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Education, Occupational Aspirations and Labour Market Entrance
in the case of Roma Youth in Romania

PhD Thesis Summary

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KEY WORDS:

social exclusion, social division, school success, risk factors, protective factors, school to work transition, occupational aspirations, habitus, social capital.

THESIS SUMMARY

Background and statement of the problem

The situation of the Roma minority has started to receive more and more attention at a European Union level, as illustrated by the adoption, in April 2011, of a European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies by 2020. In Romania, at the 2002 Census, 535.000 Romanian citizens identified themselves as Roma, whereas Roma organizations estimate that the real number of the Roma population in Romania is somewhere around 1 to 3 million people (Ionescu & Cace, 2006, cited in Baciu, Lazăr & Lukacs, 2011). Thus, Romania is one of the European countries with the largest share of Roma ethnic citizens, along with Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia and Serbia.

Several studies point at the multiple disadvantages experienced by the Roma minority ethnics, ranging from housing, education and employment to social and political participation. Terms such as social exclusion, marginalisation or vulnerability accompany the European political discourse on the situation of the Roma minority and are further employed while designing policies addressing the Roma population. However, regardless of the theoretical concepts used to describe the situation of Roma across Europe, studies illustrate that they are a population at risk, if not already at the margins of society. Furthermore, the scarce results of interventions aimed at improving the living conditions of Roma have been a source of controversies throughout the European social discourse in the last decades and often referred to as detaining countries from achieving objectives such as full employment or inscribing in the Social Europe principles.

The current situation of the Roma in Romania is to be understood, on the one hand, in the context of the communist legacy, together with the transformations of the transition to a market economy. On the other hand, discrimination and hostility practices against Roma are also to be accounted when addressing matters concerning Roma ethnics. During the communist period, the Roma in Romania were the subject of forced integration, in terms of mandatory education and work, but moreover prohibition of expressing their ethnic identity and destruction of traditional communities, as well as the embargo for practicing traditional occupations. In terms of education, gaps persisted between the Roma and non-Roma population and discrimination

further on deepened the difference of attainment level between Roma and the non- Roma. This in turn, along with other factors such as discriminatory practices from behalf of employers led to Roma unemployment or to enrolment in low- skilled and underpaid jobs. The transition to a market economy largely affected Roma as the great majority of them were employed in agricultural state holds, hence closeout of these cooperatives caused a severe increase in the unemployment rate of Roma. The low-skills level of Roma and low educational attainment made re-entering the labour market difficult for them and determined a high rate of long-term unemployment among Roma. There was also an increasing discrimination and violence against Roma, which some authors explained as the need of the population to find a scapegoat during difficult economic situations (Barany, 1994; Kenrick, 1998; Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe-Southeast Europe, 2001). Furthermore, the deceleration in implementing social protection measures for the unemployed contributed to the reproduction of a state of poverty especially among Roma, followed by prejudices and discrimination that were seldom initiated at a political or mass media level (Raț, 2011). Therefore, the transition period certified the Roma as a population accumulating several risks, which eventually hindered their access to education and to employment.

Under pressure to align to European standards, Romania has designed and implemented several measures aimed at improving the situation of the Roma minority ethnics. Starting with the first Strategy of the Government of Romania for Improving the Condition of the Roma, adopted in 2001 and the adoption of the first anti-discrimination law following the EU'S Race Equality Directive in 2000, there has been a raising awareness at the EU level on the situation of the Roma population in Romania. Moreover, in order to achieve the membership of the European Union, Romania had to prove its commitment towards the European objectives of improving the situation of the Roma population through a series of policies addressing the Roma. At present, 11 years after implementing the first national Roma strategy, the monitoring of its results illustrate that, within the areas addressed by the strategy, some positive changes have been fostered, yet result are far from meeting the needs of the Roma minority ethnics in Romania.

Education and employment are the fields that have been widely debated, given the existent gaps between the Roma and the non-Roma population. In terms of education, only 9% of the young Roma adults in Romania (18- 30 years) are upper secondary education graduates (compared to

41% for the non- Roma population) and 2 % graduated higher education (compared to 27% for the non- Roma population) (The National Strategic Report regarding the Social protection and inclusion 2008- 2010). The active participation of Roma students in education is determined by a series of reasons, among which we mention school characteristics, financial resources and investments made in schools, teachers' characteristics, or students' socio- economic status. Nonetheless, segregation and ethnic discrimination are also to be accounted when discussing Roma children and adolescents' educational attainment. Along with different social and economic factors, the educational system affects the individual's educational attainment, which in turn influences labour market prospects. Thus, the level of education relates to the level of income, quality of housing, type of employment and job satisfaction (Cekota & Trentini, 2011).

