

Lived Reality of School Socialization from the Perspective of Romani Mothers

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The aim of our study is to explore Romani mothers' narratives about school, especially in relation to how they accept or reject school expectations directed at Romani pupils. Methodologically, we focus on the discursive framing of how the needs of Romani mothers are constructed. Our research study is grounded in the premise that understanding the lived reality of a parent requires insight into how they interpret their own identity and experiences with social roles. These roles are particularly significant as they are affirmed within the institutional structures of the school system.

Keywords: *school social institution; education of Romani pupils; discourse analysis; institutional power; framing of social reality constructions*

Introduction

The education of Romani pupils represents a complex social phenomenon. The goal of the Czech Republic's educational policy is to reduce educational inequalities and improve the quality of education (as outlined in the strategic document Strategy 2030¹). Social inclusion serves as a means to achieve these objectives. At the same time, however, the implementation of social inclusion in schools (and in society at large) is itself a priority and a core objective. In its essence, social inclusion can be understood as the recognition of difference and the establishment of an equitable social dialogue—particularly within educational settings. In other words, it is about creating a fair communicative environment grounded in social values of accepting the Other. Achieving this ideal, however, likely requires significant changes within the education system

¹ Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020. (2014). Praha: MŠMT.

and in teaching itself. These changes concern the philosophy of education, as well as organizational and legislative adjustments.

Our research assumes that the transformation of the Czech school system is shaped by conflicting perspectives on whether or not to embrace social inclusion. We believe that in the context of such divergent views on changes in our educational landscape, it is crucial to analyse and describe the social environments and structural conditions of Czech schools as experienced by specific social actors. Clearly, no single narrative can capture the entirety of these structural realities, as each actor in the educational process operates within their own value framework concerning the purpose and function of education and schooling. In our view, the demand for social inclusion in schools is a response to selective mechanisms within education, the increasing technocratization of society, and the dehumanization of the individual². Put differently, we are witnessing a process in which the meaning of education is being objectified and redefined institutionally for different groups (of children) based on educational opportunities. This process of objectification—rooted in the natural sciences—is closely tied to an individual's ability (and the perceived purpose) to succeed in the labour market.

As Štech³ points out, “Economic, or even economicist, approaches to education over the past fifteen years have led to a culture of performance and outcomes replacing a culture of self-development and individual emancipation—concepts that we now almost scorn as empty, pathos-laden declarations“. The ideology of market-oriented liberal democracy is built on the premise of a meritocratic distribution of both material and symbolic resources, which citizens are expected to obtain through social competition. The educational system reflects this orientation, for example, through grading policies. The focus on students' cognitive performance in assessments, and selection processes based on academic achievement and test scores. The problem arises when assessment practices become one-dimensional. For instance, in subjects with a theoretical-logical focus, assessment relies on the cognitive domain of the curriculum, whereas in arts-related subjects, the psychomotor domain is prioritized. This system enables relatively easy selection of students based on performance outcomes. But how can we ensure a holistic approach to education and, at the same time, a comprehensive evaluation of students? Within educational policy, we must ask ourselves: What are the social consequences of sorting pupils as early as in the first years of primary school? How does the socioeconomic status of parents impact students' motivation and performance? Is the selection process within compulsory schooling contributing to social injustice? The tension between advocating for a selective or unified school system is not easy to resolve—it depends on the educational priorities

² Harrington, A. (2006). *Moderní sociální teorie: základní témata a myšlenkové proudy*. Praha: Portál.

³ Štech, S. (2015). Proč se kritizuje PISA? *Pedagogická orientace*, 25 (4), 605–612. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, p. 605.

and pedagogical philosophy of each school. If the priority is to provide all pupils with equal starting conditions and shared socialization, then the implementation of social inclusion presents itself as a viable path forward.

Terminological Note

Throughout this text, we use the term Romani as an adjective (e.g., Romani mothers, Romani communities) in accordance with conventions in international academic writing. While Roma is commonly used as a noun referring to the ethnic group, Romani not only functions more appropriately as an adjective in English but also carries with it the broader historical and cultural context of Romani identity. For the purposes of our discursive analysis, this nuance is essential. Language shapes and reflects how social actors are positioned within dominant discourses, and the term Romani helps to highlight the specific sociohistorical experiences, cultural distinctiveness, and political struggles that are often flattened or overlooked in mainstream institutional language. Therefore, we have decided to use the term Romani consistently throughout the text, as it aligns with our analytical focus and ethical commitment to representational sensitivity.

Research Objectives and Questions

This study aims to explore and interpret the perspectives of selected Romani mothers regarding the education of Romani children.

To address this aim, the research was guided by the following questions:

- How do Romani mothers construct social reality through their accounts of Romani pupils' education?
- What discursive strategies or social representations do they employ to establish the credibility of their narratives?
- What types of competing and cooperating discourses emerge in these accounts, and how do they shape the construction of social reality?

To collect the data, we conducted semi-structured individual interviews, group interviews, and focus groups. The dataset was then analysed using discourse analysis, with particular attention paid to the ways in which meaning and social positioning are negotiated in language. A total of 23 Romani women participated in the study.

Source of Knowledge

Methodologically, our research study is grounded in discursive theory, as developed by Harré and Gillett⁴. This theoretical approach is associated with the second cognitive turn in psychology. At the core of this shift is a move away from the idea of a single, universal (nomothetic) scientific truth and from research focused solely on the cognitive brain structures of the individual. Instead, the second cognitive turn emphasizes knowledge and action as phenomena produced within specific historical, social, and cultural contexts, and constructed through concrete linguistic situations.

By adopting the perspective of the second cognitive turn, our research is situated within a postmodern understanding of social science. This approach is grounded in the pluralistic interpretation of multiple constructions of reality, formed through intersecting and overlapping discourses. Within this framework, it is natural that the present study does not rely on a single theoretical perspective but instead draws on a range of interconnected social theories that share common ground. Within the chosen research issue, we drew primarily on the theory of communicative democracy⁵, the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe⁶, and the framing theory⁷. In the context of our study, we rely on the concept of inclusive democracy and the concept of the politics of difference as formulated by Iris Marion Young⁸. This author "emphasizes difference and specificity instead of an impartial moral stance, asymmetry of relationships and understanding instead of moral reversibility and consensus, and a plurality of forms of communicative practice". Young rejected the assumption that establishing unity among all people in society is a prerequisite for achieving social justice. Her tool became inclusion, through which she sought "to support the elimination of oppression by incorporating difference as a political resource for mutual understanding and the political mobilization of subordinated groups". Understanding among people is based on the recognition of so-called ethical asymmetry. This asymmetry stems from different life experiences and the cultural and social specificities of various social groups. She termed this process of understanding the politics of difference. The fairness of the politics of difference lies in accepting the material consequences based on cultural and social differences. These differences manifest through relationships of domination and oppression within institutional structures. The foundation of solidarity between different social groups is the mutual interdependence of all

⁴ Harré, R. – Gillett, G. (2007). *Diskurz a mysl*. Bratislava: IRIS.

⁵ Young, I. M. (2010). Proti útlaku a nadvládě: transnacionální výzvy politické a feministické teorii. In Z. Uhde (Ed.), *Proti útlaku a nadvládě: transnacionální výzvy politické a feministické teorii*. Praha: Filosofia.

⁶ Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. (2014). *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie: za radikálně demokratickou politiku*. Praha: Karolinum.

⁷ Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

⁸ Young, I. M., Proti útlaku a nadvládě, p. 18.

members of society living within institutional structures and the environmental context.

A common thread running through the above mentioned social theories is the emphasis on participation by all actors in a dialogical process grounded in mutual understanding and respect. Recognition of the Other and the achievement of cultural mediation occur in a processual, situational, and local manner. This approach allows for a critical distance from ideologically veiled social or institutional power that functions within the logic of the traditional social order. Through self-reflexivity, individuals can challenge and deconstruct the established social order by offering alternatives or by re-signifying reality through language. What matters is which aspects of lived reality—particularly within schools—we choose to focus on, and how we interpret them. The path to understanding social reality leads through the daily reflection of roles, expectations, and positions of social actors, as well as the norms and distribution of knowledge they encounter. Adherence to social order and moral or ethical codes is shaped by institutional regulation. Dominant discourses define what constitutes appropriate behaviour and thinking in line with institutional norms. In this way, institutions exercise power by organizing and controlling the social order through the prescription of norms and the imposition of sanctions for their violation. Yet the realization of this social order unfolds within the lived experience of individual actors, who reinterpret and re-signify these norms in specific contexts. In the context of educational reform, we must account for both top-down pressures (e.g. from official curricula) and bottom-up dynamics (e.g. from the personal experiences of school actors). Change takes place through the interplay of social representations within specific social groups. Likewise, we argue that social inclusion in schools cannot be implemented through standardized guidelines or technical manuals. Only through the continuous reinterpretation of everyday social practices can inclusive education be given meaning in a pluralistic way. As Walzer⁹ points out, “democratic politics is not the politics of a general will in the form of rational consensus, as philosophers would have it, but the politics of majority will, involving conflict, negotiation, compromise, and decision-making.” Disagreements in educational policy often stem from the differing social positions and interests of the actors involved. It follows, then, that the implementation of social inclusion—whether in schools or in society more broadly—is inherently subject to multiple interpretations and conflicts over educational practice and curriculum philosophy¹⁰. It is important to note that Czech schools operate within a highly decentralized system, which leads to considerable variation in both the quality and quantity of school curriculum content.

⁹ Walzer, M. (2000). *Interpretace a sociální kritika*. Praha: Filosofie, p. 105.

¹⁰ Bertrand, Y. (1998). *Soudobé teorie vzdělávání*. Praha: Portál.

