

# INTEGRATION NORMS AND REALITIES IN DIVERSE URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS IN GERMANY

## *The impact of different cultural capital*

### Abstract

The article presents results from the German part of an international research project, which studied from 2008 to 2011 the impact of ethnicity on the biographical prospects of urban youth in nine countries of the European Union, and places these findings in the wider framework of research on minority youths and the role of educational experiences in everyday processes of “minoritization”. The focus is set specifically on the ways in which hegemonic discourses of integration and prevalent (negative) assessments of different cultural capital actually “make the differences” and influence adolescents’ perceptions of integration, segregation, and their own societal membership in Germany.

### Keywords

Cultural diversity • immigrants in Germany • minority identity • integration policy • discrimination

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## 1 Introduction

This article sheds light on ways in which ethnic minority youths make sense of their social placement in German society. The empirical data that are presented were collected by a research team under my leadership in two secondary schools of inner Berlin in the frame of an international research collaboration funded by the European Union, EDUMIGROM, i.e. the acronym for “Ethnic Differences in Education and Diverging Prospects for Urban Youth in an Enlarged Europe”.<sup>1</sup>

Placing the question for social identification in the context of school life connects identity and biographical orientations with the experiences of hegemonic norms and collective representations in state institutions. The state school is a place of institutionalized, normative communication, and for young people from immigrant families this has particular meanings: The institutional logic of school entails the conveyance of “patterned expectations” as Parsons put it (1954: 231) *inter alia* between the national majority and (immigrant as well as other) minorities. Adult immigrants are, of course, not exposed to the school system in Germany (albeit having to absolve “integration courses” in a quasi-school situation). They experience the expectations and norms rather in dominant discourses and in interactions with other state agencies and the wider public. Likewise, for their children, school is, of course, just *one* out of many sites where they engage in learning processes regarding the country’s social and political order. Nevertheless, school is *the* state institution which is in charge of assisting the next generation in making its way in society, polity, and economy by providing the needed skills and

competences. It is hence an institution with an exceptional reach and authority to influence the distribution of life chances: School teaches children values and assessment norms, it propagates ways of conflict resolution, and is finally also an important agent to convey the idea of the own polity and of whether and how one may participate in it (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004).

The latter dimension renders special importance for minorities. In a certain sense, they are “the litmus test” for the society’s and for the state institutions’ capacity to cope with the new demands and needs (Werz 2009). The necessity to do so has increased as a result of the recent global changes. Migration, globalization and transnational flows have triggered a growing diversification in many societies (Vertovec 2009). This implies the generation of new constructions of identity, belonging, societal membership, and entitlements. In this vein, the state school system has been affected by a number of changes in Germany in the wake of labor immigration. The post-war immigrations and more particularly the consolidation of the so called guest-workers’ stay since the 1970s implicated German schools as a challenge to cope with increasingly multi-national, multi-lingual, and multi-faith pupilships. One crucial aspect in terms of the social integration of immigrants’ children is the question of what norms and practical possibilities they are made familiar with in the German schools with respect to how the traditional concepts of national cohesion may be understood in such a way that they may include the (meanwhile post-)migrant population.

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Obviously, for reasons of space, the dynamics of integration and segregation cannot be treated in full here. I will, therefore, concentrate on the way in which experienced assessments of the immigrant population's cultural otherness impact the perception of group boundaries among minority ethnic youths. To that end, I will firstly compile the major facts and relevant discourses on ethno-cultural diversity in Germany and shall, secondly, present some features of immigrant minority youth's school performance in the country. Finally, I summarize what we, as a research team,<sup>1</sup> found to be the practical logic of an everyday reproduction of social hierarchies that reveals the imbalance inherent to the hegemonic rhetoric, or better the double-talk, of integration. Practically, a reified concept of cultural differences has continued to inform the everyday constructions of social group boundaries, and, in effect, the lines of imagined "otherness" remain widely unchallenged.

## 2 Facts and discourses on ethno-cultural diversity in Germany

The former "guest-workers" from Southern Europe and Turkey in particular shape the largest minority group in Germany. It is one with a relatively low socio-economic status, and this group predominantly serves as German society's "others" in terms of its (supposedly) traditional cultural habits and, increasingly, of the Islamic religion. Depending on the chosen definition, Germany's immigrant population ranges between 7.3 million (foreigners in terms of formal national citizenship) and 15.3 million people ("with migration background" in the past two generations).<sup>2</sup> The two largest groups are former "guest-workers" and their offspring, and the so called ethnic German immigrants ("resettlers" or "late resettlers") from Central and Eastern Europe, in particular from the former Soviet Union. Among the population of the former "guest-workers" the five main groups (Turks, Italians, Spaniards, Greeks, and Ex-Yugoslavs) make up around 3.2 million persons out of which 1.7 million are Turks. In addition, there are roughly 700,000 former Turkish citizens who acquired German citizenship. Thus, the labor immigrants who came from Turkey and their families make up the largest visible minority group. They are also the most relevant group in terms of public concerns surrounding the compatibility of cultural and religious practices (for more details and data see Ohliger 2008).<sup>3</sup>