The inequalities Roma children and adolescents experience within the educational system are also to be found in their transition to the labour market, since the Roma are almost eight times more likely to suffer long- term unemployment than the non- Roma (United Nations Development Programme in 2002, cited in European Roma Rights Centre, 2007). It is in this point that the economic trap in which Roma minority ethnics in Romania are caught in becomes more obvious for authorities as well. Although explanations within the political discourse in Romania have mainly regarded the low educational attainment of Roma and their low skills- level as a matter of choice and personal responsibility of the Roma, this approach is to some extent contested at EU level in favour of an approach emphasizing state's responsibility on this matter. From this perspective, in both educational and employment field, the Romanian government has implemented a series of changes aimed at improving the situation of the Roma ethnics, such as including an anti-discriminatory policy in the Education Law or designing active labour market policies promoting Roma employment. However, although some progress has been made, Roma minority ethnics in Romania remain a population whose access to education and employment and moreover to decent living conditions is still described by numerous obstacles, out of which many depending on various structural mechanisms within the society.

Impetus for this research

Roma adolescents in Romania are among the most vulnerable groups, with high rates of school dropout and unemployment. Although several studies regarding Romanian Roma have been developed, few of them have addressed Roma adolescents, and even fewer have addressed Roma adolescents who are high school students, at the point of entering the labour market. Our research develops on multiple levels, in an attempt to gain a rich insight into what influences school success in the case of Romanian Roma high school students, what are their occupational aspirations and how do employers perceive Roma youth employment.

Given the widespread phenomenon of early school dropout among Roma children and adolescents and the impact that adolescents' school success has on their further attainment and well-being, assessing what influences school success becomes highly relevant. Regarding our research group, namely Roma high school students, the investigation of social factors in the adolescents' environment, with a focus on the school-related factors, which might influence Roma adolescents' school success is relevant from two perspectives. First, we believe the school system needs to be regarded as an important factor within the assessment of students' school success and the quality of their academic life, especially when it comes to issues of inequality, as in the case of Roma youth. Second, school based intervention for promoting school success of Roma adolescents will become more valuable while adding information on adolescents' perception on the educational process and the school setting.

As previously mentioned, in regard to the same group, we further developed an investigation of their occupational aspirations and the results of this study called for an exploratory study of employers' willingness to employ young Roma graduates. The motivation for the latter two studies is to be presented in what follows.

In Romania, as in other Eastern European countries, youth long-term unemployment is widespread, with more than half of the young unemployed being out of work for over a year (European Commission, 2009). Albeit lacking constant data on the ethnic structure of employment, there is evidence that the share of young unemployed people in Europe throughout the last ten years has been more than double than the overall unemployment rate (European Commission, 2012), whilst long term unemployment affected prevalently young people, with

maximal effects in regard to young Roma (European Commission, 2011). Given that the demographic profile of the Roma population is that of a younger population and the fact that the Roma population in Romania represents 3.2 % of the total population (National Institute of Statistics, 2003, 2012a), Roma youth represent a significant share of the youth to refer to when discussing youth employment. Nevertheless, research on Romanian Roma youth employment is somehow marginal and is mostly approached solely in terms of educational attainment and professional qualification of young Roma as preconditions of entering the labour market. In this respect, several studies highlight the low educational attainment and the low skills-level of Roma as compared to the non-Roma. In order to promote youth employment, respectively Roma youth employment, several labour market social policy measures were designed, according to the European recommendations.

Although some progress has been made, the results in this field are yet scarce, and they reflect the lack of coordination between educational policies and labour market policies, together with the unequal opportunity paths for the Roma compared to the non-Roma. As much as we agree that inadequate educational attainment or the low skills-level negatively influence labour market integration of Romanian Roma adolescents, we point at the structural factors undermining this process. Hence, studies illustrate that in Romania employers are less likely to employ Roma than any other vulnerable category and that most of the Romanian companies have not introduced internal regulations in the field of non-discriminatory practices (University of Bucharest, 2010).

The focus of this dissertation is on Romanian Roma high school students, at the point of entering the labour market. Having this in mind, the first study investigates the social factors influencing school success in Romanian Roma high school students, whereas the second study goes further to investigate the occupational aspirations of the same group. The results of the qualitative investigation of Roma high school students' occupational aspirations motivated a third study, in this case an exploratory study, investigating employers' perception on employing young Roma high school graduates. In what follows, an outline of the research studies, of the theoretical background and of the chapters contextualizing the empirical analysis will be presented.