Source of Legitimacy

In support of our research study, we briefly refer to two pedagogical sources that provide justification for efforts to reduce inequality in access to quality education and to enable the full development of pupils' potential. The first source is Václav Příhoda's school reform plan from 1928/1929¹¹. We reference this historical initiative due to its points of convergence with current developments in the education sector, which make it relevant even today. Příhoda's reform placed primary emphasis on the development of the pupil, rather than on the systematization of subject matter. The second source is the contemporary strategic document Strategy 2030+, which outlines the current vision for the Czech educational system and similarly advocates for equity and pupil-centred approaches.

Příhoda¹²'s Reform

In the school years 1928/1929, Václav Příhoda attempted to establish a reformed, unified, yet internally differentiated school in Czechoslovakia—one that “gives all pupils an equal start and a clear path in the battle of minds”¹³. He understood this reform effort in terms of social justice, educational wholeness, and a learning offer tailored to the needs of each individual student. Such an approach aimed to support the development of each child's unique potential, which he saw as having a significant social impact. This school embodied aspects of an inclusive, democratic, co-educational, labour-oriented, and social institution— “in which equal opportunity for education is provided to all children of the nation and the state”¹⁴. Příhoda was critical of the existing segregated school system: “Society did not select workers for higher and more complex functions through the school, but rather the school itself performed the selection. Early selection and unequal access to schooling preserved social advantages in the hands of the ruling class”¹⁵.

The core principles of his model were differentiation and individualization, which he saw as more effective in ensuring inclusion of all students. Differentiation in students' educational paths took place on intellectual and interest-based levels: “Selection in a unified school does not happen through elimination or exclusion from advancement, but through differentiation—distinguishing students by their working abilities and exploring what they are genuinely suited for”¹⁶. He promoted individualization as a means to awaken

¹¹Příhoda, V. (1936). *Ideologie nové didaktiky*. Praha: Václav Příhoda; Příhoda, V. (1938). *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*. Praha: Pedagogická akademie; Příhoda, V. (1945). *Idea školy druhého stupně*. Praha: Ústřední učitel.

¹² The most well-known implementation of Příhoda's reform took place in the so-called Zlín schools, funded by entrepreneur Tomáš Baťa.

¹³ Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 58.

¹⁴ Příhoda, V. *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*, p. 19.

¹⁵ Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 56.

¹⁶ Příhoda, V. *Idea školy druhého stupně*, p. 57.

interest in learning: “By allowing the student to freely express their interest and choose among cultural goods, they also seek themselves... Deepening this search for one’s own personality is only possible if it proceeds at a pace and with mental tools appropriate to each individual”¹⁷. The culmination of this principle of individualization lies in its ability to guide students toward social usefulness. All students, he believed, should have equal access to educational resources. Příhoda was inspired by Masaryk’s idea that while education should be individualized, upbringing should be collective: “Specifically, the idea of progress is implemented through a unified school on the organizational level, a labour-oriented school in terms of learning, and a socially focused school based on collective upbringing”¹⁸.

The relevance of Příhoda’s reform for today lies in the fact that he centred school change around the student (rather than the curriculum), with the goal of fostering healthy motivation to learn and to participate meaningfully in society.

Strategy 2030+

The transformation of the Czech educational system is intended to improve the quality of life for all citizens. The authors of the national education vision, as articulated in Strategy 2030+¹⁹, aim to reduce social polarization and the growing inequality in educational attainment.

From a systemic perspective, a key challenge within the Czech education system lies in its high degree of decentralization and autonomy, which has led to disparities in the quality of education provided across different regions. The diversity of local approaches results in varied outcomes and uneven implementation of reform initiatives. The current generation of children has been born into a world shaped by digital technologies and globalized knowledge, which profoundly alters the processes of their socialization. As a result, the education system is undergoing a transformation that entails “adapting the learning environment as well as changing the content of education and the methods through which it is delivered”²⁰.

Strategy 2030+ defines just two overarching strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1 (SG1): To focus education more strongly on the acquisition of competencies necessary for active civic, professional, and personal life.
- Strategic Goal 2 (SG2): To reduce inequalities in access to quality education and to enable the full development of pupils' and students' potential.

Strategic Goal 2 specifically aims to reduce manifestations of social exclusion within the Czech school system. Both Strategy 2020 and Strategy 2030+ are grounded in research analyses conducted by the OECD, which

¹⁷ Příhoda, V. *Ideologie nové didaktiky*, p. 80.

¹⁸ Příhoda, V. *Úloha pokusné a reformní školy*, p. 5.

¹⁹ Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020. (2014). Praha: MŠMT.

²⁰ Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020, p.12.

consistently highlight the high level of educational inequality in the Czech Republic. In particular, they point to a statistically significant correlation between students' educational outcomes and the socioeconomic status of their parents. Moreover, there are also statistically significant differences between the performance of pupils across various primary schools and regions. In line with the theory of educational reproduction, the Czech education system continues to exhibit persistently low intergenerational social mobility in education. Taken together, these findings suggest that the Czech Republic demonstrates relatively low educational efficiency and a weak principle of equal opportunity in achieving social success—an essential prerequisite for social cohesion and consensus (MŠMT, 2020, p. 5). The specific objectives within SG2 are designed to reduce the high degree of differentiation in education quality and to limit the strong dependence of student outcomes on family background. Regional disparities in the quality of education contribute to a situation in which a student's academic success is heavily influenced by their place of birth or the location of their schooling.

For children experiencing social disadvantage, limited participation in early childhood education remains a persistent issue. One of the reasons for this is the difficulty schools and social services face in establishing effective communication with families affected by adverse social conditions—such as poverty, chronic stress, inadequate and unstable housing, or family breakdowns. Another critical point of vulnerability arises in the later years of primary education (lower secondary level), where these pupils often begin to lose their educational aspirations. The continued existence of segregated schools—with a majority or more than one-third of pupils being of Romani background (so-called “Romani schools”)—further deepens educational inequalities in the Czech Republic and contributes to unjust disparities in educational opportunity. Moreover, the possibility of early selection in the Czech education system motivates parents with higher educational aspirations to seek out socially homogeneous schools. This results in residual schools, where both teacher optimism and pupils' motivation to pursue higher education tend to decline. As a result, the gap between families with more and fewer resources keeps growing, since access to quality education and other advantages is increasingly limited to the more privileged. One proposed solution lies in the application of the principles of democratization of education and inclusive schooling²¹. Although the Czech education system offers a variety of support mechanisms intended to help children reach their full potential, the principle of democratization is not fully realized in practice. This is largely due to the lack of parental support from families living in conditions of social exclusion. These groups often do not engage in the decision-making processes of educational policy, or they face limited access to them. Their role is frequently framed not as active participants, but as passive subjects of educational policy. This positioning creates barriers

²¹ Maurin, 2007 in Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020, p. 21.

to initiating social dialogue and interferes their participation in promoting educational mobility for their children.

International Perspective

Petintseva²², in her ethnographic study, analyses how school discourses about Romani pupils are entextualized and subsequently used in decision-making processes within Belgium's juvenile justice system. The aim of the study was to show that school reports, originally intended as neutral descriptions of students' behavior or performance, often adopt powerful narratives that portray Romani children and their families as problematic or uncooperative. While mothers are not the central focus of the research, they play a significant role within these narratives—frequently being viewed through a deficit-based lens, for example as passive, unsupportive of education, or disruptive to school order. The study also highlights how Romani mothers employ various discursive strategies to challenge institutional authority and legitimize their parental roles. Petintseva thus contributes to understanding how unequal power relations shape whose version of reality is recognized as legitimate in institutional contexts. Qejvanaj²³ analyses the implementation of the National Action Plan for Romani Inclusion in Albania (2016–2020), with a focus on education and employment. The study shows that despite seemingly positive quantitative indicators, such as increased school attendance, deeper structural barriers persist—such as a lack of preschool facilities, absence of free transportation, or the financial inaccessibility of education. These challenges particularly affect Romani women and mothers, who also face gender-based inequalities. Girls and young mothers often interrupt their education due to childcare responsibilities or early marriage. Although Romani families themselves—including mothers—see education as a path to a better life, institutional frameworks often fail to recognize and support this motivation.

Both studies agree that formal equality in access to education is insufficient. They emphasize the need to consider the quality of education, institutional cultural sensitivity, and the recognition of diverse parenting experiences. The discourse of Romani mothers thus emerges in the tension between lived experience and institutional expectations—seeking, through strategic rhetoric, to redefine their role within the educational field.

²² Petintseva, O. (2019). 'Entextualisation' Across Institutional Contexts: The Impact of Discourse in School Reports on the Juvenile Justice Trajectories of Roma Youth. *Youth Justice*, 19 (1), 3–24.

²³ Qejvanaj, G. (2021). Albanian National Action Plan for Roma Inclusion 2016–2020: A Study on the Program Achievements at the Halfway Mark. *SAGE Open*, 11 (3).

Applied Methodological Tools

Categorization

According to Šanderová and Šmídová and colleagues²⁴, the process of categorization is a “normative activity—an evaluation of the appropriateness of people’s behaviour toward others, and a determination of what constitutes normal social relations.” As Nekvapil²⁵ notes, categorization is oriented toward how “one is supposed to speak about things, events, institutions, and people,” thereby tightly linking social categorization with interpretive framing and the organization of thematic content. These communicative interactions often relate to sensitive topics, where stereotypical thinking or prejudice can become apparent. The significance of social categorization lies in the fact that speakers reveal the social identities of the individuals they refer to—thus, in speaking, “they signal who they are, or who they wish to be perceived as, and how they ‘see’ others”²⁶. Vojtíšková²⁷ defines social categorization as “a process that enables us to structure the social world into meaningful units—most generally into members of in-groups and out-groups.” Through this process, we assign meaning to the world around us while simultaneously participating in the ongoing (re)signification of the existing social order. In other words, categorization in speech acts produces the legitimacy of social control and reinforces pressure to comply with socially emphasized norms. A key factor in this process is the role of dominant discourses, which regulate the perceived seriousness and authority of spoken acts²⁸. Closely related to the concept of social categorization is that of social representations. Referring to the work of Moscovici²⁹, Marková³⁰ describes representations as “thoughts in motion”—to represent something means to think, feel, and persuade within a social event. Social representations are thus grounded in “shared thinking, knowledge, and communication”³¹.