Respective public and political discourses are primarily framed in Germany as being an issue of "integration", or rather the assumed *non*-integration of these people. This has changed over time. In the phase of recruitment (the late 1950s to the early 1970s), the Turkish "guest-workers" who came as unskilled, often little educated or even illiterate labor-force were just perceived in economic terms, and "integration" – whatever it may entail – was no frame of reference at all. The intention was to bring in laborers only on a temporary basis and let them rotate, i.e. have regular return migrations and newcomers to replace them – depending on the labor market's needs. However, the "guest-workers" became factual immigrants and even though return migrations have also been taking place in parallel, the distinct immigrant groups have settled and established their own social and economic networks. In the course of this development, the perception of the "guest workers" changed in Germany, too. Their "other" food stalls, tea houses and grocery shops appeared, differences in habits and life-styles came into view and from the late 1970s/early 1980s onwards, the labor immigrants from Turkey have started to represent *cultural* otherness in the

perception of German society. Often, the migrants had come from rural backgrounds into urban industrial environments. With their unintended permanent establishment, questions emerged along the issues of the practical social accommodation needs, e.g. their children's schooling, language and most recently religion.

While the culturalist perception of the Turkish immigrants has always included their different religion (Mannitz & Schiffauer 2004; Schiffauer *et al.* 2004), this dimension seems to have gained importance in the past decade. One could say that there has been an Islamicization of the way in which this minority group is represented in the dominant discourse in Germany (Spielhaus 2006). Increasingly, for instance, the target group for improving participation – regularly coined as "integration" – is not addressed as being a particular *ethnic* group, or an immigrant group of a particular national origin, but being *Muslim* families, and especially Muslim adolescents. This tendency is growing according to the Annual Report 2010 of the German Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR 2010: 18–19). What the Expert Council presents as constituting the main discursive threads in the current debate in Germany is an overlap of different discourses with altogether rather negative connotations of "the other". According to that analysis, the Muslim immigrant population is more and more depicted as shaping a cultural, civilizational, juridical and not least demographic danger for "our" advanced, liberal society model. The fact that the ageing and shrinking German society is in need of immigration and of strategies to include immigrants is officially recognized and promoted; but projections of the wanted immigrants do not draw upon the former Turkish guest workers. They are the icons of presumed integration *failures*. The most prominent example of this discourse on the "failed integration" was given lately by the book publication "Germany gets rid of itself" of a then Board Member of the German Federal Bank (Sarrazin 2010) which led to a heated debate two years ago. Basically, the author argued that German society would lose intellectual potential more and more because the least educated and least integrated immigrants would show the highest fertility rates. Yet, leading politicians like (amongst others) Chancellor Angela Merkel also practice double talk in matters pertaining to the integration of immigrants and occasionally fuel populist alarmism, like when stating that multi-culturalism – which has never been a concept to inform German policies<sup>5</sup> – had "totally failed" (Kölnner Stadtanzeiger 2010).

A number of experts argue that Islamophobic attitudes among Germans have increased in recent years in response to such abstract elite discourses which contribute to constructing a coherently negative image of the social effects which the labor immigration has rendered (Hafez 1999; Heitmeyer 2002, 2003, 2005, 2006a, 2006b, 2007a, 2007b; Spetsmann-Kunkel 2007). As the core of the negative image one finds the combination of factual findings about Germany as being demographically shrinking and ageing, with a high level of heterogeneity in terms of the ethnic and national origins and religious affiliations of the different population groups, and with the assessment of the Muslim population (whose birth rates are relatively higher than average) as bringing backward traditions and unwanted cultural habits into this setting (SVR 2010). However, the argumentation conflict between desirable modes of "integration" (multi-cultural approaches vs. assimilatory approaches) that dominates the political debate and much of the media coverage remains curiously vague in terms of concrete policy concepts. In fact, for most of the ethnic minority population and what their daily life concerns, integration talk is rather distant rhetoric, though with a high symbolic impact, when compared with the actual difficulties

in getting access to higher education and the labor market. This is partly also a consequence of the changing parameters of economic growth in Germany with industrial labor being on the retreat vis-à-vis a high level of skills and competencies that are sought after in the “knowledge society”. Socio-economically, the emergence of Turkish communities and segregated residential quarters in the industrialized urban regions has been accompanied from the late 1970s onwards by a decrease in the industrial job market. Low-skilled industrial jobs got lost via rationalization and outsourcing. As a consequence one could observe two parallel trends: rising unemployment as well as rising self employment rates among the former guest-workers in Germany since the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 1980s. With their children that went through German institutions of (also higher) education the qualification level of this population group increased a little but it has still not reached the German average. Children from Turkish families are regularly among the underachieving groups in schools; their unemployment rates diverge from those of ethnic Germans and are today nearly double as high. Also, they are over-represented in lower services and under-represented in higher qualified positions, also with regard to the sectors of their self-employment and the ethnic business sector. This marks a factual problem of “integration” in the sense of lower participation opportunities compared with the rest of society.