Chapter one: Beyond the discourse of Roma social exclusion

Drawing on the idea that the concept of social exclusion is seldom employed while discussing the situation of the Roma minority ethnics, the first chapter makes a critical review of the concept of social exclusion, acknowledging its use as both an academic explanatory term and as a concept within the European social policy discourse. Our analysis illustrates that from a theoretical stance, the concept of social exclusion has been criticized for its ambiguity, which is demonstrated by the difficulty to bridge the definitions of social exclusion into a common framework. When regarded as a dynamic process, others argue that analysing disadvantage through the social exclusion framework might add value to research (de Haan, 2001). Eventually, debates reach a common ground regarding the field where social exclusion has its most potential, namely in the social policy area, but attention is drawn to the political and economic strings attached to its definitions. In the last section of the first chapter, we carry out a brief analysis of the manner social exclusion of Romanian Roma is understood throughout the Romanian legislative discourse, under the European framework on social inclusion and exclusion. Our analysis highlights that social exclusion is hardly regarded through the lens of a complex process in need of assessment targeting several actors, this being the perspective explaining the benefit of employing the concept of social exclusion in research. To the contrary, it focuses to a more extent on the “social disabilities” of the excluded (National Development Plan for 2007- 2013, p. 156) or the minority-majority dichotomy, at the expense of explaining and further addressing the multiple causes of social exclusion. In the second part of this chapter, we also bring into discussion the concept of social division, considered as related and in the same time overlapping with that of social exclusion. Social division is theorized on the basis of a common set of parameters, following the frame introduced by Anthias (1998, 2001), in terms of construction of difference through categorial formations, and social outcomes as a result of inequality and positioning. In the last section, we introduce the idea of ethnicity as a form of social division, described by specific mechanisms of social differentiation and social inequalities. Without dismissing the value of the social exclusion framework in the context of social policy discourse and analysis, the social divisions frame provides us with a valuable foundation for our theoretical and methodological approach. Moreover, the contextualization of the educational and employment resources and barriers of Roma youth in Romania become more explicative when looked at through the lens of the social divisions approach, but also the social exclusion frame,

the latter having heavily informed the social policy documents and interventions in the field of Roma addressed programs.

Chapter two: Contextualizing resources and barriers for the educational attainment of Roma youth

In the second chapter, we discuss the access to education and the educational attainment of Roma minority ethnics in Romania, while focusing on the resources and barriers they encounter within the educational system as presented in several studies. An overview of the Romanian educational legislative framework circumscribes our analysis, followed by an account of the main critiques addressing the measures designed to enhance Roma minority ethnics' educational attainment. We then focus our attention on Roma youth and their transition to the labour market, keeping in mind the influences that education asserts on adolescents' labour market transition. In this respect, in the last section of this chapter, we conceptualise school to work transition, and we draw attention to the difficulties that Roma youth might come across in their transition to the labour market.

Our conclusions illustrate that the Roma population is particularly affected by early school leaving and low educational attainment, and that discrimination and segregation still represent negative influences on this matter. School failure and school abandonment generate a low socio-economic status and bring a series of negative effects, from low participation in legal economic activities to having access only to traditional jobs, thus leading to a vicious circle of “failures and economic traps” (Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008, p.155). Although the Romanian legislative framework, while struggling to align with European legislation has started a reform in what concerns the educational system, insufficient progress has been made, due to lack of clarity within this framework. This translates into a yet low level of educational attainment for the Romanian Roma youth, which in turn reflects into scarce labour market opportunities available for this group.

Chapter three: Contextualizing labour market resources and barriers for the Roma youth

The third chapter attempts to contextualize the situation of Roma youth on the Romanian labour market by first referring to the present situation and the characteristics of the Romanian labour

market, starting with a brief incursion in the recent Romanian history, which has shaped the labour market context for the Roma. Further on, we address the situation of the Roma minority on the Romanian labour market, discussing data regarding labour market indicators, in comparison with the non- Roma population, such as employment and unemployment rate. After setting the stage with data describing the economic and social context of the European and most of all Romanian labour market, youth labour market, along with social policies addressing youth employment in Europe and Romania are addressed in the second part of the chapter. Lastly, active labour market policies targeting young graduates and vulnerable youth are presented in order to obtain a general view of the labour market status of vulnerable groups, in our case Roma youth and the policies addressing Roma youth employment.

A review of studies analysing the labour market status of Roma in Romania illustrates that Roma minority ethnics are almost eight times more likely to suffer long- term unemployment than the non- Roma (United Nations Development Programme in 2002, cited in European Roma Rights Centre, 2007). Concerning youth employment, although not among the eight European countries with the highest youth unemployment rate, Romania ranks somewhere in the middle of the European Union-27' youth unemployment hierarchy according to the Eurostat statistics (European Commission, 2012). The scarcity of data broken down by ethnicity makes it difficult to estimate the ratio of young Roma in the overall data regarding youth unemployment in Romania in the last years. To the extent that we acknowledge that the Roma population is a younger population (compared to the non- Roma population, the 0-14 years old age group representing 10.4 % of the total population in the same age category) and that disadvantaged youth face higher risk of becoming unemployed, we believe it is reasonable to assert that we have a high share of working -age Roma youth at risk of becoming unemployed or even already unemployed. While analysing employment rates by age, youth aged 15-24 years old are to a higher extent unemployed than Roma in other age categories, as well as compared to non- Roma, irrespective of the age category (UNDP, 2002; Fleck & Rughiniş, 2008).