²⁴ Šanderová, J. – Šmídová Matoušová, O. (2009). *Sociální konstrukce nerovností pod kvalitativní lupou*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství (SLON), p. 54.

²⁵ Nekvapil, J. (2000–2001). Sociální kategorizace v interkulturním kontaktu: základní výklad, cvičení a diskuse dvou scén z podnikové komunikace. *Češtinář*, 11 (2), 38–52, p. 39.

²⁶ Nekvapil, J. (2000–2001). Sociální kategorizace v interkulturním kontaktu, p. 40.

²⁷ Vojtíšková, K. (2008). Studium sociální struktury jako konstruovaného prostoru. Sociální kategorizace a sociální identita. In J. Šafr (Ed.), *Sociální distance, interakce, relace a kategorizace: alternativní teoretické perspektivy studia sociální stratifikace*. Praha: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, p. 66.

²⁸ Foucault, M. (2002). *Archeologie věděni*. Praha: Herrmann.

²⁹ Moscovici, S. (2000). *Social Representations: Exploration in social psychology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

³⁰ Marková, I. (2007). *Dialogičnost a sociální reprezentace: dynamika mysli*. Praha: Academia.

³¹ Marková, I. *Dialogičnost a sociální reprezentace*, p. 178.

Framing

To understand the everyday production of social knowledge and the construction of social events, we apply the concept of interpretive frames developed by dramaturgical sociologist Erving Goffman³². Goffman focused on how people construct everyday knowledge within real-life situations. Interpretive frames are subject to discursive re-signification and shaped by systems of institutional power. This means that individuals—or social groups—can challenge established power structures by reinterpreting and relabeling social reality through language. Such re-interpretation occurs through ongoing, everyday processes of collective meaning-making, in which various social actors negotiate the relationships between particular entities or phenomena. A fundamental condition for this process is mutual recognition of identity among the actors involved. Framing is grounded in our experiences and the social stock of knowledge. As Šanderová and Šmídová and colleagues³³ note, it involves “the creation of interpretive schemes, patterns, or scripts that organize our ordinary experience, knowledge, and action.” We act within a situational context in which we read social reality through categories such as identity, status, roles, and the products of human activity. According to Koubek³⁴ frames “show how a given ideology is embedded in context and how we are expected to think about a given topic, issue, or problem within that context.” Through strategies of symbolic construction, speakers can transform interpretive frames, thereby shifting the perspective from which reality is viewed. This process is essential for the emancipation of socially stigmatized groups.

Discourse Analysis of Power

From the perspective of critical social theory, power operates by obscuring the interpretive origins of constructed reality. Michel Foucault, a foundational figure in theorizing the influence of power structures and dominant discourses, based his analysis on the premise that discourse emerges from institutional (i.e. power-laden) conditions. He emphasized the central role of what he termed discursive structures, which shape our perception of reality. Our knowledge of the world is thus made possible by discourse. As Fairclough³⁵ notes, “Discourse, according to Foucault, is a social construction of reality—a form of knowledge.” Discourses seek to fix meanings within a coherent and stable structure of signification. This, in turn, produces the illusion of a given and natural social

³² Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

³³ Šanderová, J. – Šmídová Matoušová, O. (2009). *Sociální konstrukce nerovnosti pod kvalitativní lupou*, p. 59.

³⁴ Koubek, M. (2013). *Zápas o uvozovky: interpretační rámce a repertoár jednání pro-romského hnutí v letech 1989–2007*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, Fakulta sociálních studií, p. 44.

³⁵ Fairclough (2003) in Schneiderová, S. (2015). *Analýza diskurzu a mediální text*. Praha: Karolinum, p. 24.

order. In reality, however, social reality—including society itself and individual identity—is composed of fluid and shifting entities that can never be fully or finally defined. The aim of discourse analysis is therefore to examine how constructions of social reality work to present themselves as objective, neutral, and natural.

For the purposes of our research, we draw primarily on the ideas of Laclau and Mouffe³⁶. Their discursive theory is rooted in the notion that objectivity itself is formed through discursive processes of meaning-making. The constructed objectivity of the social order obscures the contingent nature of its origin—that is, the historical and contextual struggle between competing discourses. Objectivity, in this framework, can be understood as a sedimented discourse, one that presents itself as independent, neutral, and natural, thereby marginalizing or excluding the viability of alternative discourses. Human beings are embedded in cultural traditions, in processes of knowledge production, in the social order, in acts of social control, and in their own reflected experiences. Discourse, in essence, refers to the temporary fixation of meaning. Laclau and Mouffe describe this process as articulatory practice, which marks both the beginning and the closure of a particular discourse. Discourse operates within what Jørgensen and Phillips³⁷ term the discursive field—a space that encompasses all the “surplus meanings” associated with signs that have emerged during articulatory practice. To explain how a particular discourse is formed, Laclau and Mouffe distinguish between elements and moments. Elements are polysemic signs or statements that await fixation. A discourse attempts to transform these elements into moments by reducing their ambiguity, thereby stabilizing their meanings within a given discursive structure. Every new utterance or social act has the potential to reframe the discourse, actively reconfiguring or narrowing the current interpretations by connecting signs within a different frame of reference. Discourses are organized around certain nodal points³⁸—privileged signs that give structure to the meanings of other signs, thereby anchoring the discourse as a whole. The gradual stabilization of sedimented discourses through social practices is made possible by the mechanism of hegemony. Hegemony works by fixing elements into moments, similar to how a discourse does. In contrast, antagonism represents an open conflict between competing discourses within a particular discursive order. Antagonism provides a space where the taken-for-granted status of norms and power relations can be disrupted, opening up possibilities for alternative meanings and political contestation.

³⁶ Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie*.

³⁷ Jørgensen, M. – Phillips, L. J. (2002). *Discourse analysis as theory and method*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

³⁸ Laclau, E. – Mouffe, Ch. *Hegemonie a socialistická strategie*, p.112.

Chouliaraki and Fairclough³⁹ rightly point out that individuals in subordinate social positions do not have the same opportunities to rearticulate elements or to participate meaningfully in the construction of moments—and, by extension, in processes of social change. This underscores the importance of examining how people and phenomena are categorized, and how such categorizations shape the possibilities for action available to them.

Analysis and Interpretation

Before presenting our analysis and interpretation of the research data, it is essential to clarify the conditions under which our interpretations were constructed—namely, the lived experiences of Romani mothers and students within the context of both school and family socialisation. At the outset, we had to critically reflect on our own conscious and unconscious biases—both positive and negative—as we entered interactions with Romani participants during the data collection phase. These biases were often informed more by typified representations than by personal experience or scholarly literature.

We made a conscious effort to suspend the influence of intrusive media portrayals of Romani life—whether in the form of deficit-oriented contemporary news coverage or romanticised depictions of the past (as found in films or documentaries)—as well as exoticized imagery from anthropological or ethnographic works. These representations typically involve recurring tropes of carefree, half-naked Romani children, extreme poverty, dilapidated housing, or even discriminatory humour.

However, despite our efforts to suppress such predominantly visual preconceptions, it was not always possible to fully eliminate their influence during unstructured interviews. As a result, our questions may have inadvertently contributed to, or even reinforced, a “gadjo” perspective—that is, a non-Romani outsider’s gaze, potentially lacking sensitivity to Romani cultural norms and lived experiences—which risks reproducing stereotypical constructions of Romani students’ social realities.

In group settings, we also employed techniques drawn from the Theatre of the Oppressed, which enabled participants to articulate their social positioning within the education system, both verbally and through embodied expression. The selection of analytical methods was intended to facilitate a relatively authentic interpretation of social reality, as understood and expressed by the Romani participants themselves. Employing discourse analysis and coding strategies common to qualitative research methodologies, we grounded our interpretation in the personal experiences and narratives of Romani respondents, while attending to the relativistic and power-laden dynamics of meaning-making.

³⁹ Chouliaraki, L. – Fairclough, N. (1999). *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 125.

Through this approach, we sought to achieve intersubjective understanding and culturally mediated insight into the lived realities of our participants. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that a certain degree of interpretative distortion is inevitable. This arises from differences in linguistic codes and sociocultural frameworks between researchers and participants, as well as the varying epistemological resources that individual informants draw upon when articulating their experiences.

Categorization

Source of statements: Romani mothers

The informants' construction of social reality concerned the following categories:

- Aggression in School
- Different Cultural Pattern
- Competing Binary: Them (teachers) vs. Us (mothers)
- Recognition of the Teaching Profession
- Priorities of Romani Mothers

Aggression in School

a) Based on Construction of Romani Children's Unruliness

I1: And he tried to defend her, and then some older boy, maybe from eighth or ninth grade, punched him. He came home with a black eye ((gestures to eye)). Yeah, he had a black eye, so it just...yeah, that was that.

I2: We've got stories like that too.

I4: I've been through that too, I know it – happened with my son.

I1: The headmistress, she was very nice, she understood. She even talked to the pupils. And, well, for a little while, it kinda worked.

I4: Hm.

IA: And after a while it started again. Like, you know, one of them started it and then everyone joined in. There wasn't, like, a person or some girl who would say, "Stop! What are you doing to her?"

...

I4: Like, I wanted to put my son in the after-school club, or well, I can't really – those Vlax kids go there.

I3: 'Cause you're scared they'll beat him up.

I2: Yeah.

