

# **“Education, ethnicity & gender. Biographies of Roma and Sinti women in Germany.”**

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Roma and Sinti are facing social marginalization within the German education system (Lüken-Klaßen/Meixner 2004; Strauß 2011). In Germany as well as in other countries they are overrepresented in so-called special needs schools for children with learning difficulties (Kertesi/Kézdi 2010; Open Society Justice Initiative 2012). The paper is a report of an ongoing research project (in the context of a doctoral dissertation) that brings into focus that especially Roma and Sinti women are confronted with various levels of discrimination as they belong to a certain ethnicity and are female. The project, which is informed by Glaser's and Strauss's (1967) strategies of Grounded Theory (e.g., theoretical sampling), is based on autobiographical narrative interviews with Roma and Sinti women in Germany and is dealing with processes of social exclusion especially in the field of education but also with the women's strategies of resistance and self-realization. It tries to answer the question how biographies of Roma and Sinti women are shaped concerning their self-conception as women and education processes (focusing formal learning and especially informal learning settings/surroundings). The study also wants to offer some first ideas how support for women can be effectively organized and discrimination can be reduced or even anticipated. First results show that Roma women are facing specific forms of discrimination but they are also developing forms of opposition against discrimination. The dominant discourse on Roma and Sinti students' frequent failures at school emphasizes "essential cultural differences" and "ethnic particularities", discriminating structures and schools' lack of sensitivity to the life circumstances. Informal ways of learning are seldom taken into account. Solutions that mainly comprise pedagogic measures instead of addressing processes of institutional discrimination and social exclusion are too narrow. Keywords: Minority, Ethnicity, Gender, Biographical research. References: Glaser, B., Strauss, A. L.: The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research. Aldine Pub. New York 1967. Kertesi, G.; Kézdi, G.: The Roma/non-Roma test score gap in Hungary. In: American Economic Review, 101(3), pp. 519-525. Lüken-Klaßen, D.; Meixner, S.: Roma in Public Education. RAXEN. National Focal Point for Germany. European forum for migration studies (efms) Institut an der Universität Bamberg. Bamberg 2004. URL: <http://www.efms.uni-bamberg.de/pdf/Roma.pdf> (September 24, 2013). Open Society Justice Initiative: Failing another generation. The travesty of Roma education in the Czech Republic. New York 2012. URL: [http://www.soros.org/sites/default/files/failing-another-generation-20120601\\_0.pdf](http://www.soros.org/sites/default/files/failing-another-generation-20120601_0.pdf) (September 24, 2013). Strauß, D. (ed.): Studie zur aktuellen Bildungssituation deutscher Sinti und Roma/ Dokumentation und Forschungsbericht. I-Verb.de. Marburg 2011.