give me a 1-euro job, whatever they want, that is, the job has to be appropriate for my qualifications. The rest is beneath my qualification level, because I’ve certainly finished and completed everything.”*

2.5. Story-Telling in the Family

This category emerged from the questions about narrative traditions within the family. On one hand, the intent of the questions was to bring to light the cultural traditions of the Sinti and Roma, such as children's songs, stories, and fairy tales. On the other hand, there was a wish to examine the presence in family life of stories of the family's persecution. In this context, however, various personal ways of dealing with the National Socialist persecution of the Sinti and Roma also could be ascertained.

2.5.1. Intrafamilial Narrative Traditions

In response to the question about narrative traditions within the family, such as children's stories and fairy tales or even songs, about half of those interviewed said that they are unaware of any, or remember them only in fragmentary form. The other half of the interviewees are familiar with them. Very few of these stories are told, however, although the interviewers encouraged their telling in the interviews. The stories, whose key points were presented by some interviewees, are very often narratives passed down in the family in which fiction and reality are intermingled. Mostly they concern events from the family's own life that already lie several generations in the past and have developed a dynamic of their own in the familial narrative setting.

It is striking that in this interview context, around one-third of the respondents talk about the National Socialist persecution and the murder of family members, in some cases in great detail and in lengthy narrative sequences. These narratives are not fictional in nature. Quite frequently, when answering questions about Sinti stories, the interviewees started out by recalling and also telling such a story, but then the family stories of persecution came to the fore. All those interviewed have been affected, either directly or as a family, by the National Socialist persecution.

"Well, okay, there are some, for example, when my grandfather talked about his times, when he was still at the parties, he was an actor, you know, then he always laughed, always grinned, that was his life. Then when he told how wonderful it all was, when the family was together in earlier days, when they all were still alive, his siblings, his parents, that was really something special. And then we thought about how many relatives we lost, how many good, interesting people we never knew. He also talked a lot about his brother, who was very strong, a very strong man, and

*a lot about his father, too, who did survive the concentration camp, but then died after all. There's a lack of descendants. My father is the oldest of four sons, of my grandfather's sons, that is, and then we also had an uncle, practically my grandfather's brother, and he was sterilized, he had no children of his own, and so we have practically no kin on his side, they never materialized at all. And really a lot of my grandfather's siblings died in the concentration camps, and there are no more descendants.*⁸⁷

*"Well, I can tell you the whole story about my aunt, my great-aunt. She has often told how she, along with my grandma and with her mother, these three women, that is, the old mother and her two daughters, still young daughters at that time, and they were sent to the concentration camp, to Auschwitz. And there stood Josef Mengele, the doctor, the terrible doctor, in front of the three, that is, they stood in a row, all women, and then Mengele pointed right and left, right was life and left was death, yes. And then he made his decision based on appearance. And there came my great-aunt, she was a big woman, and healthy and young, and he more or less waved her to the life side, to the right. My grandma, she was a little slighter, he also waved her through to the life side, and then came her mother, that is, my great-grandmother. And then he waved to the left, but she was clever, she knew that left meant death. And so she tore her neckline, her blouse, right off, and to say it with all due respect, she showed her breasts, lifted up her breasts and displayed them and shouted, 'I can work for the German fatherland, Heil Hitler, I want to work for my Führer,' she shouted (interviewee laughs), and so Mengele was flabbergasted, and then he said 'to the right,' and she went to the life side. And all three of them came out alive, out of Auschwitz. All three survived."*⁸⁸

"Yes, my great-granddad was in a concentration camp. Now that's a sad story. He had to run around a table for days, for days on end, without eating and drinking, they had to run around the table, which had food on top. There was meat, sausage, drinks, and bread, cut into little cubes. And my father's grandfather took a piece and put it in his mouth and wanted to save it for his son, and so he was beaten to death. With a club, only because he put a piece of bread in his mouth. And for that, he was clobbered, beaten to death." *[Fehlt hier eine Anmerkung?]*

Here the fictional stories and tall tales that belong to family tradition and are repeatedly passed down as part of the general cultural heritage of the minority intermingle with the histories of persecution actually experienced by family members. This dominance was present primarily in

⁸⁷ E.F., male, Sinti, age 31, see Footnote 35.

⁸⁸ T.W., male, Roma, around 45 years old, see Footnote 1.

the conversations with interviewees from the third generation. One could conjecture that gradually, the culturally transmitted stories and songs were displaced or overlaid by the memory--still intensely alive--of the persecution, physical and mental torture, and death of relatives. This generational development may be most distinct in the youngest generation.

The persecution and murder of family members are present in family narratives of more than two-thirds of the interviewees. In some cases, the stories are not told specifically, but the topic is present nevertheless; in other cases, the stories are related weekly and thus are part of everyday family life. These family narratives are passed on from one generation to the next, and with various intentions. Sometimes there is a desire for the suffering of relatives not to be forgotten; at other times, the following generation is encouraged to pay close attention to social developments.