I4: And he's like, „Mom, I don't wanna go!“ ((desperate tone))

...

I1: It's also about that kid, you know, how he didn't get any upbringing from his mom, from the parents. ((shakes head in disapproval))

I3: Yeah, they don't have respect for the teachers.

I4: No respect.

I1: So yeah, the parents are partly to blame too.

I2: Yes.

I3: That's what I'm saying – they don't have respect, these kids, not for the teachers, and the teachers, they're just out of patience, so the just...((waves hands in the air)) they let it go.

...

I2: I think the kids should change, 'cause some of them are rude. Romani kids are extremely rude, loud... it's a disaster, really.

I1: White kids too.

I2: Yeah, white kids too, I'm not saying just Gypsies. Like—Romani kids can be white too, but mostly it's the Romani ones. This really needs to change.

I7: If there are bad prejudices against Romani in white schools, then it'll always be bad. And the other way around—if there are bad prejudices against white people in Romani schools, then it'll be bad too. It's never gonna be solved. That's the problem nowadays—prejudices. Bad prejudices.

R: Do teachers have them too?

I7: Oh, for sure.

b) Based on the Construction of Poor Conditions in Romani School

I3: It's the school that changes them.

I5: Like, maybe someone provokes him, maybe someone starts provoking...

I3: =The school changes them.

I5: He won't let it go, he kinda likes fighting.

I3: =No, it's the school. It's changing them.

I5: Yeah, and they do keep watch, like when he was in... second grade, there was this one teacher—she didn't care. She let the kids fight, and she didn't care. She just went to the teachers' room.

...

I6: The kids are okay, yeah, but I also think that the way—

I4: =Mm-hmm.

I6: —the way they're treated, like, they're basically given the chance to hit each other, so then the kids think it's okay.

I3: Exactly, yes.

I4: Exactly, like they think they're allowed to do it.

...

T: What's the source of that aggression? Is it that they're around other Romani kids?

I4: Exactly.

R: So you think they should rather be around non-Romani kids? That they'd be less aggressive?

I4: Yes, that's true.

...

R: And what bothers you about that school?

I4: Bad—bad teachers, bad kids, the way they behave is bad, the teachers aren't even there, like—there's just no supervision at all.

I3: There isn't. ((nodding)) It's an awful school.

I4: Nobody watches the kids, stuff goes missing—slippers, hats, like, everything.

...

I3: Well, me personally... my son went to a Romani school for just one year, and I took him out, yeah. Because mostly it's true—Romani kids, they're hyperactive, yeah. Probably a bit more than regular non-Romani kids. And for some kids, they're a bad example. I'm talking from my own experience—that's why I took my son out. And when I put him in a school with Czech kids, there was bullying, though. In the Romani school, it's like he could do whatever he wanted, he could mess around with the other kids and so on, right? 'Cause he was among his own, yeah? And then when I put him in the Czech school, he was the one everyone looked at, you know? Now he's kind of blended in—he's in sixth grade, so it's not such a big issue anymore, because he's used to it, right? But at the beginning, it was a big problem. Still, I preferred to deal with that problem so he could... so he could fit in a bit with the other kids, because I saw that things go faster there, and I saw he had what it takes. Rather than leave him in the Romani school where he could just do whatever he wanted. I think the problem with Romani schools is the teachers. They let the kids do whatever they want—everything. And I've really witnessed it: when I went to the Romani school thinking about putting him back there, they told me, "Yes, he'll be fine here. He can do what he wants. He'll be fine." So I think in the Romani school, when the kids are that wild, it's because there's absolutely no authority. That's the problem.

...

I5: I'm telling you, teachers have no authority.

I3: They can do whatever they want there. I mean, speaking from experience—I went to a Romani school too. I came from a Czech school, and when I saw what was going on in that Romani school... Like, kids actually opened the window and lit a cigarette. That was it for me. And that's exactly the kind of thing no one deals with there—just nothing, really, at that Romani school.

That's why, if all Romani kids had to go only to Romani schools—like, if they weren't even allowed into Czech schools—that would be really bad. You know that film *Bastardi*? That's exactly it.

I6: But I have to speak up. I think if there's a good teacher, one who knows how to earn the kids' respect—and the whole class—then it can work.

Different Cultural Pattern

a) Based on the Construction of Life Priorities

I1: But only a few of them care, you know? Some parents just don't bother. Yeah, their kids go to school, sure... but they don't care whether they go or not. And I know, like—when I go to pick up my boy from school, I hear some of those Romani girls—

R: =Mhm.

I1: —or Gypsy girls. I listen to them. I don't talk to them, I don't know them, but I listen to how they talk. Like, “Ugh, finally, let him come out of that school already, so I don't have to go there anymore. So, I don't have to deal with all that school stuff. I don't want no responsibilities, like, having to go to school. I can't wait till he's fifteen, sixteen.” ((mimicking whining tone))

...

R: And did your parents, like, push you—

I1: =Hmm. ((sighs))

R: —to go to vocational school, or how was it?

I1: Yeah, they pushed me. From around twelve, they started pushing me. But unfortunately, I was acting all cool teenager, right? And I was like, “Sure, sure, I'll get a qualification.” ((mocking her past self)) Then when I was in seventh grade, I was like, “Forget it. I'm going to the labor office.” I went to discos, parties, and I didn't care anymore. I said, “Nope. I'll get unemployment benefits and just stay home.”

b) Based on the Construction of Communication Habits

I6: But you know how it is—she's just louder, she laughs a lot, she's a happy girl, really.

I3: =Well, she's young.

I4: She's young, so like—so what?

I2: Exactly.

I6: And like, when she says something—her view or opinion—the teachers take it the wrong way, like it's bad or something.

R: 'Cause they're not used to that kind of thing?

I2: Yes, yes.

I6: Yeah, and she's just that type—when something's wrong, she'll say it. She's not afraid to speak up! ((firmly))

I1: That's a good thing.

...

R: So, they teach would understand what's actually going on?

I5: Yes, yes. Because in Romani, most of the time, that's where the conflicts start. They curse each other, they use bad words, and the teacher can't intervene. The kids are handling it among themselves. She can't step in—because she doesn't understand.

R: And if she did understand, what could she do?

I5: If she understood... if she knew, then she could step in: "Give me your report book, and if you do that again, I'm going home to tell your parents. And if that doesn't help, I'll go further." Like, up the chain—to the office, to child services. Because child services want to deal with families like that. When it gets extreme—like families that are just like: "Go to school so they don't cut my benefits!"—then that's how it ends up getting dealt with, you know?

c) Based on the Construction of Parental Role Modeling

I1: ...he just doesn't want to, or he's lazy. So, I always push him, or sometimes I even argue with my man about it—like, that he doesn't push him, you know? That he's spoiling him. I say, "Show him! Look, you're not educated either, you only finished primary school and now you can't get a job anywhere."

...

R: So, when kids aren't interested in school—why is that, like...?

I2: =It's the Romani, yeah. It's the Gypsy talk, basically. The parents just aren't interested in school at all.

R: And the kids?

I2: Well, that's how their parents grew up. And now, when the kids see that—like, dad's like that, mom doesn't care either—then they're like, "Why should I care?"

R: Mhm.

I2: They just copy it from their parents, that's how it is. It's all about how they're raised. It's all in the upbringing.

...

I1: And for some parents, school just means nothing, you know? Like, "I don't care—let the kid just grow up already, so me and my husband can finally have some peace and quiet." ((parodies)) Yeah, a lot of parents think like that. They just want peace.

...

R: So, what's the solution, then?

I4: Well, like... the solution is that some parents... it really depends on them. If they want that for their kids—going to school and all that. It's not just about the kids. Sometimes the real problem is the parents, that they absolutely don't care. They open the report book, sign off on six failing grades—fine, right? Just out of duty, so they don't lose their child benefits or some kind of welfare. So it's like, "Get up, go to school." And that's it. Not like, "Get up, brush your teeth, get dressed nicely, do you have everything? Got your lunch? Is your report book signed? Homework done? Okay, let's take ten minutes before you go to school, let's check everything, tell me what you remember." Out of fear—so the kid doesn't bring home another F, right? And they know—some of those moms send them off like, "Get up and go." So sometimes the problem really is the parents, not just the kids.

Competing Binarity: Them (Teachers) vs. Us (Mothers)

a) Based on the Construction of Non-Romani Teacher“Superiority

R: But what I'd like to understand—you were saying the teachers didn't really deal with it?

I4: Exactly, just like you said.

I5: They say it's like, you know, just between the kids—the Romani kids.

I4: Right. They don't deal with it. They just don't respond anymore, they let it be, like, that's how it is, I guess.

I5: They just throw all the Roma and the Vlax into one bag.

I4, I5: They're probably scared of the parents.

I3: Because they're Roma. And the teachers, they just see it like— “They're all Roma, that's it.”

...

R: Why are the teachers passive? What's the reason?

I6: Because they don't care.

I5: Exactly. They don't care—it's well paid for them. That school's not going to get shut down, because they want to keep the students. So, it's like, “Quick, give us as many as you can.” And if you transfer from a Romani school to a regular one, they'll say, “Go back to first grade, please—you can't keep up.” They don't give them any real education.

I3: That's exactly why I didn't get into high school. Because I wasn't... Like, when I was at the Czech school, my grades were average—Bs and Cs. Then I switched to the Romani school and suddenly I had straight As. So, I thought I was doing great, you know? And then I took the entrance exams—and nothing. Nothing at all. I didn't know a thing.

...

R: What do teachers lack, in your opinion? If you had a Book of Wishes and Complaints right here, and it said: Teachers – Pros and Cons?

I5: They lack authority. They don't care whether Romani kids get any... I feel like in Romani schools, they're just not interested in helping Romani children get a proper education. They don't care.

R: The teachers?