### 3 School performance and ethno-social segregation in the German system of education

There are marked differences between the school attendance levels of students with and without a migration background in Germany, and the lower school attendance of students with migration history can partly be related to their socio-economic status (Bildungsberichterstattung 2006: 161ff.): Within the group of students from migrant families, those whose parents or grandparents immigrated as guest-workers – when poorly or unskilled workforce was sought after – show significantly lower attendances (Bildungsberichterstattung 2008: 37). According to the first federal Educational Report on Germany (Bildungsberichterstattung 2006) which gave special reference to students with migration background (based on micro census data), in 2000, 32% of grade 9 students with a migrant background attended the lowest ranking school-type (*Hauptschule*), and this was nearly twice as many as among their native German peers. Only 25% of the pupils with migrant background went to the highest achieving school-type (*Gymnasium*) compared with 33% of their native German peers. This disproportion was even more dramatic amongst the largest group of students with migrant backgrounds in Germany, i.e. those of Turkish origin. Every second pupil of Turkish origin attended a *Hauptschule* whereas only every eighth attended the *Gymnasium*. Moreover, the percentage of ethnic minority students attending a so called “special-needs school”, for students with a learning disability, is disproportionately high. In 1999, 4.5% of all foreign students but only 2.33% of ethnic German students attended such a school (Kornmann 1999). Astonishingly enough, that situation has remained relatively unchanged in its tendency. Even if they have the same reading competence as their German peers, children from former guest-worker families are less likely to receive a recommendation from their primary school teachers for grammar school enrolment (Bildungsberichterstattung 2006: 162).

The proportion of young people from ethnic minority groups entering the labor market or attending further education is consequently decisively lower than among ethnic Germans. While 60% of the Germans find a position within the fully qualifying system of regular dual vocational training or vocational schooling and only 40% depend on special qualifying programs, the proportion is just the opposite regarding students from the minority groups (Bildungsberichterstattung 2008). Overall, these misrepresentations are well known and have been documented repeatedly in surveys inclusive of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development run Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) studies: Compared with other industrialized countries, Germany has the most pronounced correlation between the students’ social and/or migrant background and their educational achievement – even despite the fact that the correlation has slightly diminished between 2000 and 2006. The secondary analysis of the PISA-survey nevertheless confirmed disadvantages of students of lower socioeconomic status and/or a migration background. However, these surveys have as yet not provided sufficient answers to the question whether the students from migrant ethnic minority groups are primarily disadvantaged because of their immigration family background or rather because of their socioeconomic position: The concerned students are in any case disproportionately affected as both categories often coincide (see Miera 2008 for more details on these aspects). Elina Kilpi-Jakonen’s study on the educational pathways and school performance of second-generation migrant adolescents in Finland proposes similar research results (Kilpi-Jakonen 2011).

Institutional mechanisms of the German multi-track school system – with its highly selective and extremely early streaming after grade 4 (or latest after grade 6 in some of the German federal *Länder*), and the lack of permeability and upward mobility within the system contribute to discrimination effects against ill-famed ethnic minorities (Gomolla & Radtke 2002). Their most frequently taken path through either a “special needs school” or a low achievement level *Hauptschule* commonly predetermines a disadvantaged school career, and a long lasting or even completely unsuccessful transition to vocational training and/or into the labor market. It furthers societal segregation effects when ethnic minority groups are in a majority position in such schools, which is not uncommon in the bigger German cities with considerable population shares of immigrant ethnic minorities concentrated in one catchment area. The first national survey on education, dating from 2006, points out that, “social segregation and ethnic segregation are closely connected in Germany, and are an important challenge for the education policy (...) One out of four pupils with migration background attends a school where migrants are in a majority, but only one out of twenty pupils without migration background does. In schools with high rates of migrant pupils (more than 50%) pupils are concentrated who do not speak any German at home (Bildungsberichterstattung 2006: 161–62; Miera 2008).

While the educational experts’ discourse is marked by an acknowledgement of the negative net effects of these pupils’ poor socio-economic backgrounds and the institutional logic of the German school system that fosters segregation and discrimination, e.g. lacks efforts in intercultural education and the teaching of multilingual classes and so on, the public media discourse tends to be remarkably one-sided. In general, the school education of post-migrant children and youth is depicted as being highly problematic, and the common perception scheme is that it is the students and

their families who do not come up to “our” standards, routines and expectations. The situation is illustrated, for instance, by reports of classes being unmanageable because of high proportions of pupils with a different ethnic background, of deficiency in German language skills, lack of discipline and willingness to learn, and of heightened aggression levels. These pupils’ “otherness” is often not only regarded as self-evident, but furthermore assessed to be the major source of problems in school: The “foreign pupils” appear as the representatives of a profound cultural difference of “oriental families” who raised their children according to a different agenda than Germans did, with resulting clashes over sources of authority, learning concepts, or behavior styles in school (Mannitz & Schiffauer 2004).

In the German public representation, the responsibility for the high rate of school failures of certain ethnic minority students is thus primarily ascribed to these students and their parents as being a culture specific problem, and attributed mostly to students of Turkish or Arabic origin – if not simply to Muslims (Spielhaus 2006). This perception scheme may remain dominant even if media make it an issue that an educated environment matters for schools success. It underlines the necessity of investing a kind of resources into the children’s school careers which many of the concerned families do not offer. Their “otherness” is hence even confirmed in reports on poor living conditions, or illiteracy rates since these are hardly ever framed as being a general problem of disadvantaged families, beyond national or ethnic origin, but rather depicted as a lack of particular cultural capital, typical of the Muslim immigrants in the country (for more on this see our project country report on education, Miera 2008).