*"So I can't really tell you much now, because my grandfather and all the others just really didn't want to talk about it with us. Actually, all they did was warn us about all that. All that happened. Because they thought we really couldn't imagine that such things would be possible at all. (...) So my grandfather said it actually wasn't anything different from what the present time is, too, that it didn't start out any differently at all, that it also began with nothing more than attacks and with this and with that and that, actually the beginnings were exactly the same as everywhere today, when you see the attacks now, whatever the neo-Nazis or skinheads or whatever are doing, he says that started off just the same way at the outset."*⁸⁹

A man from the third generation, whose parents were affected by the persecution, associates these experiences with family identity or ethnic identity.

*"Today? Today it plays a role only to the extent that I remind my children, every now and then, to keep them from forgetting who they are, where they come from, what happened at one time, and that they must not forget it. It has nothing to do with racism toward the Germans or anything else, I just want them to be conscious of it, so that they simply remember what their origin was."*⁹⁰

⁸⁹ G.G., male, Sinti, age 37, see Footnote 16.

⁹⁰ B.F., male, Sinti, age 57, see Footnote 13.

2.5.2. Dealing with Family Experiences of Trauma

The way of handling the traumatic experiences of family members and the narratives passed down by those concerned—both those directly affected and those of the subsequent generations—is very diverse and complex. Here, the interviews can provide an initial glimpse. In the following material, an attempt is made to point out trends.

Among the 30 interviewees, there were four who themselves were victims of National Socialist persecution. In these cases, the entire interview is dominated by their experiences under the National Socialist dictatorship. Education is barely discussed here, first, because these people for the most part were unable to attend school, but were on the run or had already been deported to a concentration camp. Second, because it was difficult for the interviewers to pursue the subject of education in the conversation, as the experiences from the era of National Socialism kept coming to the fore and governed the narratives. Individual strategies of coping become evident here, such as devotion to religious faith. Further, it becomes apparent that from the standpoint of those affected, there is virtually no acknowledgement of their suffering by the majority population and the Federal Republic of Germany. Thus, two interviewees repeatedly emphasize that their narratives are truthful. An older woman, who survived flight and several concentration camps, welcomes the construction of the monument in Berlin, but thinks that the members of the minority themselves have to finance it, and regrets that she is unable to contribute any money.

Among the interviewees from the second generation, too, one sees various individual ways of handling the family and collective history of persecution. Two distinct approaches are discernible here.

Several of the interviewees report that they take an offensive approach to dealing with the subject of persecution. They attempt to consciously come to grips with it, visit memorial sites, for example, gather information about them, give talks on the subject themselves, and so forth. Others avoid the topic. They make no mention of the persecutions, and they turn off the television when relevant documentary reports are presented. About one-third of the interviewees fall into this category.

The ways of handling the memory of the history of persecution and coming to terms with National Socialism point to the existence of a collective trauma. Here is one example from an

interview with a Sintizza, who states, despite great emotional strain, that this subject matter does not move her emotionally:

“So, sometimes my grandma did tell me how bad it was. And she herself said, when she was still alive, that if she knew that this time was going to come back, then she would rather kill us beforehand, because it was just so bad, (...) but nowadays, personally (...) I haven’t tried to come to terms with it now (...), somehow it doesn’t move me emotionally.”⁹¹

Regardless of their individual handling of the collective trauma, all the generations express intense emotional dismay when this topic is under discussion, and not infrequently they voice rage, hatred, and fear as well. That reaction is not observable to such an extent with respect to experiences in the educational institutions.

“Yes, but it’s a little bit prettified, but the stories of that kind are pretty much alike among the Sinti, I think. And the camp stories that you hear told and that make you very weepy, because then, later on once you’re grown up and have gone to a concentration camp and looked at this concentration camp in person, you may have seen it in photos or on TV or in film materials, but when you’ve been there yourself and then call to mind the stories your father or mother told, then you can, yes, there are times when you feel hatred for the Germans. The hatred grows until you’ve left the concentration camp and are back on the autobahn, and after an hour it should die down again, because you’re under such emotional strain as a result of what happened in the war, and not only to Sinti, just to people in general. And I think it’s very emotional, and these stories do stick in your mind, yes.”⁹²

“Yes, and I then I wasn’t allowed to keep on going to the vocational school, because the time of the concentration camps had already started.”

B.L., female, Sinti, age 82

She lived with her parents and seven brothers and sisters in a mobile home at a trailer park in a large city in western Germany. Her mother was a housewife, her father a musician. One brother was serving in the Wehrmacht. B.L. attended *Volksschule* [elementary school, now known as *Grundschule*] and then entered the vocational school. At this time, when she was around 14, she was deported to the Ravensbrück concentration camp. *“Yes, and I then I wasn’t allowed to keep on going to the vocational school, because the time of the concentration camps had already started.”* She was in four different concentration camps. Out of her family, one brother and one sister, seriously ill, survived. All the other family members—her parents and five siblings—were murdered in Auschwitz and Dachau.

⁹¹ K.E., female, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

⁹² B.F., male, Sinti, age 57, see Footnote 13.