I5: Yes. Especially in Romani schools—not in the non-Romani ones, not at all. Their job—I've written to them more than once: You're not suited for this profession! And mostly it's the authority. They're not even trying to hold that authority. They just don't. I think they treat this really just like a job. Like, “Why should I even bother? That kid's a little bastard, that one too, that one's also one of theirs. Did you see his mom? And the other day they arrested her brother.” They take into account where someone's from—what kind of family. And then it's all pointless. They're like, “You're black, you're a Gypsy, you're from a problematic family. What could ever come out of you, seriously? You'll end up on welfare anyway!”

b) Based on the Construction of Diagnostic Superiority

I6: Like, my daughter was supposed to do some kind of test or something. And I said I'd go to the principal myself and talk about how it's going to be. And then the mentor said, "No, I'll go there!" and tells me, "You don't need to go." Then even someone from the foundation called me and said, "We have a mentor position to handle things like this." And I said, "Well, nobody told me that! That's my responsibility as a parent!"

I4: =Exactly.

I6: Like—whether my daughter has this test or that one, I'm the one who should go talk to the principal and ask. And I told them, "I don't care that you're giving her money. What matters to me is to sort these things out myself!" ((firmly))

...

R: So, you're saying the deputy head didn't want to admit the child because they didn't go to preschool?

I4: Yes, exactly.

R: Could you say specifically what her reason was—what exactly bothered her?

I3: It bothered her because the kids weren't... She said she can tell the difference between a preschool child and one who didn't go. She said—

I5: =And I still don't get it—preschool doesn't even teach them anything. You get that?

I3: But yeah, she said she can recognize preschool kids. She just wants them to have attended preschool—because she wants them to be less playful once they start school.

I4: It's kind of weird. It is weird.

I3: Yeah, I guess so. She said something like he's still missing a few years.

I1: She didn't want a kid from the prep class to go into first grade—she wanted one from preschool.

I3: She said, "Look, he still has some gaps."

I1: She didn't know how to explain it, so she just made it up like that.

...

I6: They even told her in eighth grade that she wouldn't make it to high school—and they said it right to her face. And she was like, "I want to go to a teacher training school, because I want to work with kids."

I4: Yes.

I6: And the teacher says, "You're not good enough for that—you'll be a cook."

I4: I don't like that. I really don't like that.

I1: And how can she know that?

I4: How can she know that? Exactly!

I2: They'll tell you you're not good enough, that you won't make it.

I4: Yes.

I1: But how can she know—if she doesn't even give you a chance?

...

I6: So actually, I kind of gave up on school, and I started motivating her in a different direction. I encouraged her to see that learning doesn't just happen at

school, but somewhere else. That she can learn in other spaces in life. Like trying different clubs. Or I got her involved in different activities, so she could actually see that she has self-confidence. That she's not stupid.

I4: That's true, that's right.

c) Based on the Construction of Eye-for-an-Eye Mentality

I5: When I transferred my kids here, they were more communicative, kind of a bit ahead of the other Romani kids. They were used to speaking Czech, to expressing ideas, being part of the group. So, they attracted a lot of friends to their side—a lot of friends. And the teacher saw my son like—if anything bad happened, then it was my son's responsibility, because he was above average. And the teacher even called him the boss. And I didn't like that. That happened to me here. They just weren't used to a Romani child who was doing fine in terms of behavior, thinking, right? Whenever there was some activity, they could see he was way, way ahead. But they didn't see that as a good thing—as a positive example for the others. No. If something bad happened, they blamed my son: "He's the one who influenced them, because he's got the brain."

R: And what happened? Did they punish them or what?

I5: Well, punish... they wanted to punish him, yeah...

R: Just him?

I5: Yes, just him. They even wanted to send him to a children's home. I went to the school authority and nothing much happened, so I escalated it all the way to Prague. And then the principal came to my door, begging me to withdraw it, because they were docking his salary for six months. Some kind of bonus or part of his pay, something like that. And I said: No. No. I've been fighting this for half a year, I've had this internal battle with you here, so no. You deserve to be punished! You made a mistake, and you wanted to put my son in a children's home!

...

I2: This little boy came home and had been really restless in class—just misbehaving. And he wouldn't listen at all. Just wouldn't listen. So, the teacher yelled at him, and then he made up this story at home that she had beaten him, and some more nonsense like "everyone saw it." His mother went and waited for the teacher until five o'clock, and then she beat her up so badly that now she's facing eight to ten years in prison.

Recognition of the Teaching Profession

a) Based on the Construction of Job Demands

I1: And this school isn't bad, the one our kids go to. The teachers here, they really try, and they've got a lot on their plate too. You can't just say, like—imagine having twenty kids in one classroom, or maybe fifteen, and now imagine this one shouting, that one shouting—you don't even know what to do. ((others nodding)) We also have to kind of recognize that the teacher, she's dealing with a lot too, right?

I4: Yeah, definitely.

...

I3: A teacher told me this already in kindergarten. When my son first started going, she said, "From now on, we're already fifty percent responsible for raising your child." And it's true. Because he spends more time there than at home, almost. He gets home at five, and by eight he's in bed. It's been like that since kindergarten. He spends almost half his life at school, you know?

I5: Well, I wouldn't say half exactly. But up until he's eighteen, yeah, you could say he's there half the day.

I3: Right, that's just it. So, part of the upbringing really is on the teachers.

b) Based on the Construction of an Understanding and Caring Approach

I2: I think the child, the student, should definitely respect the teacher.

I3: I'll put it the way I understand it, okay? That strictness has to be there from the teacher's side—like, "I'm strict with you because I care about you."

I5: The student has to know that—it's not just about learning. There has to be respect on both sides.

I3: "I care about you. I can be strict, but I can also show the other side." That's how I see it.

...

I5: A teacher should be supportive with the child: "I need you to do this. I'm asking this from you. It's for your own good, for your life. I'm the one giving you a start in life."

c) Based on the Construction of Expected Professional Support

I4: And they said that my son just doesn't have what it takes, the little one—that he's just slow. And I said, "That doesn't matter, they'll teach him anyway." But they just said they don't have time for him, that there are thirty kids in the class.

I3: Thirty kids?

I4: Yeah, and they said they don't have time, that they won't explain things to him three times.

I3: That's not okay.

I1: That's what school is for—to explain things to him!

I3: Not in this school. ((firmly))

I4: And I don't like that.

I6: They should've given him some kind of individual plan or something that he could keep up with, right?

...

I6: She was seeing the school psychologist, and the psychologist said, "Yeah, she comes to me sometimes, we talk a bit"—but that was the full extent of the support! And because of that, she was totally demotivated to even try. She ended up seeing herself as an outsider, like... ((gestures)) If I hadn't been there to support her as a parent, she would've hit rock bottom—no one would've done anything with her.

...

I3: And when something happens, the teacher handles it instead of the kids—and I really like that.

I4: Yes, exactly, she takes care of it.

I3: Yeah, like two years ago, some girl strangled my daughter—and I didn't even know, because my daughter didn't tell me.

I4: No!

I3: And the teacher called me in the evening to tell me some girl tried to strangle her, and she asked if there were any aftereffects, if my daughter had told me. I said, "No. I'm hearing this from you." And she said, "Well, I already issued a formal warning to the student."

Priorities of Romani Mothers

a) Based on the Construction of Necessary Changes

R: I'm just thinking—when you say the teachers should change somehow, there are two options. I still don't fully get it. Should they be stricter with the kids, so that there's more order—

I3: Yes.

I4: Exactly.

R: —or should they be kinder to them, so the kids aren't—

I1: No, stricter.

I2: Stricter.

I3: No, stricter.

I4: Yeah, more strict.

R: So, you feel the teachers are too soft on them?

I3: Yes, yes, yes.

I1: Too soft, yeah.

...

I5: She lets the kids go without even asking, "Where are your parents? Who's picking you up?"

I4: Yeah, I don't like that at all.

I5: She just doesn't care. She won't even say, "Line up in pairs." And her locker room's just around the corner. ((ironically))

I3: That's bad. That's really bad.

I4: Now she knows me as a parent, she recognizes me, but not the others. ((angrily)) There was a father sitting there, right next to me. “Excuse me, where’s my son?” I said, “I don’t know.” Turns out the teacher left him standing outside the school. A first grader! That’s just not okay.

I1: That’s not allowed! You can’t do that!

I5: In the end, my friend called me—she had him at her place. She had gone to pick up her son around half past eleven and found him there. She said, “What if a car hit him? Or a tram? Who’s responsible?” There’s heavy traffic there—no lights, no crosswalk, nothing.

I1: Mhm.

I5: And the teacher told me, “We’re not responsible!” So, you know what I did? I pulled my kid out and put him in another school.

...

R: So, you're saying it should be mixed—half Romani, half non-Romani in the same school?

I4: Yes, exactly.

Others: Yes! ((all nodding))

...

R: So, what bothers you about school—what would you like to change, to make it fit better?

I6: Can I say something?

R: Go ahead.

I6: I wish there were schools where kids didn’t end up having to go to a psychiatrist or psychologist because of how the teachers treat them. That’s what I’d want most. I want schools—and teachers—where students actually enjoy going to school.

I3: Yes, I feel the same.

R: Can you explain what you just said?

I3: Like, when a student has some issue at school—or they think he’s a little problematic—or they just notice something, they immediately send him to a psychologist. And I don’t like that either, because the kid ends up stressed. That happened to me too—and I was stressed as well.

R: What caused that stress?

I3: What caused it? That it felt mandatory. That they were forcing us into it.

b) Based on the Construction of a Romani Perspective on School

I6: But the teacher at school should really try to motivate the child. You know?

I4: That’s true.

I6: I get it, but then complaining about the child, saying they just can’t handle school—and not even trying to understand why they can’t?

I2: That’s what every teacher says about my son. Just like she said.