In regard to youth policies and active labour market policies, in the final section of the third chapter we make an analysis of the policy measures addressing Roma youth employment, particularly young Roma high school graduates. Besides a review of these measures, we discuss the impact on youth employment of some of these measures, such as that of the Law no. 116

from 15/03/2002 on the prevention and combat of social marginalization. Finally, we argue that although youth policies and active labour market policies have been created in order to increase the participation of young people in the economic sector and to provide equal opportunities, results are yet scarce, as can be seen in the case of Roma youth.

Chapter four: Constructing a theoretical and methodological framework for the study of Roma adolescents' school success, occupational aspirations and employment opportunities

In chapter four, we introduce the theoretical framework for the study of Roma adolescents' occupational aspirations, the factors influencing their school success and their school to work transition, respectively their employment opportunities. Due to the complexity of the research aims and the characteristics of the research group, we opted for operating within two complementary theoretical approaches, instead of bridging these aims under a single framework, since we argue that the latter option would have limited our insights into the problematic. Therefore, the theoretical frame that we describe in this chapter draws, on the one hand, on the Bourdieuan theory of practice, particularly on the concepts of social capital and habitus, which we consider related to the construction of occupational aspirations. The concepts are theoretically underpinned and then discussed in terms of their empirical value, throughout a review of the studies in the field of occupational aspirations. Our frame draws, on the other hand, on the ecological – interactional-developmental perspective on school success, in the attempt to investigate the social factors influencing school success.

A key assumption of the ecological-interactional- developmental perspective on school success model is that children and adolescents' interactions and relationships in their family, neighbourhood, school, peer group and school determine specific outcomes associated with school success (Richman et al., 2004; Bowen, Rose, Powers & Glennie, 2008). Out of the social support providers, we refer in particular to teacher support, as a key factor influencing students' school success. We argue that a positive, supportive teacher- student relationship leads to positive outcomes in terms of educational attainment for the students. Other concepts that we define within our theoretical approach and we further include in our literature review are the concepts of school engagement, school satisfaction and success orientation. School engagement can be viewed as an important tool in addressing low academic motivation and attendance issues.

Since we are dealing with adolescents, who strive for independence and autonomy and, moreover, adolescents at risk, increasing school engagement could be a problematic task, but, as studies show, would lead to positive school outcomes. In addressing school satisfaction, the literature on this topic brings forward, besides the link with academic achievement, an important influence of school satisfaction on other dimensions of students' academic life, such as behaviours and attitudes toward school, attendance, school engagement and, most important, students' well-being. Finally, success orientation is presented as dynamic, both influencing and being influenced by the school system and furthermore influencing adolescents in establishing goals and generating motivation. Thus, positive school interactions may be a key factor in enhancing school success for Roma high school students.

For the qualitative investigation of Roma adolescents' occupational aspirations, our choice is to operate inside the framework introduced by Bourdieu (1972/1977, 1984, 1986, 1990), which we find the most adequate approach for studying occupational aspirations, while taking into account social networks influence, together with societal bias (Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch, 1995; Beam, Chen & Greenberger, 2002; DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). We begin with an overview of the Bourdieuan theory of practice, with a focus on the concepts that we consider the framework of our analysis, as compared to other approaches. Thus, in line with Bourdieu, we define social capital as "the aggregate of the actual and potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition" (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 248). Bourdieu's understanding of social capital stresses the influence of social class, and it assumes that actors are constrained by the social contexts in which they are embedded, and therefore, their access to resources is constrained as well, this leading to reproduction of social inequalities. In this respect, he acknowledges the existence of objective structures inside the society, which influence the scarcity of resources that accrue to some individuals as a result of their belonging to a certain social class. Another concept that we employ in our empirical analysis is the concept of occupational aspirations, which we define as an individual's orientation toward particular career goals, which determines one's transition goals in the context of one's class or status position (Rojewski, 1996; Morgan, 2006). We argue that the construction of occupational aspirations is to be understood in relation to the construction of habitus. In order to translate the definition of habitus in more practical and

aspirations-related terms, we define habitus as “an individually operationalised set of expectations and understanding based on the collection of experiences one encounters that shapes one’s sense of the rules of the game” (Baker & Brown, 2008, p. 58) or the “incorporation of the social into the body” (McNay, 1999, p. 95). The habitus develops accordingly to individual’s “lasting exposure to particular social conditions and conditionings, via the internalization of external constraints and possibilities” (Wacquant, 2006, p. 6). As it is suggested by its description, habitus comprises individual’s set of dispositions for action, while these dispositions are to be understood as individual’s internalization of his role and position in the social order, together with their socio-cultural opportunities and constraints (Calhoun, 2003). Bourdieu (1972/1977) further argues that habitus is not only individual, but also collective, when it is shared by people who have internalized similar experiences, like in the case of class or gender. He also emphasizes that habitus needs to be regarded as malleable since the social environment in which individuals are embedded evolves, yet individual’s habitus is malleable to evolution but nevertheless influenced by his previous experiences (Wacquant, 2006). Thus, the same author concludes that habitus is characterised by both continuity and discontinuity because, on the one hand, it perpetuates social forces within the individual and, on the other hand, it can actuate change in the form of new dispositions acquired by the individual. In sum, the habitus integrates experiences and actions that inform individual’s current frame of reference, while shaping his understanding of both present and future (Jacobs, Karen & McClelland, 1991). Consistent with our theoretical framework, we argue that for the study of occupational aspirations in the case of Romanian Roma youth, it is important to include aspects of (a) the relationship between social capital and occupational aspirations, as prior studies demonstrate their interconnections, (b) the focus on the influences beyond the immediate family as resources that can engage adolescents in accumulating benefits from an outside referral system and (c) the construction of adolescents’ occupational aspirations in terms of habitus or the operationalized expectations and understanding based on their collection of experiences.