She associates her time at school with exclusively positive memories. B.L. had no problems at all caused by her ethnic origin, and got along well with her classmates and teachers. In particular, she has good memories of her homeroom teacher, Mr. S., who did all he could for her and her family and tried to support and protect them. He even campaigned for her father's release from the concentration camp. *"And he knew that my father was in the concentration camp. And then he went there, wrote a letter, saying that my father should be released after all. (...) And I already had a bad leg. Then he came there and brought ointment to me."*

She describes the deportation of her entire family as having been arranged under the direction of the police. She herself was interned at the police station for weeks before being deported to Ravensbrück. *"And so I had to stay at the station for six weeks more, until the transport came. (...) And in the meantime, my brother was already at the station the whole time."* Her experiences during the years in the concentration camps understandably take up a great deal of space in the interview. *"I could write a book now, but the book wouldn't be suitable at all, it would be far too much."* Again and again, she describes circumstances and chance occurrences that saved her life, which she always assesses against the background of her religious faith. *"My God was with me again there."* Finally, she managed to escape while on one of the forced marches.

Ever since, her life has been influenced by the traumatic experiences. She deliberately watches documentaries or films that address this era, in the hope of seeing members of her family. *"I watch that quite frequently. I have to look at it. (...) Then I always think, maybe I'll see my brothers and sisters one day, or I'll see my mother or father."*

In 1945, B.L. met her husband, also a persecuted Sinto, married, and had seven children, five of whom are still alive. She has many grandchildren now. She attached great importance to the education of her children. *"Very, very great. That's how it has to be, we're living in different times now, you know. It's very important for the children to go to school."* In her late forties, through one of her daughters-in-law, she came into contact with the Jehovah's Witnesses. Today the religious community and its beliefs are a mainstay and a point of reference in her life.

2.6. Experiences in the Majority Society

The interviews also included questions about the relationship between the minority and the majority outside the setting of educational institutions. Among the topics addressed were acceptance within the residential neighborhood, at work, in associations, and elsewhere, and experiences involving discrimination. The interviewers also asked how the interviewees evaluated the Federal German culture of commemoration, especially the memorial now being built in Berlin to commemorate the European Sinti and Roma who were murdered.

2.6.1. Experiences of Social Discrimination

Here, too, a heterogeneous picture results, in which a few trends nonetheless can be discerned. First, it is striking that in the case of around one-third of the interviewees, the minority-majority relationship dominates the interview. In these conversations, the interviewees repeatedly address their experiences with the majority society; this holds true for almost every topic raised, even when the question is not necessarily pointed in that direction. These interviewees see every area of their life as being determined by the conflict with the majority society. Some repeatedly experience themselves as victims; some see themselves as obligated to invalidate antiziganistic stereotypes through the life they themselves lead; and others use involvement in civil rights as a means of standing up for the rights of the minority.

Various forms of discrimination are an important topic for more than two-thirds of those interviewed. It is striking that “discrimination” is mostly interpreted as the active and overt form, such as refusal to accept a tenant, termination of an employment contract, and the like. The subtler forms of discrimination, such as “different treatment,” questioning or hostile glances, and being ignored or disregarded, are more apt to be mentioned peripherally in the interviews, and often in the context of other questions.

More than two-thirds report experiences of discrimination involving members of the majority society. It is noticeable that here too, as in the case of discrimination experienced in school, the majority are males. Correspondingly, several of the interviewees—in this case, mostly females—state that they have had few or no negative encounters with members of the majority population.

More than one-third of the respondents report that they have experienced discrimination in almost every area of life in which they have contact with the majority population: at school, during training, in working life, when seeking employment, when looking for a house or apartment, in associations and clubs, at highway rest stops, at camping sites, and in interpersonal relationships.⁹³ Here too, the majority are men.

“Negative, exactly. Because they think a Gypsy cheats everybody and does this and that, so when you sell them something, they say, ‘You wouldn’t be a Gypsy, would you,’ meaning that I’m not going to sell them anything bad now. So, I have customers, I’ve also had customers,

⁹³ Several men report that love relationships with non-Sinti women were broken off when their ethnic origin became known. In some cases, these women were under heavy pressure from their families to end the relationship.

*who have bought things on many occasions for years, and still, time and time again, the same words. Until one day it finally made me mad, and then I said, ‘Yes, I am a Gypsy, I’m a real Sinto.’ And at the time he looked at me in a horrified way, and the next time he didn’t buy anything. Yes, the next time he didn’t buy anything, but formerly had been a satisfied customer for years.*⁹⁴

*“And then I got a dismissal notice. Of course, she didn’t say to me, I fired you because you’re a Sintizza, but because the store has disappointing sales, and some such excuses, which didn’t apply at all, only now I couldn’t prove why she threw me out.”*⁹⁵

By contrast, gender distribution is balanced with regard to the topic of subtle, covert discrimination. Around one-third of the interviewees—men and women in equal measure—feel affected by such discrimination.⁹⁶ In this context, the interviewees often point to universal or religious values that refer to the equality of all human beings.