I6: Yeah. For example, my daughter developed epilepsy when she was ten and started taking strong medication, and her academic performance dropped by two whole levels.

R: Mhm.

I6: And they just kept pressuring her—"you have to do this, you have to do that"—but she just couldn't.

I4: She couldn't handle it.

I3: I understand.

I2: She couldn't, yeah.

I6: And when I asked for some kind of individual learning plan, they told me she didn't need one at all.

I4: I don't get that. ((quietly))

...

I6: So, it was really about how the teacher acted—so arrogant. The child felt miserable, didn't feel good at school, and the mother couldn't find a way to talk to the teacher because of it, to make school feel safe for the child. Or like—my child is sensitive, and they need to feel good in the place where they spend time. And when they don't feel safe with the teacher, they don't even want to go.

...

I4: He knows the teacher in that class is like a robot. Not like a person. There's just nothing emotional there. Like, she could at least talk with the kids, not as a friend, but... you know, just have some kind of conversation. Not just the lessons. That's the problem with my son—he sees the teacher as a stranger. She comes in, goes through the material, and he's afraid to ask anything, because she might say, "You're behind" or "You weren't paying attention." But maybe he just doesn't understand. And we've had to deal with that a lot. There's no relationship with the kids.

I9: There's no friendly connection between them. I don't mean literally being friends—but there should be something like that between a student and a teacher.

I3: Because if a child likes the teacher, they'll listen. They'll say, "I'm not going to hurt that teacher—I like her, because she's kind to me."

c) Based on the Construction of the Need of an Inclusive Approach

I6: And just to go back to that—I think what a child really needs is a space that feels safe, where they really feel good.

I4: Exactly.

I6: Because if someone keeps putting pressure on her all the time, or just—

I1: Then the kid won't even want to go to school.

I4: Exactly.

R: So, what creates that safe space?

I6: That she's accepted the way she is. With everything she is.

...

I4: I said, "Everyone can be who they are. Nobody has to be perfect." Maybe this one is a bit slower—it doesn't matter. Everyone is who they are. I told her that straight to her face, just like it is.

...

I6: I just wanted to add that every child has their own pace, and we need to approach each child individually. Teachers should take that into account. Because every child has their own personality. Just because something doesn't come easy for them doesn't mean they're bad. Maybe they don't get good grades, but they might be great at something else—you know, they have...

I5: Or the teacher should recognize that he's struggling in a certain subject, and then pay more attention to him, explain the material better. Not just throw it at him and give him a failing grade and move on.

I6: Yes, or pile on a bunch of assignments just to show he can't keep up.

I5: Exactly!

...

I1: I mean, I've got nothing against special schools—but that's where the slower kids go.

R: Mhm.

I1: And I just don't like—well, actually it does bother me—that it's all Gypsy kids there. Like, when someone I know asks me what school my son goes to and how satisfied I am, I tell them straight: I don't like that school. But no other school will take him because he's darker. A few shades darker—not totally black, he's more olive-skinned. But they won't accept him, and they make up excuses like it's not his district.

Positioning

We will now conceptualize the ways in which symbolic constructions of social reality are shaped by the so-called *Modi operandi*⁴⁰. These *modi operandi* can contribute to the establishment of dominance relationship and the legitimization of their validity.

Romani mothers directed the legitimization of their narratives into a binary division of responsibility for influencing the Romani child. In this framework, the school assumes the primary role of supervisory authority over the proper behaviour of Romani pupils. Only secondarily does it serve an educational function. The Romani family, in turn, plays the role of emotional support and guardian of the child's personal interests. Romani mothers reaffirmed the role of the school as an institution that should develop Romani children in accordance with Romani socialization patterns. Through this, they rationalized the subordination of the school to the interests of Romani family. In effect, this positioning supported the existence of so-called "Romani school", which, unlike non-Romani schools, do not prioritize academic performance. The mothers narrated their arguments through frequent life stories involving cases of so-called school failure. By using this strategy, they asserted a claim to shift responsibility for Romani pupils' school failure onto the school itself.

⁴⁰ Thompson, J. B. (1990). *Ideology and modern culture: critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

The dissimulation *modus operandi*, specifically concealment, selectively highlights aspects of social reality that align with the speaker's power interests. In the case of Romani mothers, the conflictual behaviour of Romani pupils was consistently framed as a product of the school environment. Conditions within Romani families were mentioned only through euphemistic language. These references typically pointed to acts of social emancipation or expressions of Romani children's temperament. Examples included themes such as loud speech, clothing styles, or conflictual interactions with teachers. Isolated comments by Romani mothers about inappropriate behaviour at home were discursively re-labelled using a cause-effect logic: the child's misbehaviour was presented as a consequence of a lack of school discipline, resulting from the weakness of the teaching staff. Latently shared awareness of the lower cognitive demands in predominantly Romani schools, as well as remarks about pupils' academic performance, were replaced in the mothers' narratives by an emphasis on alternative education goals. Instead of the expected performance (such as good grades), they preferred the child's personal well-being within the school environment and preparation for a future parental role.

Through the *modus operandi* of unification, Romani mothers (within the focus group setting) developed cooperative strategies to criticize a school system that they perceived as failing to understand the needs of Romani children. They expressed symbolic unity especially in relation to school interventions concerning the psychological assessment of Romani pupils. In this regard, they leaned toward inclusive mechanisms grounded in the acceptance of the child as they are. The period of compulsory schooling was discursively framed by the informants as "liveable" educational atmosphere, in which Romani children are guided by teachers who are both supportive and consistent. Within the *modus operandi* of fragmentation, the informants' narratives revealed three key dichotomies. The first concerned the relationship between Romani and non-Romani culture, particularly in relation to the perceived value of education. The second dichotomy involved the differing interests of the Romani school—represented by white female teachers—and those of Romani families. The third dichotomy reflected a distancing from the social practices of Vlax⁴¹ Romani. In the first case, the mothers generalized Romani life patterns in order to legitimize the specific educational needs of their children. In the second, they often launched harsh criticisms of school staff, motivated by perceived racial bias. They understood the alleged indifference of white teachers toward Romani pupils as an expression of the hierarchical superiority of the non-Romani majority society. In the third case: relating to the distribution of social power—the mothers labelled the group they called "the Vlax" as aggressors with whom no reasonable dialogue was possible. These symbolic constructions of reality enabled the mothers to engage in positioning—that is, discursive self-localization of their identity as fair defenders of Romani children's rights and as

⁴¹ Vlax Roma are a Romani subgroup with distinct linguistic and cultural traditions.

knowledgeable advocates for their educational needs. In this context, the school was framed as a failing institution from two perspectives: the social (as it fosters racism) and the professional (as it seeks to reshape Romani pupils against their nature).

Reification was a relatively common *modus operandi* in the informants' narratives. Social reality is based on the negotiation of meanings and their inherent fluidity—something that reification denies. The deconstruction of entrenched perceptions regarding the interaction between Romani families and schools was rather rare in the perspectives expressed by Romani mothers. Most statements emphasized the dysfunctionality of predominantly Romani schools, often accompanied by considerations of transferring their child to another school. In their accounts, there was a strong tendency to naturalize the perceived need to “keep Romani pupils on a tight rein.” Alongside this, the temperament or character of Romani children was naturalized and eternalized, reinforcing a long-standing tradition of avoiding more demanding academic paths. In this way, Romani children are discursively assigned the identity of underachieving pupils. This identity is further supported by a powerful institutional discourse that promotes the existence of tailor-made “Romani schools.” Within this discourse, the views of both teachers and Romani parents tend to align and reinforce each other.

We will briefly describe the range of linguistic tools through which the social reality of education for Romani pupils was symbolically constructed from the perspective of Romani mothers, using the framework of speech acts developed by Austin (2000). Criticism of teachers' behaviour was a frequent theme in their arguments. Romani mothers presented stereotypical examples from educational reality in which teachers' authority failed in disciplining Romani pupils. Teachers allegedly deliberately ignored aggressive behaviour by Romani children, thereby reinforcing their social superiority over Roma people. The Romani mothers positioned themselves as competent critics of the school environment without addressing the interests and demands of the school. From the perspective of speech acts, they issued verdictives against non-Roma teachers, thus discrediting their professional identity as education experts. In the mothers' narratives, there was a lack of recognition for teachers' contributions to the cognitive development of children. Through expressiveness, they voiced their astonishment and indignation at how the school was “ruining Romani children, which also negatively affected intergenerational communication within Roma families. A secondary rhetorical effect of these impassioned critiques was a resulting refusal to cooperate with the school. Through this act, they discursively justified their children's school failures and personal conflicts with school staff. In rare instance, they deconstructed the generalizations of their negative statement about the school by pointing out specific exceptions. The background for this shift in evaluative context was the appreciation expressed by teachers for the child's progress. The illocutionary force of the Romani

mothers' statements aimed to evoke the impression that Roma people are not sufficiently understood or, more importantly, recognized in Czech society.

Framing

The narrative pattern articulated by Romani mothers constructed what may be described as an “everyday educational reality,” primarily shaped by their perceptions of how non-Romani teachers relate to Romani children. Their accounts drew on both personal recollections from their own school experiences and their current perspectives as parents. Within this discourse, Romani mothers assigned the responsibility for the learning process almost entirely to the school. Underachievement on the part of the child was interpreted as a consequence of unprofessional, inappropriate, or even dismissive attitudes on the part of teachers. In contrast, academic success was attributed predominantly to the child's innate talent or giftedness.