Constructing a theoretical framework for the study of Roma adolescents’ occupational aspirations, the factors influencing their school success and their school to work transition has called for combining two ranges of theories, which have become complementary for our research aims. This choice was motivated first by the complexity of the research areal in terms of multiple

research aims, but also the characteristics of the researched population, bearing in mind the manner ethnicity may also be understood as social division within the society. Thus, the ecological-interactional-developmental perspective informs the investigation of school success of Romanian Roma adolescents, focusing on the interactions between subsystems in adolescent' environment. It stresses the importance of "goodness of fit" (Bowen, Wolley, Richman & Bowen, 2001, p. 45) by referring to protective, risk factors, and the results of their interaction. Resilience is a core concept within the EID perspective, defined as the ability of individuals to overcome adversity in their environment.

We assert that although the ecological-interactional-developmental perspective on school success is an applicable conceptual and methodological tool for understanding factors influencing school success in Roma adolescents, it overlooks aspects of inequality and social divisions as part of the wider social structure and determining multiple social outcomes. Therefore, the need for our framework to draw also on the Bourdieuan framework, by conceptualizing occupational aspirations as related to that of habitus and social capital. The latter approach fosters a complex understanding of the resources and barriers adolescents identify in their school to work transition and their perception of the employment opportunities.

Chapter five: Quantitative investigation of social factors influencing school success of Romanian Roma adolescents

Drawing on the idea developed by Richman and Bowen (1997), that of considering ethnic minority students as experiencing more difficulties in achieving school success, and adding the statistics which describe Romanian Roma adolescents as having a low educational attainment level and subsequently low employment rate, in chapter five we develop a study investigating the social factors influencing school success of Romanian Roma high school students. Relying on the previously presented theoretical framework, the purpose of the quantitative study presented in chapter five is to understand and examine the relations between potential social support providers –parents, teachers, friends and neighbourhood-on Roma adolescents' school outcomes, academic performance and their success orientation. We first investigate the relation between social support factors, academic performance and success orientation in the case of Romanian Roma high school students. Further, we analyse the most important social support predictors of

adolescents' school outcomes, academic performance and success orientation. Finally, we examine the predictive role of certain school outcomes, in our case school satisfaction and school engagement, on Roma adolescents' academic performance.

More than a search for the best regression model, our quantitative analysis implied an exploratory exercise, in which our aim was to find the relevant predictors of academic performance and different school outcomes in the case of Roma high school students. We used the stepwise computation model to find the hierarchy of influence of different predictors on dependent variables: academic performance, success orientation or school outcomes.

Consistent with other studies (Ginorio & Huston, 2001; Johns, 2001; Brewster & Bowen, 2004), our analysis demonstrates the important role of teacher support on the academic performance of at risk adolescents, in our case Roma high school students. Following the already mentioned studies, we find reasonable to assert that the influence of teacher support, defined as positive communication, encouragement and respect promotes Roma adolescents' academic adaptability and performance, and thus reduces the risk of school dropout. It is interesting to note that although some studies argue that in adolescence, the role of peers is more important than that of teachers (Wentzel, 1998), our results illustrate not only that teacher support exceeds the influence of peers, but it is also a better predictor for Roma adolescents' academic performance than the other social support providers, namely parental support and neighbourhood support.

Besides academic performance, our analysis also focused on school outcomes, motivated by the idea that, on the one hand, they are additive for academic performance, and, on the other hand, that positive educational outcomes relate to adolescents' overall well-being and adult attainment (Hodgkinson, 1991; Richman & Bowen, 1997). While searching for the social support providers' influence on Roma adolescents' school outcomes, such as school engagement, school satisfaction, self-efficacy, school attendance, trouble avoidance and hours studying, it is again teacher support that predicts more of the school outcomes, compared to the other social support providers. Hence, in regard to school satisfaction, school engagement and hours studying, teacher support is a better predictor than the other social support providers. Nonetheless, it appears that hours studying and school satisfaction further influence Roma adolescents' academic performance.