*“What’s bad for me? The way they treat you, for example. That is, some are very unfriendly, very disagreeable, and some ignore you or something. So, some also think that you’re not even there, although you’re right there. Some, I don’t know, are just so strange. I mean, we’re human beings, too. We’re treated just like completely normal human beings, too, and that’s also what I want, I want them to respect me for what I am.”*⁹⁷

About two-thirds of the interviewees assume that the members of the majority population have views of the minority that range from negative to hostile. Several, however, also describe a growing acceptance on the part of the majority population, and more than two-thirds say that they maintain friendships with non-Sinti. In the free-church communities in particular, many of the interviewees feel accepted and well-integrated, in accordance with the belief that all men are created equal.

“Well, they’ve just never disappointed me, they’re just always there when you need them. They’re just people who are simply neutral, and also people who understand. So there are, now there’s a friend of mine, she’s a German, for example, just a Jehovah’s Witness, and she just knows, too, that we’re Sinti, but it doesn’t matter a bit to her whether we’re Sinti, or Russians,

⁹⁴ G.G., male, Sinti, age 37, see Footnote 16.

⁹⁵ K.E., female, Sinti, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

⁹⁶ Within the scope of this analysis, no conclusion can be drawn regarding these distinctive gender-related features, as in the case of discrimination experienced in school, where males also are in a majority.

⁹⁷ L.O., female, Sinti, age 20, see Footnote 41.

*it's all the same to her. What counts for her is the human being, and what that human being is like, and you just rarely meet such people in life.*⁹⁸

2.6.2. Assessment of the Culture of Commemoration in the Federal Republic of Germany

Commemorative events and memorial sites, particularly the memorial in Berlin, are greatly welcomed by almost all the respondents. For them, the Berlin memorial is a place for remembrance of the victims and simultaneously a form of recognition of the persecution and murder of the Sinti and Roma. At the same time, about half of the interviewees see a need for increased educational work with regard to the attempted genocide of the Sinti and Roma. In this context, it is also to be noted that about one-third of the interviewees contrast their persecution with that of the Jews, whose history, in the respondents' opinion, is well known and well handled in the general public in the FRG, whereas they do not perceive that as true of the National Socialist persecution of the Sinti and Roma.

The culture of memorialization in the FRG is perceived as positive, on the whole, by a majority of the interviewees, but the political handling of neofascism is criticized by almost all of them. Also, when this topic is under discussion, the interviewees often express feelings such as rage, grief, and hatred, in addition to roused anxieties.

"I made a deal with God."

L.H., female, Roma, age 32

This 32-year-old Roma woman attended neither kindergarten nor the regular school. It is not clear how her family managed to avoid complying with Germany's compulsory school attendance law. She herself describes it as follows: *"(...) anyway, when I was of school age, mind you, it seemed that nobody worried about it somehow. So they neglected to apply the school requirement in my case, back then."* She was a highly curious child, eager to learn, and ultimately taught herself to read and write. She also taught herself English with the help of dictionaries. Her educational media were books, magazines, and television. When she was a young woman in her early twenties, an event held by a state association of German Sinti and Roma triggered her commitment to her own educational path. In evening classes, she first completed the *Hauptschule* requirements, then obtained her *Realschule* certificate, and finally earned her *Fachhochschulreife*.

Neither of her parents attended school, and both are illiterate on account of great fears on the part of her grandparents. *"So, my grandparents were deported and persecuted back then, you know. And because of these earlier fears, my grandparents didn't take my parents, that is, effectively my mother, to school. Out of fear that they might disappear somehow, all of a sud-*

⁹⁸ K.E., female, Sinti, between 30 and 40 years old, see Footnote 40.

den. So my mother never went to school, and the same was true in my father's case, his parents had the same fear, because they were persecuted too, you see."

L.H. has not completed a vocational training program and is presently unemployed, though she works as a volunteer. For one thing, she has contacts with every state association for German Sinti and Roma, and for another, she has cofounded an educational and social association for Sinti and Roma and is a volunteer there.

In the interview, she describes the motivation for her unusual educational path: In addition to her personal drive to educate herself and her great thirst for knowledge in childhood, it was the repeated conflict with the majority society that motivated her. The lack of education, especially of formal educational qualifications, set her significantly apart from the majority society. Knowledge and educational qualifications create the gulf that separates the minority from the majority. She wanted to overcome this gulf. She was curious about what awaited her on the "other side." A further motivation was her wish to invalidate the common antiziganistic prejudices. *"I was always curious, wondering what they were learning, what the majority population was learning, what was going on in the heads of those people, why they thought we were uncivilized. I asked, Are we really the way these researchers, race researchers, have said: They are receptive only up to the twelfth year of life and then it's all over, you can't teach them anything else. (...) For me that was, that was such a terrible statement in my opinion that I didn't want to let it stand."*

In addition, however, L.H. is also a woman who was not willing to take on, unquestioned, the classical female role of wife, housewife, and mother. Therefore, starting a family at an early age was out of the question for her; her educational path was her first priority for the time being.

Besides the family lack of interest she portrays with regard to her regular school attendance, however, the travel of the family could also be a reason for her failure to attend. She speaks very positively of traveling during her childhood—a happy childhood, in which the children were very protected on the one hand, but on the other could also enjoy many liberties, and in which, above all, the entire family was together. In the context of her portrayals with regard to school attendance by her parents and grandparents, however, it also becomes clear that the family's experiences under National Socialism could be responsible for the lack of family involvement in her own school attendance. It is amazing that she herself does not see this connection, but it dovetails with her overall attitude of declining to see herself as a victim.