This emphasis on cultural differences of Muslim minorities might be taken for an expression of the visibility which these immigrants have reached in urban agglomerations, especially in the studied districts of Berlin where their status in terms of the population figures, and particularly so in some school catchment areas, is no longer that of a minority in the true sense. Although this might be a factor, it does not do away with the fact that these children share many of the negative experiences and effects of their underprivileged living conditions with German peers from the same social strata. Insofar, the discursive structure of the public representation of ethnic minority members’ “school failure” reflects characteristic features from the more general debate on the “lacking” or “failed integration” of the former guest-worker immigrants; and it is very often linked with the notion of an alleged incompatibility of Islam with German culture and conventions.

#### 4 The EDUMIGROM research in Berlin: Focus and findings

The EDUMIGROM research project entailed two components: a quantitative survey in secondary schools of different (ethnically diverse) cities, and a qualitative community study which looked into the local interactions between societal majority and minority members and their discourses in ethnographic detail. The anonymous surveys were based on a common questionnaire that we had developed altogether in the international project group. We asked for a wide range of family background information of the pupils (like number of persons/household, educational background of the enlarged family circle, socioeconomic self-perception, etc.) and for a number of personal judgements on the adolescents’

experiences with schooling, with either discrimination or particular encouragement, for their biographical projections, sentiments of identification. The resulting data were processed with the help of correlation analyses firstly for the individual countries and, secondly with a focus set on selected items across the countries (Szalai 2011a; Szalai 2011b).

The results for the German country case are based on a quantitative survey which was conducted at 16 schools in three German cities (Berlin, Cologne and Leverkusen), and a qualitative fieldwork which was conducted in two districts of Berlin. All three cities are considerably shaped by immigration and immigrant minorities, though in different ways as a matter of their different immigration history, their different socioeconomic structure and their different size. In the schools we sampled for the survey, the students of grade 9 or 10 were focused on, and 1,110 of them filled out the student questionnaire completely or nearly completely.

The in-depth qualitative research for the German case was done in two of the typical immigrant districts of Berlin (Moabit and Kreuzberg). Berlin is among those agglomerations in Germany, which attracted many labor immigrants in the 1970s, and their socio-ethnic segregation and the existence of “parallel society institutions” has reached a fairly high level there. For this reason, the City of Berlin has taken on also a lead role in developing political strategies to counter segregation patterns in the state schools. This made Berlin particularly interesting. We wanted to know to what extent and in what sense the concerned pupils experience their school life as a problem, and how they assess the meaning of having hardly any relationship with native Germans for their identification and biographical orientations. Two secondary schools and their environments made up the sites of the qualitative community study in Berlin. The researchers carried out participant observations in and outside the classroom, they organized several focus group discussions and conducted semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents, pupils, social workers, and ethnic community representatives there.

##### 4.1 Research sites and focus groups

The neighborhoods where our ethnographic research took place are both classified for urban development and a special social work program by which the city administration is trying to improve the multi-problem dynamics of certain quarters in central Berlin. Schools, in particular those on the lower achievement level, play a crucial role in the downward processes which some of these quarters have experienced. Once the schools in these areas have a bad reputation as being “ghetto schools” of certain ethnic minorities, upwardly mobile or middle class families leave the neighborhood when their children come of schooling age, or after grade six when streaming takes place in Berlin at latest. This is not only true for the German middle classes, but “school shopping” is also practiced by the (slowly emerging) middle classes of the migrant population. To fight this flight phenomenon, the City of Berlin has just reformed the system of enrolment and closes two former school types from the traditional tripartite structure (*Hauptschule*, *Realschule*). Instead, a structure has been introduced with just two tracks from 2011 on. There will hence only be comprehensive secondary schools (*Integrierte Sekundarschule*), and grammar schools (*Gymnasium*) in the future. Maybe more importantly, up to

one-third of the enrolments shall be decided by a lottery, meaning that the pupils or families opt for a school type but no longer for a particular school in their neighborhood. These are two of the topical policy measures against the social segregation patterns in schools (Senatsverwaltung 2011).

The more particular necessity of offering better assistance for inclusion to pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds in school education was addressed in another strategic paper of the City of Berlin, dating from 2006. However, this one does not tackle their problems from the perspective of segregation effects but is focused rather on the need to improve these pupils' lingual skills by way of special homework-assistance and similar target-group measures (Senatsverwaltung 2006). It is hence rather one of the examples for the tendency to look at minority member's deficits and not into the direction of the majority society's share in the patterns of segregation and discrimination.