Acknowledging that future orientation is an important developmental asset for adolescents and furthermore it can motivate adolescents towards school related activities and consequently to upward mobility (Ou & Reynolds, 2008), we also considered relevant to investigate Roma adolescents' success orientation in relation to its possible predictors and influences it can stress on adolescents' academic performance. Our findings emphasize once again that albeit friend support is to a certain extend influential for adolescents' thoughts about their future, teacher support remains a better predictor. Yet, success orientation does not relate to adolescents' academic performance, which could suggest that within adolescents' perceptions on their school to work transition, they dissociate their academic performance from their labour market opportunities.

To conclude, drawing on our results, as well as on similar findings regarding school success of at risk adolescents, we draw attention to the centrality of the school setting and particularly to the role of teacher support in enhancing adolescents' academic outcomes. We need to further assess the school environment as one of the main social support providers for Roma youth and to consider that the large amount of time that students spend in the school setting can trigger a positive impact on adolescents' school success and to a large extend on their global life satisfaction. To this end, correlating the worrisome data on the educational attainment level and the educational process of Roma children and adolescents, as presented in Chapter two with the results of our study, we highlight that among the social systems in which Roma adolescents are embedded, the school systems is to be regarded as an important protective factor, yet it very much depends on the teachers who are to a large extend responsible for building a positive school climate.

Table 1 -Summary of the methodology and results: Quantitative study investigating social factors influencing Roma adolescents' school success

<p>Aim of the study</p>	<p>The purpose of this study is to understand and examine the relations between potential social support providers –parents, teachers, friends and neighbourhood- on Roma adolescents' school outcomes, academic performance and their success orientation. We first investigate the relation between social support factors, academic performance and success orientation in the case of Romanian Roma high school students. Further, we analyse the most important social support predictors of adolescents' school outcomes, academic performance and success orientation. Finally, we examine the predictive role of certain school outcomes, in our case school satisfaction and school engagement, on Roma adolescents' academic performance.</p>
<p>Hypothesis</p>	<p><i>H1.</i> Teacher support and success orientation are good predictors for the Roma adolescents' academic performance.</p> <p><i>H2.</i> Teacher support is a better predictor than parental support, friend support, and neighbourhood support for the Roma adolescents' academic performance.</p> <p><i>H3.</i> Teacher support is a better predictor than parental support, friend support, and neighbourhood support for the Roma adolescents' success orientation.</p> <p><i>H4.</i> Teacher support is a better predictor for the Roma adolescents' school outcomes (SO) than parental support, friend support, and neighbourhood support.</p> <p><i>H5.</i> Out of the school outcomes (school satisfaction, school engagement, self-efficacy, attendance, trouble avoidance, hours of study), school satisfaction and school engagement are the most relevant predictors of Roma adolescents' academic performance.</p>

Participants	The sample included 181 girls and 162 boys of ages ranging from 15 to 21 years old, from 6 counties from the North-Western region (Bistrița- Năsăud, Bihor, Cluj, Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj), 4 counties from the Centre region (Alba, Brașov, Mureș and Sibiu) and București- Ilfov region (the city of Bucharest and Ilfov county).
Measures	The assessment tool used in our quantitative investigation of social factors influencing school success of Romanian Roma adolescents was the School Success Profile (<i>Profilul Succesului Școlar- SSP-Ro</i>), developed by Bowen and Richman (1997), from the North Carolina University, USA. The initial instrument was translated from the original language and adapted and validated for the Romanian population by Hărăguș, Dămean and Roth (2009).
Procedure	The SSP-Ro administration - self- report questionnaire, administered in group sessions, but due to absenteeism, students who manifested their interest in participating but did not participate in the group session were asked to complete the SSP-Ro within a separate meeting. The SSP-Ro questionnaire was administered in the period of September 2011- March 2012.
Analysis	In our quantitative research, we used the multiple linear regression to verify one by one each hypothesis. This was a research and an introspective learning process, and it implied more facets: the running of stepwise multiple regression procedure in IBM SPSS 19 software, assessing the resulted models, management of outliers, influential and missing cases, diagnostic statistics, assumptions checking, drawing conclusions and reporting results. For the multiple regression analysis, we used the stepwise method aiming to depict step-by-step which particular dependent variables are more influential for dependent variable outcome. Based on mathematical criterion, stepwise method searches for the predictors out of the ones