Also interesting is her assessment of her own educational level and educational trajectory. Again and again in the interview, she emphasizes that it has not made her a "better human being" and that she does not look down on people who are illiterate. But she also makes it quite clear that she considers education for Sinti and Roma indispensable, and advocates a "normal educational path" for the children of the minority from the outset: kindergarten, school, and training.

L.H. is placing her own successful educational career entirely in the "service of her own people" and regards this as more important than her previous career aspirations.

"I made, I made a deal with God. (...) 'God,' I prayed, 'if you help me get educational qualifications, then I'll use my knowledge for my people.' And he did. He helped me get through the schools successfully, and since then I've used my knowledge to help my people."

3. Summary

The qualitative analysis of the 30 interviews reveals the heterogeneity of the educational paths in the German Sinti and Roma minority. Nevertheless, the finding of a serious educational plight with regard to formal educational qualifications is confirmed.⁹⁹ This grave situation appears to be due to multiple factors. First, there are intrafamilial circumstances that hamper formal educational careers, and second, there are institutional and social conditions that thwart the educational careers of Sinti and Roma.

From the family and individual standpoint, instruction of the children within the family was, and in some cases still is, viewed as sufficient. But even if there is great interest in formal qualifications for the children, families frequently are unable to provide adequate support because of their own educational deficits. Moreover, in many cases, learning to read and write was, and still is, seen as sufficient formal education, and this attitude means that a focus on further qualifications and training programs is not ordinarily encountered. Traumas experienced by family members as a result of persecution under National Socialism, too, have a considerable influence on the minority's relationship to the school as an institution: For one thing, the parents' and grandparents' generations can, in some cases, provide little active support for school attendance, because they themselves, owing to the persecution, could not attend school; for another, they continue to fear for their own children when the latter circulate in the majority population.

Unquestionably, a tendency toward increasing focus on formal qualifications is discernible within the minority. Nevertheless, on account of the repeatedly reproduced educational deficits, the support given the children by their parents or other close family members continues to be inadequate. In this connection, one must also take into account the consequences of collective trauma, which distance the minority from the majority and its institutions.

As yet, there is little evidence of education as self-education in the minority. Educational ambitions are based either on the need to strengthen one's sense of self-worth vis-à-vis the majority or on the need for financial security, or both. Thus, education does become a contributing factor in emancipation, though not primarily for the individual him/herself, but rather for the individual as member of a minority.

⁹⁹ See the quantitative evaluation of the 261 interviews by Michael Klein.

Kindergarten and school are decisive places for the first, formative experiences of German Sinti and Roma with the majority society and thus for their educational histories as well. To this extent, it is especially serious when they encounter predominantly antiziganistic hostility and prejudice here, or are even confronted with physical assaults on the part of the student body, as well as the teaching staff. The intensity and openness of this discrimination seem to have diminished over the course of time, and in the recent past and at the present time, the accounts seem to point instead to more subtle forms of discrimination, such as structures of prejudice and the different treatment they produce. Nevertheless, the large number of examples from the interviews indicates that antiziganistic stereotypes persist tenaciously throughout the generations, and that widespread antiziganism can be assumed to exist in the German majority society. Further, the unreflecting application of common “Gypsy” clichés to the German Sinti and Roma minority indicates that there is little evidence of any awareness of their history and everyday realities among the members of the majority population.

To a considerable extent, supportive, dedicated teachers can exert a positive influence on the educational careers of Sinti or Roma students. In addition to assistance with school-related matters, support also entails protection from, and intervention in, antiziganistic hostility and abuse by fellow students. In this way, those who are labeled as problem students can be enabled to phase out of that role. The positive experiences of those who attended a *Förderschule* also confirm the decisive role played in some cases by approachable, sensitive, teachers who provide individual assistance and thus contribute to successful educational trajectories.

As the outcome of this study indicates, an essential basis for improvement of the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma appears to be creation of mutual trust and additional enlightenment and sensitization of the majority society. For many Sinti and Roma, educational institutions are not yet places of trust and safety for their children. Here, it is primarily the educational institutions that must step up to the plate. At school and during vocational training as well, the reaction to antiziganism must be sensitive and consistent. Over and above that, Sinti and Roma families need go-to persons who help them close the gap between the minority and the school as a public institution, and between the minority and education in the sense of an education of the self.

Education can become a factor in the emancipation of the German Sinti and Roma only when the educational process no longer takes place solely against the background of the attributions

of the majority society. Instead, education must take into account the individual in his or her totality.

The creation of trust, however, requires action on the part of all those concerned. It is encouraging to see that there are Sinti or Roma who actively take charge of their own educational path and refuse to accept an educational disparity for themselves and their children. These men and women are valuable role models, for they reveal paths toward matter-of-course, respectful interaction between minority and majority.

Ten Findings of the Educational Study and Recommendations

Daniel Strauss

An estimated 80,000 to 120,000 Sinti and Roma with German nationality live in Germany today. Their presence in the German-speaking world dates back to the fifteenth century. In 1997 they were recognized as a national minority. Nonetheless, to date there are no studies that deal with the everyday realities of the Sinti and Roma as they themselves experience, feel, and interpret them.