In Berlin, one-third of all students speak a "non-German mother-tongue". Turkish and Lebanese represent the two largest groups, and were therefore focused in our field research. They belong to those students whose performances are significantly lower than average. To get a differentiated picture of these two minority groups' experiences in school we conducted our investigations in two schools which represent – at the least officially – both ends of the educational ranking: one integrated comprehensive school (*Gesamtschule*) that could be regarded a typical school for students with this background (especially since most students enrolled there ranked on the low *Hauptschule* level with their examination results), and one grammar school (*Gymnasium*) to gain insight into the situation of more successful students with the same ethnic family background and find out about factors which made them more successful than their peers. In both the schools, the pupils from Turkish and Arabic speaking families make up approximately 80%. The chosen research sites are, of course, not representative in the meaning of quantitative research. They are peculiar schools with their own traditions, with particular staff consisting of particular individuals and – nowadays – with their distinct conceptual profiles. At the same time, however, they all continue to represent general relays between the state and the population, and they play their role in collective socialization. This principle relevance makes ultimately any school a social field of meaningful interactions – not irrespective of but rather inclusive of its particularities because the day-to-day social contestations for public classification play a key role in (re-)organizing social relations and in influencing identities (Bourdieu 1987). This understanding of the meaning of social practice involves the necessity to direct attention to the small-scale social field and motivated the school ethnographic approach that we followed in the qualitative part of the EDUMIGROM research.

#### 4.2 Impact of the learning atmosphere

In comparison of the two school environments that we studied, the differences in learning atmosphere were most striking. And accordingly, in interviews with pupils we found that it depends to an enormous extent on the supportive or else discriminating atmosphere whether school is experienced as a positive part of life and encourages young people to develop ambitious aspirations for their adult future, even if their family backgrounds do not provide an ideal environment for that. Related effects were clearly observable in the two schools (Strassburger, Ucan & Mannitz 2010).

In the case of the comprehensive *Gesamtschule*, very few students gave an example of supportive, motivated and friendly teachers whereas students in the *Gymnasium* generally were confident that most teachers were "good". As a matter of fact, in the comprehensive school type some teachers tried to "tame" the class to ensure an atmosphere for learning, while others simply did not interact with the students or constantly blamed them for several aspects, be it with or without reason. In the *Gymnasium* the general atmosphere was open, respectful and friendly. Teachers were motivating the students with positive responses to their ideas and suggestions. This difference in attitude applied as well to the relationship with the parents. All in all, teachers in the lower profile *Gesamtschule* did not regard the parents of their ethnic minority students as partners in solving education problems but as an important *cause* of these problems. These teachers felt to be blamed in public (e.g., in the form of the negative media coverage in the wake of the PISA-studies) for any failures of the family. "We can't make up for their mistakes" was the message given in many variations. The educational level of the parents there was rather low, so that these were hardly able to influence their children's academic career in a positive direction. This was also conceded by the students themselves. Yet, most of them stressed that their parents were interested in their school success. The problem was that they only told their kids to study hard but had actually no further idea about what was needed for school success. Although the teachers there were well aware of the underprivileged situations their pupils lived in, they mostly saw it as a burden which made their job too exhausting, and responded to it by reducing their standards. Language problems and other difficulties were blamed on the (wrong) input from the side of the families. In sum this created an atmosphere where the adolescents unmistakably felt that their "other" origins were not appreciated at all.

The teaching staff in the *Gymnasium* tended to draw different conclusions from their evaluations of the pupils' family situations. They rather acknowledged the success of many students with Turkish or Arabic background because they were well aware that most families were unable to support the kids in learning and thus saw it even more as the school's charge. Compared with the *Gesamtschule* the educational level of the parents was also slightly higher. A few parents had attended high schools themselves, and in the extended families there were usually some single members (uncles, aunts, or cousins) with an academic background who served as a reference point or role model for the pupils. Even if this means only a tiny difference in the cultural capital of a family, it seemed to raise the support and motivation for education because the adolescents knew examples which proved that school entailed real opportunities. Other parents in the *Gymnasium* who lacked a comparable background themselves were convinced strongly that their children had a chance to succeed and put much effort into supporting them either emotionally, or materially (homework lessons). All of these students in the *Gymnasium* had been familiar with the projection of an educational career from childhood. Most of them had been successful in primary school and were advised to attend a *Gymnasium* track. In some cases the parents had also opposed the primary teachers' advice and send their children to the higher achievement level school because they were convinced of their children's abilities. This interplay of active and education conscious parents and committed teachers made the hugest difference here in comparison to the negative atmosphere in the *Gesamtschule*.

### 4.3 Images of Cultural Difference and Effects of “Othering”

Schools, classes and neighborhoods of the focus groups are spaces where the probabilities to enter inter-ethnic relationship with German<sup>4</sup> peers are rather limited because of the factual residential segregation. However, the separation along the Muslim minorities versus German majority boundary is further aggravated by the different conditions under which teenage lifestyles are supposed to unfold.

The teenagers’ leisure activities differ – at least in their own perception, or else in the anticipation of what discrepancies might occur. Crucial issues that came up in our interviews were (1) the question if evenings are spent within or outside family circles,<sup>5</sup> (2) the different locations to meet peers (with or without an opportunity to consume alcohol), and (3) different gender compositions of friendship-groups (mixed-gender vs. gender-separated groups). Interestingly enough, most problem potentials are, however, not at all experienced personally but avoided right from the start in anticipation of negative experiences. The students of Turkish, Arab or other Muslim background whom we talked to, who live in a community with many peers of similar backgrounds, judged it to be easiest to make friends “among themselves”. Many expressed the feeling that they understand each other without any words and *expect* this to be very different with German peers that they know – to limited extents – from school. They are not tempted to get into closer contact because there is no “added value” attributed to having closer contacts with Germans while it is a regular estimation that a lot of difficulties *might* occur. From the beginning of adolescence, meaning practically with the end of primary school, these imagined differences seem to gain importance and the resulting separation effects increase.