	available that best predicts the predicted variable – academic Success.
Results	<p><i>H1:</i> Both teacher support and success Orientation are strongly related to academic performance; therefore, we can validate the H1 hypothesis. Teacher support is a relevant predictor for Roma students’ academic results, while success orientation as an aggregated measure, remains out of the model. Certainly, teacher support remains a main driver in academic results for Roma students, as resulted from both quantitative approaches in <i>H1</i> research analysis.</p> <p><i>H2:</i> Teacher support is more predictive of Roma adolescents’ academic performance and success orientation than the other tested variables (parental support, friend support and neighbourhood support).</p> <p><i>H3:</i> Teacher support and friend support are good predictors of dependent variable success orientation when introduced stepwise in the linear regression model analysis. Parental support, friend support and neighbourhood support are excluded variables from the regression model meaning that they are not significant predictors of Roma adolescents’ success orientation. Since based on mathematical criterion, teacher support is introduced in the valid regression model prior to neighbourhood support predictor; we can conclude that hypothesis <i>H3</i> is valid from a statistical point of view.</p> <p><i>H4:</i> Teacher support and neighbourhood support are the relevant predictors for school satisfaction as a school outcome. Teacher support is more influential on school engagement than the other predictors - parental support, friend support and neighbourhood support, which remain irrelevant for this particular school outcome – school engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - out of all predictors implied in the regression analysis, when it comes to self-efficacy, the relevant predictor is neighbourhood support. The results at this point are quite intriguing: teacher, parental and friend support are irrelevant predictors for self-efficacy when the neighbourhood support has a significant role of influence of self-efficacy; - attendance as a school outcome is independent of any of the tested predictors- teacher support, parental support, friend

support and - neighbourhood support;

- trouble avoidance is influenced by parental support that has a standardized beta coefficient of -0.129;

- hours studying as school outcome is influenced mainly by teacher support; it has a standard coefficient of 0.183 and the other predictors are irrelevant at this point.

H5: School satisfaction, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.108 is the relevant school outcome predictor for Roma adolescents' academic performance. School engagement as it comes from our research and sample population, it is not a relevant predictor for academic performance, therefore, *H5* cannot be totally confirmed

Chapter six: Social determinants of occupational aspirations of Romanian Roma adolescents

Focusing once again on Romanian Roma high school students, in chapter six, we carry out an investigation of their occupational aspirations and the influence of the social networks in which they are embedded in shaping their occupational aspirations. Relying on the aforementioned theoretical approach, the qualitative study investigating North-Western Romanian Roma high school students' occupational aspirations aims to understand how does social capital (operationalized as social networks beyond the immediate family) inform and shape adolescents' occupational aspirations. We further on focus on the resources and barriers that adolescents identify as influencing their occupational aspirations.

Our analysis of the occupational aspirations of North-Western Roma high school students clearly highlights the important role of social capital in the process of adolescents' development of occupational aspirations and perception on aspirations attainment. Through adolescents' narratives, we understand that their minority status overlaps at most times with issues of poverty and scarcity of resources. In this respect, the awareness of their social status in terms of opportunity paths and resources that accrue to them determine their choice for both their ideal occupations and the occupations that they perceive as achievable for them. Albeit accounting for the important role of family's support, school personnel are largely acknowledged by adolescents as influencing their career paths. Yet, adolescents regard this latter issue in the context of ongoing discrimination in the school setting and the teachers chosen as role models being tolerant in respect to their minority ethnic background, in contrast to other teachers and colleagues. Drawing on the Bourdieuan framework and the approach of Stanton-Salazar & Dornbusch (1995) on the role of non-parental adults on low-status students, our understanding of the school personnel's influence on Roma adolescents is seen as highly important, but nonetheless subject of the school personnel's personal choice rather than the norm. We conclude that for the adolescents, the school setting can stand for one of society's channels to perpetuate social inequality and furthermore designate one's position into society, in accordance to their social status.

The issue of aspirations perpetuating the power structures and institutional pathways (Gardner, 2010) is also reflected in adolescents' perception on entering the labour market. Relying on their high school experience and their wider social interactions, they consider that being a Roma ethnic will be most influential in terms of employment than any other personal achievement like high school graduation diploma or professional skills.

Table 2- Summary of the methodology and findings: Qualitative investigation of Roma high school students' occupational aspirations

Aim of the study	In the qualitative study investigating North-Western Romanian Roma high school students' occupational aspirations, our aim is to understand how does social capital (operationalized as social networks beyond the immediate family) inform and shape adolescents' occupational aspirations.
Research questions	<p>Q1. How do Roma adolescents describe their occupational aspirations?</p> <p>Q2. What are the resources that Roma adolescents identify in occupational aspirations' attainment?</p> <p>Q3. What are the barriers that Roma adolescents identify in occupational aspirations' attainment?</p>
Participants	In our study, we included 22 Romanian Roma high school students from the North - Western region of Romania, 12 boys and 10 girls. Participants were selected from all the six counties in the North - Western region of Romania, three adolescents in each of the smaller counties (Bistrița- Năsăud, Maramureș, Satu Mare and Sălaj) and four participants in each of the two larger counties (Cluj and Bihor). Participants were selected using snowball sampling, with one or two adolescents being referred in each of the counties by a carrier counsellor working within several schools in the county and further upon adolescents' referral.
Measures	The interviews were conducted using an interview guide, which included the following questions: “what are your occupational aspirations?”, “what/who might help you in achieving your goals?”, “what/who might stand in your way?” and “imagine you are an adult and tell me about what you have achieved”.
Procedure	The interviews were conducted in the period of March 2012- June 2012.
Analysis	Using deductive analysis and following the major themes of our research, we reviewed the interviews separately until we identified the codes that emerged from the data. We then compared the list of codes and developed a common list of codes, which we believe reflects the participants' perspective. In the view of our research questions, eight major codes emerged from the interviews