And even worse: The expulsions from schools and terminations of educational programs that had been brought about by the National Socialists were public knowledge ever since the 1950s, thanks to the *Bundesentschädigungsgesetz*, or West German Federal Indemnification Law, yet they had no consequences with regard to future educational options for the minority. In 1982, in the course of the emergent civil rights movement, Andreas Hundsatz's study *Soziale Situation der Sinti in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Social Situation of the Sinti in the Federal Republic of Germany], conducted on behalf of the Federal Ministry for Youth, Family, and Health, was published. It was preceded by a study by the same author in 1980, dealing with school-related behavioral characteristics of Sinti and Roma children.¹ It presented alarming findings of a desolate educational situation among Sinti and Roma. Appropriate educational policy measures, however, utterly failed to materialize. They would have been as necessary then as they remain today.

Demands by the Council of Europe for Reliable Data on the Educational Situation

Since 2002 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has criticized Germany's lack of meaningful data on the general circumstances and educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma. Since that time, the Council of Europe has called for improved knowledge of the

¹ Andreas Hundsatz, *Zigeunerkinder. Eine sozialpsychologische Untersuchung schulrelevanter Merkmale* [Gypsy Children: A Socio-Psychological Study of School-Related Characteristics], Frankfurt a.M., 1980.

realities of their life and education, so that suitable action can be taken to ensure effective promotion of full and actual equality for this national minority.²

The EU Lays the Groundwork for Effective Training and Access to Career Possibilities

In April 2011 the EU demanded that its member countries adopt national strategies for integration of the Roma by 2020, and at the same time emphasized the important role of education.

“Therefore we must urgently invest in the education of the Roma children and thus enable them to enter the labor market successfully later on.”³

The aim is to ensure that all Sinti and Roma children/youths have access to nondiscriminatory, high-quality education, vocational training, and unrestricted access to the job market.

Goal and Methods

The guiding theme of the present study was, from the perspective of the minority, to proactively build directly on the European groundwork, close the data gaps, and highlight the need for action with regard to educational policy.

In this way, it was also possible to bridge the “great divide” caused by history “between the fields of science on the one hand and the members of the Sinti and Roma.”

Scientific methods were used to describe, examine, and interpret the everyday realities from a subjective perspective.

In the present documentation and research project, which was initiated and carried out between 2007 and 2011 by RomnoKher, A Center for Culture, Education, and Antiziganism Research in

² See Statement of the Federal Republic of Germany with Regard to the Statement of the Advisory Committee on the Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in the Federal Republic of Germany; in particular, Art. 4, No. 75, and Art. 6, No. 80, Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2002.

http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Themen/MigrationIntegration/NationaleMinderheiten/Rahmen_uebereinkommen_des_Euoparates_zim_id_23218_de.pdf?blob=publicationFile (accessed on April 18, 2011)

³ Note from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions. EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020; KOM(2011) 173 final and absolute, Brussels, April 5, 2011:2.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0173:FIN:DE:PDF> (accessed on April 20, 2011).

Mannheim, 275 German Sinti and Roma from three generations, predominantly in western Germany, were questioned about their educational situation. For this purpose, quantifiable data were gathered and biographical interviews were conducted. This material was used to describe and interpret developments and experiences relating to personal, generational, and family history with regard to the significance of successful/failed schooling, along with relationships to the majority society, to discrimination, and to intergenerational transmission of traumatic events resulting from the National Socialist policy of extermination.

For the survey, 14 Sinti and Roma agreed to serve as interviewers. In workshops and seminars, they were familiarized with interviewing techniques by researchers, and 275 interviews (of which 261 were included in the analysis) were conducted in 35 widely distributed cities/places. Somewhat more than half of the interviewees are women. More than 40.61% of the interviewees are between the ages of 14 and 25, 42.91% are in the 26-50 age group, and 16.48% are 51 and older. Records, audio files, and transcripts for each interview are available.

The results were interpreted by education researchers, historians, political scientists, educators, sociologists, and civil rights activists from the minority.

To include the experiences and skills of the minority organizations, the working group "Education for Sinti and Roma" was established at the RomnoKher. Represented in this working group are seven state associations of Sinti and Roma, two cultural centers that are active nationwide, and two regional information centers. Ms. Petra Rosenberg of the Berlin-Brandenburg Association of German Sinti and Roma was chosen to head the working group for two years.

Representativeness of Sample

If one assumes the total number of Sinti and Roma in Germany to be 100,000, then the sampling ratio was 1:383. The precise figures for the "base" of Sinti and Roma in Germany, in sociological terms, are not known, of course, so that one cannot speak of a representative survey in the strict sense. But the interviews are so widely spread according to social position, gender, age, residential area, and educational situation and so diverse that one can assume with a high degree of plausibility that even if a representative survey were conducted, the image of the minority portrayed here would be only slightly altered (see A. von Plato).