Causality Framework of Conflict Behaviour

According to the narratives of Romani mothers, the core problems in predominantly Romani schools stem from conflictual relationships among Romani pupils themselves. Manifestations of racism and violence, however, are primarily attributed to the indifference and inconsistency of non-Romani teachers in addressing these conflicts. Another cause of the problems was identified as the neglect of the pupils' right to freedom of expression and decision-making. In the informants' accounts, a causal chain of reasons and consequences leads to the conclusion that the school is ultimately responsible for the disobedience of Romani children. The lack of respect shown by Romani pupils toward teachers is rooted in a generalizing assumption of the teachers' (alleged racist) aversion to Roma. At the same time, however, the lack of respect is paradoxically and counterproductively attributed to parental upbringing, where children adopt dismissive behavioural patterns toward school from their family environment.

Visible signs of disorder and a lack of discipline in schools often led Romani mothers to express contempt toward the teaching staff. According to them, teachers choose a strategy of non-intervention in disputes among children or engage in alibistic denial of their responsibility. The main reason for this approach was said to be fear of potential backlash from Romani parents.

Informants also contextualized the specific challenges of educating Romani pupils by referring to the behaviour of Vlax Romani children in Romani schools. Their behaviour—along with that of Vlax Romani parents—was described as hostile and aggressive toward other Roma. By distancing themselves from the Vlax, Romani mothers constructed a binary opposition between “non-conforming” Vlax Roma and “tolerant” non-Vlax Roma.

As a solution to the unacceptable conditions of violence in Romani schools, the informants proposed systemic change—namely, social inclusion. They understood inclusion in terms of the existence of ethnically mixed schools, and more specifically, the elimination of all-Romani segregated schools.

In discussing the violent tendencies of Romani pupils, the mothers emphasized a construction of social reality that stems from teachers' unpreparedness to understand the Romani temperament. The heightened aggressiveness (wildness, unruliness) of Romani children and the belief that the school—rather than the family—is to blame was supported by the argument that their children did not misbehave at home before attending school. Teachers were accused of not understanding the context of pupil conflicts due to their lack of knowledge of the Romani language, leading to alibistic and evasive reactions. Blame was also placed on the frustrating and demotivating school environment itself. Through these discursive constructions, Romani mothers absolved themselves of responsibility for their children's behaviour—even while acknowledging that their children now behave inappropriately at home during their school years. The most common solution, from the perspective of Romani mothers, was to transfer their child to a different school.

The "Carrot and Stick" Framework

Romani mothers typically focused their descriptions on the functioning of disciplinary rules and on teachers' familiarity with pupils' family members. When informants perceived shortcomings in these social processes, they responded by drawing conclusions and forming judgments about the school's effectiveness. A sense of mutual familiarity among people within the school, and the predictability of their actions, is considered essential. A major point of contention arises when a teacher demonstrates disinterest or loses track of a pupil's current family situation—particularly at the primary school level. A lack of knowledge about the child's parents or close relatives, or leaving the child unsupervised, is interpreted as a failure on the part of the teacher or school as an institution. There is a clear preference among Romani mothers for teachers' supervisory roles over their educational ones. The content of instruction is usually not a central concern. A teacher's authority is expected to be based on strictness and the enforcement of rules. Within this framework of preferred behavioural models, Romani mothers value teachers who demonstrate active, responsive, and simultaneously firm leadership in the life of the school. Their sensitivity to what they perceive as unjust treatment of their children often manifests as criticism toward the teachers. At the same time, what is perceived as "supportive" behaviour on the part of teachers is welcomed even more strongly. A particularly effective strategy for fostering cooperation between school and Romani families is when teachers recognize and affirm Romani children. Romani mothers have clear expectations of how teachers should act. The verb "to deal with" (řešit) plays a key role in their accounts. The teacher's

primary responsibility is seen as the immediate resolution of any school-related issues. Fulfilling the competence of pedagogical authority is associated with timely responses to events—issuing a warning, applying sanctions, demonstrating trust, or offering cooperation. Above all, teachers are expected to give the impression that they have firm control over Romani children. Expectations toward teachers are not based on academic expertise, but rather on their professional role as guarantors of children's physical and emotional safety. Romani mothers are aware of the challenges of raising young children, which they illustrated through references to shouting and high energy, especially in classrooms with large groups of pupils. It is evident that many school conflicts cannot be prevented by supervision alone, nor can full responsibility for children's behaviour rest solely with teaching staff. Nevertheless, when disciplinary issues arise, the teacher is often immediately blamed for mishandling the situation.

The views presented above can be summarized in the observation that Romani mothers dichotomously prefer both strictness and consistency in discipline, and kindness and responsiveness in education. Romani parents are often troubled by the idea of their children being stressed by the pursuit of grades and the pressure to perform academically. The problem of school failure among Romani pupils is frequently attributed by Romani parents to inappropriate guidance or classroom management by white female teachers, who are perceived as lacking understanding of the individual needs of Romani children and attempting to "re-educate" them according to non-Romani norms. A key value for Romani mothers is a supportive school environment, and language mastery is seen as central to their children's educational success. According to the mothers, language is a pathway to higher education and improved life opportunities for Roma. For this reason, some Romani mothers choose to prioritize Czech over Romani in their family upbringing. At this point, the mothers also reflected on the current possibilities for their children's success in the school system. The so-called "white" school is viewed as unsuitable for Romani pupils due to its emphasis on competition and its tendency to penalize mistakes. The so-called "Romani" school is also considered inappropriate, primarily due to the tense interpersonal dynamics among Romani families that affect the school environment. An inclusive school is seen as a possible solution, as it acknowledges both social heterogeneity and the importance of individualized approaches to pupils. From the perspective of Romani mothers, the essence of school education lies in the child's well-being.

Framework of Cultural Misunderstanding

Conflicts between Romani mothers and schools are most often triggered by teachers' criticism of Romani children and by teachers' interventions into the private lives of Romani families. Disputes may also arise from differing cultural norms regarding speech volume, as Romani pupils tend to speak somewhat more loudly. In some cases, this loudness is interpreted by teachers from the

dominant culture as rudeness or a lack of respect toward adults. Romani mothers, however, described loudness of speech as a positive trait—characteristic of youth and an expression of emancipation. Through this lens, loudness was reframed as a cultural difference that should be recognized and respected within a pluralistic society. At the core of Romani mothers' complaints were repeated experiences of their needs being ignored, which they perceived as evidence of their social marginalization and inferiority within Czech society. This sense of social stigma serves to legitimize, in the mothers' view, expressions of resistance and violations of school rules by Romani children. Another example of cultural misunderstanding concerns the lack of second chances in response to academic failure. Romani mothers called for continuous rather than one-time psychological assessments of their children, highlighting the need for more flexible and individualized evaluation processes. The consequences of assessment practices were also evident in how children's academic potential was judged—particularly whether they entered first grade from a regular kindergarten or from a preparatory class. Children coming from preparatory classes are often rejected, a practice that Romani mothers strongly criticize. They perceive the justifications offered by school staff as self-interested and overly personalized. These examples point to a deeper conflict of interest between schools and Romani families. While schools prioritize maintaining academic performance standards, they often fail to operate in truly inclusive ways—pushing Romani issues to the margins of institutional concern. Romani mothers are aware of the advantages of enrolling their children in regular, preferably non-Romani, schools, as completing such education is believed to improve life opportunities. This reflects a broader call for the Czech education system to recognize and accept Romani cultural difference. Taking into account the interests of Romani children—even when expressed through different behavioural norms—is seen as a path toward meaningful cooperation and mutual recognition between school and family.

Framework of Expert Intervention

The increased occurrence of social pathologies among Romani children in schools has led to institutional pressure—within the dominant educational discourse—for interventions into Romani families. Consequently, this sector has seen a growing presence of specialized professionals. While the work of experts in newly established, non-teaching roles is often perceived as beneficial, excessive intervention into family relationships can, in some cases, hinder rather than support cooperation. The contextual background of the informants' dissatisfaction stemmed from the symbolic labelling of social reality, which was based on expected patterns of communication between Romani parents and non-Romani educational specialists. In their accounts, Romani mothers expressed concern over the institutional transfer of decision-making authority to schools (and, implicitly, to other social institutions), which they viewed as marginalizing the educational influence of Romani parents on their own children. In response

to the framing of parental competence monitoring by school-based professionals, the informants clearly voiced their opposition to any such interventions. For instance, the role of the mentor as a qualified expert in addressing the educational needs of Romani children was repeatedly questioned. In contrast, the mothers constructed alternative narratives that challenged the dominant professional discourse. These alternative framings emphasized personal familiarity, emotional support, and—above all—the irreplaceable love they felt for their children, which they believed could not be replicated by any institutional structure. Romani mothers consistently assigned responsibility for their children's academic education to teachers, while insisting that emotional upbringing and decisions regarding the child's future life path remained firmly within the domain of the family.

Discursive Grounding of Frames

In the following interpretation of the research data, we will focus on the functioning of binaries, articulation practices, and the formation of discourses in the narratives of Romani mothers.

Discourse of Family Priority

One of the key pillars in the narratives of Romani mothers was the discourse of family priority. Within the discourse, the following binaries became apparent:

- I (Romani mother) - They (non-Romani teachers),
- My child – Romani pupil (in general),
- Teacher - Pupils,
- Romani family - School.

These social binaries formed an articulatory scheme within the categorization inventory. In this framework, the informants constructed interpretations of reality whose discursive effect served to legitimize the specificity of Romani children's education. In doing so, they created argumentative space for proposing their own visions of how an adequate teacher should act. At the same time, from the perspective of Romani identity, they used this discourse to validate their own views, since teachers at the Romani school were not of Romani origin.

The informants' power position was grounded in the authenticity of their membership in a specific social group, derived from their ethnic background. A key moment in the articulation practice was the prioritization of the interests of the Romani family over those of the school. Within this discourse, the school appears as an institution that should culturally adapt to Romani pupils—or, more precisely, to the institution of the Romani family. Romani pupils thereby gain the right to take a critical or oppositional stance toward the school, especially when it is perceived (or acknowledged) as acting against or failing to understand Romani interests.