It became clear in the personal interviews that we conducted that past experiences of being “othered” in the school environment discouraged the Turkish and Arab students from approaching their German schoolmates unless necessary. They all knew (and hence also expected this to govern possible interactions) the need to explain themselves in many aspects that German peers are not (thought to be) familiar with. It would be even more annoying if their German counterpart was not really interested in understanding anything about “the other” but was already convinced to know better. This experience seemed to be part of everyday life of the minority members. One controversial subject is the freedom of choice in the realm of partnership and sexuality. Students of Muslim background who subscribe to norms of premarital sexual abstinence described the situation as being perceived by the German majority as representing outdated attitudes or family oppression. For example, several Muslim girls explained that they felt discrimination because of their headscarf. Some explained that they felt bothered by discussions in school lessons about arranged or forced marriages and family life in Islam even if these had occurred only rarely in their school life. The strong impact and the lasting feelings of discrimination seem to be due to the fact that in these cases that caused them bad memories, the teachers had presented complex issues in such a way that the Muslim students felt put under pressure and under observation. They had got the impression that the teachers’ intention was not to resolve negative stereotypes about Islam, or open a real dialogue in class but to make them subscribe to (likewise stereotyped) majority views. As they did not want to justify themselves all the time, they preferred to spend time with peers who share similar conditions.

Whenever we heard that it would be better if there were more Germans in the school, the argument was purely pragmatic, either that it helped to become fluent in German, or that it would improve the image of their school. In the same vein, however, some students argued expressively that it was better to attend a school where minorities are in majority because this offers a kind of protection against everyday discrimination. However odd this may sound, it does not only confirm my own previous research results (Mannitz 2001; Mannitz 2005b). What is more, we found this positive assessment of segregation to be a rationale of behavior in other country cases of the EDUMIGROM research as well (see Feischmidt *et al.* 2010 on the “island culture” phenomenon). Also, these research results correspond to recent findings on the ways in which identities are contested among pupils in complementary schools in Britain where language becomes a crucial resource for identity performances (Blackledge & Creese 2008).

### 4.4 Identifications and aspirations

One important empirical question was how the pupils from ethnic minorities delineate group boundaries, and how their own group categories, as expressions of identity, refer to the wider context of societal classifications. How do they ultimately perceive their own status in respect of their recognition and future participation in German society? In short, in this regard the conceptual divide between Germans and “others” ruled out cross-cutting experiences. This whole complex showed to be related with two dimensions: (1) Family solidarity was seen by many as being an outstanding positive trait of their own circles, and as something “the Germans” were lacking; (2) constructions of “us” and “them” were used in resistance towards discrimination and exclusion experiences. These two reflections of the experienced categorical exclusion reconfirmed the dominant discourse and boundary drawing on their own level, along collective lines of the “other” culture, Muslim belief, and ethnic origin.

Solidarity with the family became an issue in many different contexts. The need for ethnic minority pupils to close ranks with their parents by stressing how much they agreed with them, and that their own respect of certain norms was completely deliberate may be interpreted as a reaction to the mainstream discourse about “backward immigrants” and Islam as a repressive force. Our interviewees were well aware that most Germans regard chastity norms, the covering of the hair, or marriage at an early age as signs of an outdated lifestyle, or of family oppression. In their schools students are frequently faced with discussions about these issues, and they encounter their teachers’ or German classmates’ negative perceptions of their families and religion in this context. In reverse, many adolescents from the ethnic minorities expected solidarity only within their “own circles”. Constructing “we-group” and “they-group” in such a way that the content of discrimination is reversed is an important component of identity building for minorities. Some students used this strategy and extended the ‘we-group’ to all Muslims in Germany and sometimes even to non-Muslim immigrant minorities who were described as sharing similar cultural norms. In our sample, we observed this strategy more often in the Arab than in the Turkish group which might indicate that it is more convenient for smaller communities to represent themselves as parts of larger communities.

Irrespective of variations in formulating their own identity, there was a complete absence of identifications as being Germans

although almost all students in our sample were German citizens. They, nevertheless, told us that it would be impossible to identify oneself as German: “Look at my hair, look at my skin! How could I be a German? On top of that, we are Muslims!” is the kind of answer they gave. Some students argued also that the “real Germans” would never accept them as being alike. Formally, German citizenship constructs the equality of individuals before the state, but German nationality is at the same time interwoven with notions of family origin in a cultural community – the concept of the *Kulturnation*. Everyday discourses regarding the recognition of entitlement to such membership might still refer to the particularly colored concept of the nation and make the “integration” that is expected to be performed by the immigrants unfeasible. Sure, legislative changes in 2000 have made it easier for foreign residents and especially for their German-born children to acquire German citizenship, and on the whole, attempts to actually develop an integration policy have been made since then as well. However, the ethnicized conceptualization of “real Germans” does not seem to have changed so far; at least not in those parts of society where the question of how to accommodate diversity is raised on an everyday basis and under strained living conditions.