The project on the educational situation of the German Sinti and Roma can be regarded as a pioneering feat in every respect: first, because of the findings of this research on their life situation in general, and on their educational situation or the relationship of this minority to the majority society in particular; second, because of the new avenues that become apparent by virtue of the collaboration of Sinti and Roma as participants in research.

The study establishes a basis for (educational) policy, as well as for the representatives of the Sinti and Roma (see A. von Plato).

Ten Highlighted Findings of the Study

(1) 94.64% use the terms “Sinti” or “Roma” to describe themselves.

All the people interviewed, with the exception of one individual in the 30 interviews that were qualitatively analyzed, describe themselves as “Sinti” or “Roma.” The only interviewee who describes herself as a “Gypsy” gives a negative connotation to this term: *“I grew up with it and by now I’ve also come to accept that they call me that. (...) I’m a Gypsy, that’s just how it is, and one has to live with that.”* (Sintizza, age 19)

Some of the individuals interviewed spoke of negative experiences that resulted from their ethnicity becoming known, experiences so profound that they no longer reveal themselves as being Sinti or Roma at all, except within the minority. Even when asked specifically about their ethnicity, they deny it and claim a different ethnic origin, such as India or Spain (see J. Schuch/U. Rüchel).

There is great variation, however, in the intensity of the feeling of discrimination when the term “Gypsy” is applied:

- 6.9% allow this term to be applied to them *with qualifications*, if it is obvious that no discriminatory labeling was intended
- 44.44%, depending on the situation, do not admit that they are Sinti or Roma, in order to avoid discrimination
- 20.69% do not acknowledge during the exercise of their occupation that they are Sinti or Roma, in order to avoid discrimination
- 16.09% do not acknowledge when looking for work that they are Sinti or Roma, in order to avoid discrimination (see M. Klein)

(2) Generally, traumatic experiences become apparent. They are transmitted intergenerationally in the family and are discernible even in the third generation of the 14- to 25-year-olds.

Evident in this context are the intergenerational effects of the history of persecution of the Sinti and Roma, also and most notably in connection with the extermination policy of the National

Socialist era. Thus, deep fears and distrust within the family are central themes in the context of the interviewees' school attendance or that of their parents and grandparents.

The ways of dealing with memories of the history of persecution and the ways of coming to terms with the National Socialist past, both in the families and individually, point to a collective trauma (J. Schuch/U. Rüchel).

Whenever "stories from (family) history" are told, these are tales of suffering from the period of Nazi persecution. Other stories or songs, narratives, and fairy tales, with which other German children—at least, those from middle-class families—grow up, apparently do not exist (anymore) among the Sinti and Roma.

In a generational comparison, an evident correlation is revealed between the school attendance of the parents or grandparents and the success in school of the children. The better educated the parents and grandparents were, the greater was the children's success in school (see A. von Plato).

(3) 81.2% have personal experiences of discrimination.

The experiences in school are to a great extent affected by overt and covert discrimination in the form of everyday antiziganistic name-calling and prejudices on the part of individual students. The teachers apparently do not intervene professionally here.

It is alarming that antiziganism obviously is still present, on the part of teachers as well, and is openly articulated in everyday school life.

At the same time, there are individual teachers and schoolmates who act in a supportive way and in some cases have such a motivational effect that they can exert a positive influence on the child's school career (see J. Schuch/U. Rüchel).

- 1.1% furnish *no information* on experiences of discrimination
- 17.6% have *no* experiences of discrimination
- 55.9% feel discriminated against *sometimes*
- 8.4% feel discriminated against *on a regular basis*
- 12.3% feel discriminated against *frequently*

- 4.6% feel discriminated against *very frequently* (see M. Klein)

(4) 53.64% note feelings ranging from “intimidated” to “badly treated to discriminated against” when they have contact with the authorities.

Among the interviewees who mention slight problems or even a “highly problematic” relationship, the responses range from “feel bad” to “feel intimidated,” from “stressed” or “can’t sleep the night before” to “feel intimidated,” “patronized,” “not taken seriously,” “not taken notice of,” “badly treated,” “panicky,” “treated like dirt,” “feel discriminated against,” or the like (see M. Klein).

- 6.13% furnish *no information* regarding their feelings when engaging in contact with the authorities
- 40.23% describe their visits with the authorities as “*normal*”
- 13.41% describe their experiences as “*slightly problematic*”
- 40.23% depict their experiences when in contact with the authorities as “*highly problematic*”

(5) Only 18.8% of those interviewed have completed vocational training, in comparison with 83.4% of the majority population in the younger age group.⁴

⁴ Comparison figures for the majority population were taken from: Bildung in Deutschland 2010. Published on behalf of the Permanent Conference of the Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder and the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. http://www.bildungsbericht.de/daten2010/bb_2010.pdf (accessed on April 18, 2011), p. 10; on participation in education, see the data from the 2008 Microcensus, p. 227. <http://www.bildungsbericht.de/zeigen.html?seite=8404> (accessed on April 18, 2011).