Among the elements of this articulation practice was the Romani family's effort to open up to the educational offerings of the school. The desired outcome of such cooperation would be improved educational results through the principle of the democratization of education. Within a discursive field that promotes inclusive mechanisms, the emancipation of Romani pupils appears as a likely possibility. However, variants of cooperating discourses—those that would emerge in the interaction between the Romani family and the (Romani) school—were only rarely present in the informants' narratives.

Discourse of Social Recognition and Goodwill

Evidence of occasional appreciation for the work of the school was represented by the discourse of social recognition and goodwill. The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- I (mother) - She (teacher),
- I (partner of the school) - She (partner of the Romani family),
- I (mother) - teacher as social worker,
- I (mother) - teacher as expert on the Romani way of life.

The narratives of the informants were grounded in the assumption of equality between teachers and Romani mothers. For Romani mothers, proof of this equality was the teacher's familiarity with the family members of Romani pupils. Since trust toward the non-Romani Czech majority is generally low, teachers who tend to be successful in the education system are those with long-term experience and stable positions within a school.

Romani mothers consider the institution of school important for their children; however, they need to feel accepted and to experience a recognition of the Romani way of life. If this is not the case, they adopt the role of protectors of their children's interests—which often leads to transferring the pupil to another school.

A key element of articulation practice within this discourse was the expectation that teachers demonstrate strong organizational skills when communicating with Romani families, as well as appropriate social competencies when teaching Romani pupils. In this context, teachers are expected to manage primarily fieldwork in the spirit of social workers—those who understand the family circumstances of each Romani pupil, and only then are able to initiate successful education within the school.

Among the valued social skills of teachers are the ability to assert their authority and to enforce consistent behavioural rules. Another element of articulation practice was the possibility of involving another school staff member (e.g., a social pedagogue) who would work—preferably informally—with the Romani family and help mediate an optimized pedagogical environment for the Romani pupil. The position of a “depersonalized” mentor, tasked with resolving conflicts between the Romani family and the school, was subject to criticism.

Discourse of Hidden Racism

Romani mothers generally expressed negative attitudes toward the school's activities. In their arguments, the discourse of teachers' hidden racism strongly resonated.

The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- I (mother) - She (racist),
- I (mother) - She (indifferent teacher),
- Romani woman - Non-Romani woman,
- Romani women - Intervening professional,
- Romani family - Discriminatory school.

In the arguments of Romani mothers, the perspective of the school's dominance over family models prevailed. Hidden racism was presented as the result of an alleged conscious indifference or superiority on the part of non-Romani teachers toward the social problems and educational needs of Romani pupils. Diverging school preferences and expectations for home study practices among Romani pupils were emphasized as hostile acts.

Through this lens, Romani mothers discursively anchored the identity of discriminated mothers whose children are not granted the opportunity for free self-realization or daily problem-solving within the school setting. Another example of perceived discrimination was the social practice of diagnosing Romani pupils and the subsequent recommendations for interventions into the Romani family. The informants perceived such interventions as a threat to personal freedom, manifested through the suppression of social patterns and typical behavioural expressions of Romani children.

An important moment in the articulation practice was the highlighting of institutional pressure from the school, represented by undesirable interventions into the family socialization of Romani people. It is clear that a lack of understanding of cultural differences—or simply holding a different perspective on education—does not necessarily constitute racism or hostility. Nevertheless, Romani mothers anchored their narratives predominantly in examples of undesirable practices or teacher behaviour. Through this act, they legitimized their suspicion of latent racism.

Discourse of the Naturalization of Violence Among Romani Pupils

A closely related discourse - rooted in conflictual communication - was the discourse of the naturalization of violence among Romani pupils. The articulatory scheme included the following binaries:

- Romani mentality - Weakness of teachers,
- Romani people - Vlax Romani,
- Romani family - School lacking order and authority,
- Romani school - Inclusive school.

Verbal and physical attacks among Romani children were presented by the informants in the context of an absence of disciplinary rules and a lack of respect for teachers in the Romani school. Aggressive behaviour among Romani children was thus interpreted as a consequence of the school's leniency. On one hand, the school is seen as a discriminatory institution in which Romani children are socially subordinated; on the other hand, it lacks effective tools to manage their aggression.

Another discursively anchored source of aggression was the transfer of unresolved conflicts from relationships between Romani families. A salient moment in the articulation practice was the use of metaphors describing the (Romani) school as a battleground or a place for settling scores among Romani families and clans. This atmosphere of conflict is further reinforced by the school's policy, which tends to appeal to the pupils through reasoning rather than applying stricter disciplinary measures.

Among the elements of articulation practice was the notion of a socially inclusive school; however, this idea was not elaborated on in detail by the informants. In an inclusive school, it is inherently understood that the social and cultural composition of the student body is diverse and varied. The expected effect of social inclusion is the disruption of entrenched stereotypes and behavioural patterns—both those directed toward Romani pupils and those present among the Romani pupils themselves.

Critical Discussion

A central theme that emerged in the accounts of Romani mothers was the category of "the needs of the Romani pupil." At the core of their perspective on schooling was a strong expectation directed toward teachers: that they should first recognize the identity of the child as Romani, and only then view them as a pupil of the school. From a broader social perspective, the relatively low educational aspirations expressed by Romani mothers regarding their children's future schooling can be interpreted as a pragmatic judgment based on the limited employability of Roma individuals in the labour market. Another important factor explaining these lower educational ambitions lies in the family patterns and socialization processes of Romani children. During primary socialization, many of them internalize a sense of distance from the school environment. In the eyes of many Roma, the school is a compulsory institution, one that is closely tied to representatives of the majority society—representatives in whom they often have little trust. In the interaction between Romani families and (often non-Romani) schools, conflicts frequently arise from fundamentally different life perspectives—particularly those held by non-Romani teachers. To borrow a metaphor from the world of sports, this dynamic resembles a contest between two institutions, each attempting to assert dominance and impose its own "style of play" on the other.

It is clear that the education of Romani pupils requires a process of deconstruction and reconfiguration into genuinely collaborative mechanisms. These mechanisms concern not only the relationship between schools and families but also the broader dynamic between Roma and non-Roma in Czech society. While educational policy attempts to support collaboration through strategic documents (such as Strategy 2030+⁴²), social reality is always shaped by situational contexts in which different expectations and needs become salient for each participant in communication. In this sense, it is essential to acknowledge the sources of knowledge that speakers draw upon. The everyday stock of knowledge—materialized through language, which mediates our perception of social reality—determines the discursive competence of individuals to act within institutional structures of power. Social actors cannot assert their interests merely by voicing demands or issuing threats. Rather, the meaningful realization of interests, needs, or expectations requires the initiation of equal dialogue. Principles of negotiation should function on the basis of mutual recognition and a shared vision of education. In real sociocultural contexts, however, aligning the positions of all actors remains a complex and often difficult task.

To effectively meet the needs of Romani pupils, it is essential that schools prioritize the development of personal soft skills—such as self-esteem, self-realization, and self-responsibility. This raises the question of whether school curricula should place a stronger emphasis on the personal and social dimension of building relationships between Romani families and the school. The concept of hegemony, as discussed earlier, has contributed to the naturalization of certain educational practices for Romani pupils. Within the discursive constructions produced by Romani mothers, specific assumptions were reinforced—namely, that Romani pupils require a different, cognitively less demanding style of teaching within “Romani schools.” This framing of difference led to the acceptance of cultural diversity as a standpoint, whereby the distinctiveness of Roma from the majority society was acknowledged. At the same time, however, it also led to a counterproductive elevation of certain inclusive policies—such as the closure of schools with a majority of Romani pupils—as inherently desirable. From the perspective of the Romani mothers we interviewed, the integration of Romani and non-Romani pupils is conceivable only if the school respects the cultural distinctiveness of family socialization among Romani children.

The research data do not indicate that Romani mothers reject the value of education—on the contrary. At the core of differing perspectives lie unfulfilled mutual expectations: between school staff on one side, and Romani parents and pupils on the other. Factors such as the socioeconomic status of Romani families, the level of cultural capital within the household, the influence of symbolic and institutional power in society, and differences in language

⁴² Strategie vzdělávací politiky České republiky do roku 2020.

socialization all contribute to the demotivation of Romani families in navigating the school system. In effect, the selective mechanisms embedded within the Czech educational system reinforce patterns of educational reproduction, where children of parents with only basic education are unlikely to attain higher levels of education themselves. Romani mothers clearly articulated their expectations toward schools. These demands focused not on teaching content, but on teachers' organizational and communication skills. If educators succeed in implementing an approach that genuinely responds to the individual needs of (Romani) pupils, and if they engage with the classroom as a shared social environment for all learners, there is potential for meaningful improvement. Such progress, of course, requires systemic adjustments in the conditions of schooling: for example, adapting assessment methods, allowing for variation in learning pace, establishing consistent communication with Romani parents, shifting focus from outcomes to the learning process, and developing support mechanisms such as tutoring or classroom assistants.

According to the participants, only a portion of Romani parents fully recognize the value of educational attainment. They stated that Romani children are often not engaged by school, which is why, in their view, completing a vocational certificate is commonly seen as the main indicator of educational success. The informants identified family socialization as the primary cause of school failure among Romani children. Through a binary construction of the "self" as a supportive parent versus "others" as unsupportive parents, they articulated two fragmented versions of family socialization. In the case of unsupportive parents, all engagement is reportedly limited to picking up their children from school, with no real interest in school life. The perceived neglect in parenting is attributed to parental passivity or the desire for personal comfort, which, according to the informants, can lead to behavioral issues in children that border on the pathological. A significant external factor in the reproduction of educational disadvantage is how the value of family background is framed—selectively privileging either the family or the school but rarely integrating both.

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