According to the students and parents whom we interviewed in Berlin, Muslim identities are still treated as being alien in their daily interactions with “real Germans”, and therefore also in these minorities’ own conflictive perceptions of belonging. What we encountered in our interviews with students and parents on the one hand, and with teachers and other school staff on the other is, in short, that Muslim lifestyles are not accepted (students’ and parents’ perception) or do not fit (teachers’ judgement) in German society. As states James Angelos, “in public discourse, integration is often spoken of solely as an immigrant’s duty” (2011). Yet it remains open into what they should integrate as long as the majority identity is defined “not by what you are but by what you are not” – namely Turkish by descent, or a Muslim (ibid.).

## 5 Conclusions

The EDUMIGROM findings from the German case study have shown (once again) how important a principally supportive atmosphere is for the positive development of minority ethnic students in schools. For adolescents from these minorities, the most important actors of “othering” (or else equal treatment) are teachers or other adults working in the school environment. Due to the existing high degree of ethnic segregation in the studied districts, the school is *the* site where students interact with members of the majority population most regularly, and school activities absorb much of their time. This holds true as long as students attend lessons; the notoriously low attendance rates of certain pupils may, however, improve also if they feel to be accepted and supported. The influence of German teachers’ behavior on the impressions their pupils get from German society is therefore much higher than in catchment areas where pupils are in constant interaction with all sorts of population groups, inclusive of more autochthonous Germans, and where they may also qualify individual teachers’ or classmates’ performances. This impact needs to be recognized in particular in school catchment areas where young people have otherwise little contact with wider society; and should be used as an opportunity to dissolve stereotypical perceptions.

Within the general debate of school reform and the performance of ethnic minority kids in the German system, the

agency of the majority population has remained under-reflected. In public representations of “failed integration” and poor education performances, the immigrant population is often blamed for staying among themselves although other people’s flight movements have at the least contributed to create the situation. Since the interrelatedness of ethnic inequalities and dependency on welfare is one of the notorious markers of underprivileged school districts, the most common suggestion for these urban areas is to improve the infrastructure, encourage minority members’ civic participation and local networking. Policy programs attribute to schools the role of “integration centres”. The schools are expected to offer particular services in order to stop or even reverse local segregation effects. Typical strategies are the reduction of class sizes, an increase of the numbers of teachers, co-teaching by two teachers in one class (in some cases also for bilingual teaching), whole-day schooling with qualified homework supervision, and the implementation of intercultural pedagogy. The City of Berlin has become a pioneer in trying to fight the segregation with the help of lottery enrolments and the systematic introduction of comprehensive secondary schools, but it is too early to assess these rather new measures. One might expect that new practices of distinction will develop to circumvent the “forced” mixing because established middle class as well as upwardly mobile oriented families devote special attention to their children’s school choice and avoid schools with a high rate of minority ethnic pupils from poor socioeconomic environments.

The existing segregation is assessed to be the “better option” by many minority youths who fear to be exposed to even more discrimination if there were more people from the majority population around. Such a withdrawal into supposedly cozy corners of society where “own folk” shapes a majority and where one may experience the recognition which is otherwise missing in society is a reason for concern. It shows *inter alia* that discriminatory attitudes and behavior in schools have not been tackled sufficiently as a condition for successful integration processes. The form, the contents and the consequences of the relationships between so called “real Germans” and ethnic minority youths depend in parts on the perceptions of each other, but not less on the actual social interaction which may conform to, or else falsify collective imagery. We have seen in different phases of our research that the alleged “otherness” is not experienced continuously. It is even irrelevant in many day-to-day situations which do not, however, mean that it is irrelevant for the (re-)production of images of the self and the “other”; nor in terms of the existing structural inequalities.

It is of eminent interest for Germany to better assist the ethnic minority youth’s societal inclusion by way of state education: because of the conflict potential inherent to ethnic patterns of resource distribution, because of the necessity to have as many people who are qualified as good as possible to be employed and contribute to the welfare system of an ageing society, and because of the minority’s equal basic rights to enjoy assistance for their participation in the political, social, and economical life. Since education has remained to be a domain of the German federal *Länder*, a systematic reform of the country’s school system would imply the need to find a common solution; and is hardly to be expected in the near future. In Berlin, current school reform acts do aim at improving individual pupils’ achievements, increasing the autonomy of individual schools and introducing whole-day schools as well as more pre-school facilities such as nursery schools free of charge. However, not only the majority of policy makers across Germany refuse to abolish the multi-track school system and its early streaming which have repeatedly been rated to be most detrimental

for underprivileged groups; also those privileged families who oppose any such reforms because they fear for the loss of their own children's relative advantages<sup>6</sup> reveal an existing integration unwillingness on the side of the German majority population.