(6) 10.7% of those interviewed attended a *Förderschule*, in comparison with 4.9% of all school-children in the majority population.⁵ Broken down by age group, the following interviewees attended a *Förderschule*:

- 7% of those over the age of 50
- 13.4% of those between 26 and 50
- 9.4% of the 14-25 age group (see M. Klein)

(7) 13% of those interviewed attended no school of any kind, in comparison with probably less than 1% in the majority population. At least 44% of the participants have no *Schulabschluss* [school-leaving certificate] of any kind. By comparison, 7.5% of the 15- to 17-year-olds in the majority population have no *Hauptschule* certificate.⁶

Today, regret is emphatically expressed by the vast majority of those who abandoned their own schooling or vocational education or failed, despite efforts in their own right, to attain the level of education they sought.

Furthermore, especially in the third generation, one observes increasing family support for efforts to obtain an education. This support is associated with a higher level of formal education in the parent generation.

Fears and distrust of the majority society and its educational institutions, however, are still present, and the interviewees perceive their own potential for support with regard to the formal education of the children as being very limited (see J. Schuch/U. Rüchel).

Of those interviewed here, the following attended **no** *Grundschule* at all:

- 39.5% of those over 50
- 18.8% of those between 26 and 50
- 9.4% of those between 14 and 25 (see M. Klein)

It can be unambiguously stated that personal commitment to education has demonstrably increased in the second and third generations.

⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

(8) Only 11.5% attended a secondary school of the *Realschule* type. By comparison, in the majority population more than 30% of those in the 14-25 age group graduated from this type of school.⁷

Broken down by age group, these interviewees attended a *Realschule*:

- 4.7% of those over 50
- 13.4% of those between 26 and 50
- 12.3% of those between 14 and 25 (see M. Klein)

(9) Only 6 of 261 interviewees, or 2.3%, attended an academic high school, or *Gymnasium*. In the majority population, a total of 24.4% graduated and thus qualified for university entrance (*Hochschulreife*), while more than 40% of those between 20 and 25 have the higher education entrance qualification.⁸

(10) 45.6% are/were unable to get help with homework from family members.

- 8.4% gave no information about family help with homework
- 46.0% received family help with homework

It is very revealing whenever the interviewees explain why no help with homework is/was provided. Of 93 respondents who listed such reasons, 72 cited the following: “*parents have no formal education of their own*,” “*have only limited schooling myself*,” “*too little formal education*,” “*can neither read nor write*,” or the like. In addition, 18 interviewees expressly mention “*persecution*” or “*ban on school attendance*” in the National Socialist era (see M. Klein).

⁷ Ibid., Table B3-1A, p. 227 (2008 Microcensus).

⁸ Ibid.

Educational Policy Recommendations

Starting Position

- (1) The dismal educational situation with respect to formal education (secondary school and vocational qualifications) attests to the serious failure of the German educational system.
- (2) The study provides valuable information about the causes of failing educational processes. They point to the great importance of informal education in the setting of the family's daily school routine, from kindergarten through youth and adult education.
- (3) Intergenerational traumatization, present-day experiences of discrimination, and lack of opportunities for participation point to an asymmetrical relationship between the minority and the majority, which presents an enormous obstacle to successful education.
- (4) From the intergenerational perspective, a vicious circle becomes evident: a marginalization and non-integration of the German Sinti and Roma that reinforces itself over decades and continues to take place today as well. Antiziganism plays a significant role in this process.

Recommendations

- (1) Against the backdrop of the persecution of the Sinti and Roma under National Socialism and their continuing marginalization and subjection to discrimination, it is vital to configure a forward-looking minority policy in Germany that complies with European standards for the advancement of Sinti and Roma, a policy that does justice to the actual life situations of the Sinti and Roma.
- (2) The key educational policy recommendation is to anchor in German society sustainable structures of validation and participation for Sinti and Roma, in order to initiate and develop successful educational processes with regard to early intervention, education, apprenticeship, and adult education.
- (3) For equality of opportunity for Sinti and Roma, the aspects of antidiscrimination, support during an individual's educational history, and overcoming of the distance between educational institutions and the minority are of cardinal importance, and they must be especially taken into account at all levels of promotion of education.

Therefore we recommend creation of a national action plan, spanning generations, for promotion of education for Sinti and Roma.

- (4) For preparation of this action plan, an educational commission must be established without delay, involving representatives at the federal, *Land*, and local community levels as well as, on an equal footing, representatives of the Sinti and Roma. In addition, academics, educational experts, social initiatives, and actors such as foundations, for example, can become involved.

(5) For the national action plan, resources from federal, *Land*, and local community sources and EU funds should be pooled. Effective mechanisms must be created for that purpose.

The national action plan must include at least the following tasks:

- a) setting up of structural supportive measures at the federal, *Land*, and local levels
- b) development and implementation of targeted supportive measures and programs to achieve real equality for Sinti and Roma
- c) visible commitment of individuals in public life on behalf of the Sinti and Roma
- d) efforts to convince the minority of the benefits of education and bring about an “educational awakening”
- e) individual promotion of education that ties in with the lifeworld, language, and cultural identities of the Sinti and Roma and ensures them equal educational opportunities in the German educational system
- f) adult education programs for Sinti and Roma families, to offset inadequate human capital on the part of parents and enable parents and children to make competent educational decisions
- g) cooperation by the field of educational science and by specialized institutions with educational institutions of the Sinti and Roma

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