There is still a long way to an understanding of integration as a "two-way" process, as Modood put it (2007a) and not only in Germany (Joppke & Morawska 2003; Szalai 2011a; Szalai 2011b). For the moment being, the divisive hegemonic discourse continues to breed feelings of alienation among many people of "other" ethnic backgrounds, and to the detriment of both the minorities and the majority population groups. The school system is of paramount importance for the solution of these problems because education and language proficiency are crucial in determining the chances to participate in the economy and in the argument over defining the contents of the collective good (Morales & Giugni 2011). To facilitate such a qualification, being able to cope with dilemmas of belonging, with contested meanings, or ascribed vis-à-vis self-defined interests is a crucial competence for both ethnic majority and minority members in an open society: "The idea that there has to be a schedule of 'non-negotiable' value statements to which every citizen is expected to sign up is not in the spirit of an open, plural citizenship. National identity should be woven in debate and discussion, not reduced to a list. For central to it is a citizenship and the right of all, especially previously marginalized or newly admitted groups, to make a claim on the national identity" (Modood 2007b). The recognition claims of minority groups, be they religious, cultural, ethnic, or whatever else, will continue to contest and challenge established concepts. It will thus be increasingly important to develop capabilities regarding conflict resolution strategies, and school is the place to start with this.

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## Notes

1. The EDUMIGROM research project was funded by the European Union for 36 months in the 7th Research Framework Programme, and was co-ordinated by the Center for Policy Studies of the Central European University in Budapest as a collaborative work. Team members and empirical studies came from institutions in nine countries – among them the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, where I directed the

German case. Detailed information on the research project and the available publications can be obtained from <http://www.edumigrom.eu>. My article synthesizes findings from the German case study and draws foremost on the research reports that were compiled for the comparative study and on the community study report (Miera 2008; Ohliger 2008; Strassburger, Ucan & Mannitz 2010). Across the countries, the project entailed a huge quantitative survey in secondary schools and qualitative ethnographic research in selected schools. The methodological background information for the German case can be found at the beginning of the empirical section of this article.

2. Until very recently official statistics in Germany followed the classification of German citizens versus non-German citizens ("foreigners"). Thus, the public discourse about and the statistical labelling of immigrants was dominated by the discourse about "foreigners" (*Ausländer*). Yet, this category included people who were actually born and socialized in Germany (as the so called "second" and even "third generation of immigrants"), while it excluded millions of persons who had arrived in the country as ethnic Germans from Central and Eastern Europe since 1950 and had enjoyed the privilege of immediate naturalization upon immigration. Only within the last years this situation has been controversially discussed, and as one effect a terminology emerged that was originally intended to be more encompassing, the "persons with migrant background" or "persons of immigrant origin". The newly created category includes immigrated foreigners, foreigners born in Germany, naturalized foreigners, and ethnic German immigrants who receive a German passport upon their immigration. As an effect of the redefinition which entered also the 2005 micro census data collection, the relevant group under consideration for questions of immigration and integration roughly doubled from 7.3 million "foreigners" to 15.3 million "people of immigrant origin" (Ohliger 2008). However, in everyday social practice, only those people are addressed as having an immigrant background who are perceived as being "others". What is more, the new terminology also leads to a longer lasting construction of otherness: Even people who are born in Germany today as German citizens become categorized as being "of migrant background" if their grandparents immigrated the country.
3. Irrespective of the consolidation of the former guest-workers' stay, the official political creed remained that one should not regard the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) as immigration country. The fact was managed on a daily basis that a considerable number of foreigners was part of the population, but the German state, particularly under the conservative government that held office throughout the 1980s until 1998, showed no willingness to aim at the long-term recognition of the labor immigrants as fellow residents. Thus, a divide developed over time between the societal reality of immigration and the official political (non-)recognition (Bade 2000: 336–338). In the past fifteen years this has changed. The fact that immigration is going to be a lasting phenomenon has become officially recognized, and a series of governmental activities has been launched to bring the challenges of integration to the fore. Also, the political public has been discussing the extent to which Germany needs immigration, and the steering process that should regulate it. Nevertheless, the established perception scheme has not yet been dismantled of seeing immigrants, or nowadays Germans



“with immigrant background” as representatives of a cultural “otherness”. Such differences, whether construed or not, were not made an issue as long as the “guest workers” remigrations were expected. They have come to be assessed by many commentators as an obstacle to the integration process since it has become clear that these “others” will be staying in the country, and that they will be enjoying citizenship rights to a growing extent.

4. Meanwhile, many of the minority ethnic adolescents hold German citizenship, but hardly any of them feel to be included in the category of “the Germans” and uses the term for him- or herself. The everyday classificatory terminology distinguishes between Germans (in an ethno-national sense) and either “foreigners”, or “Turks”, “Arabs”, and so on. I use the term in the same way here, quoting the vernacular.

5. The stress on evening activities is striking when considering that so many of these teenagers actually do share places and engage in the same practices in the afternoons, i.e. they spend hours with strolling through shopping malls, or with “chilling” either at home or in the open. The fact that this sameness in everyday habits does not even come to their minds illustrates very well the power of the imagined differences.
6. This was the case in Hamburg in 2010. The City Council had agreed (in a consensus across the political parties!) on a school system reform that included an extended duration of primary school teaching. Streaming was planned to take place after grade 6 only in order to fight the known negative effects of earlier selection (after grade 4 when pupils are 10 years old). An initiative of (fairly well established) parents stopped this part of the reform with the help of a plebiscite.

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