<p>Results</p>	<p>Aspirations in context</p> <p><i>“I don’t know if I will succeed. I hope I will. It’s difficult. It’s not about the tuition money for the university, or about not becoming a state- funded student, because this year I participated at the national Olympiad for Rromani language and earned the first place. They have told me that because of this I can become a state- funded student at any university. Considering this, you would think it is easy. But it’s not, when, coming from our communities, you start to blend in, see this better world, compared to what you leave at home. And you tend to stay here, but you can’t do this so easily, the roots are too deep and it all very much depends on what happens at home. You can’t do this because you know what you leave behind. The normal thing would be to do it, sacrifice a few years and then go back and do a greater good. But it depends from case to case. I, for example, have my doubts. I don’t know if I will continue my studies because I have to find a job. I could work here, in Romania, I could manage, but I can’t do this because my parents wouldn’t. This is why I can’t stay and study in Cluj, while my family lacks the wherewithal. I might go and work abroad and send them money. In what concerns a career, I would love to become a lawyer. I really want to study and become a lawyer” (Maria, 18 years old, Cluj).</i></p> <p>Family’s support</p> <p><i>“Since primary school I started dreaming of becoming someone. I did not consider myself as being very smart, but looking at my mother who only finished the eighth grade having difficulties in finding a job and then working so hard for so little money, that motivated me. For my mother, my education and me finding a good job...this means a lot to her. She is always pushing me: go, do that, study! And that motivates me a great deal” (Tania, 17 years old, Bihor).</i></p> <p>School models</p> <p><i>“I had a mentor, God rest his soul! He died two years ago. He was also a Roma. This was during the time my father was in jail. He was an old man, around 60. From him I learned about my rights and he enrolled me in a support program for Roma youth. He was my role model. I think I want to have a job, become someone and be well seen by everyone” (Ovidiu, 18 years old, Bistrița-Năsăud).</i></p> <p>Discrimination</p>
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“My ethnicity would be a problem when looking for a job. I don't know if the employer would accept me. Maybe some of them will not want to meet me. Just like in school, when children, before getting to know me, would make judgments. After they got to know me, there were no more problems” (Larisa, 17 years old, Sălaj).

“Nowadays it is very important to have a diploma because Roma are very badly seen in society. But, if you have an educational diploma, they think more of you. This is my only chance to get a good job, earn some money and help my family” (Dorin, 18 years old, Satu-Mare).

The results of this qualitative study entitled the necessity to develop an exploratory study on employers' willingness to employ young Roma graduates. This necessity emerged from our desire to understand whether adolescents' concerns about the structural factors undermining their occupational aspirations attainment, in particular employers' willingness to employ Roma ethnics, are to be confirmed while analysing employers' perception on young Roma graduates employment.

Therefore, in the last section of chapter six, we present an exploratory quantitative study investigating employers' perception on Roma youth employment. Having in mind the worrisome data on Roma youth unemployment, as presented in chapter three, and the scarcity of studies examining the impact of social policy measures promoting Roma youth employment, in our study we also investigate employers' perception on labour market policies promoting young Roma graduates employment.

Table 3- Summary of the methodology: Exploratory quantitative investigation of employers' perception on Romanian Roma adolescents' employment.

Research questions	<p>Q1: Are employers willing to employ young Roma high school graduates?</p> <p>Q2: What are the perceived characteristics of Romanian young Roma graduates and the specific policy measures incentives that would positively influence employers to employ young Roma high school graduates?</p> <p>Q3: What are the perceived characteristics of Romanian young Roma graduates and the specific policy measures incentives that would negatively influence employers to employ young Roma high school graduates?</p> <p>Q4: How do employers who report having Roma employees describe the work relations with their Roma employees?</p> <p>Q5: Do employers have knowledge of the policy incentives promoting Roma young graduates labour market insertion?</p> <p>Q6: What is the employers' opinion on the policy incentives promoting young Roma graduates' employment?</p>
Participants	<p>An original sample of 2500 employers from the North- Western region of Romania was randomly selected from a data base that provided contact information for all active private employers in Romania, at the end of 2011 (Romanian Companies Database, developed by Borg Design, 2011). Out of the original sample of 2500 employers, 324 agreed to participate in the study.</p>
Measures	<p>The questionnaire is built on three main sections: general information about the company, employer's perception on Roma employment, with four additional questions investigating employer's perception on his relationship with the Roma employees in the case of those who report having Roma employees and employer's perception on social policy measures addressing young Roma graduates' employment.</p>
Procedure	<p>The study relied on a questionnaire- based telephone analysis, which addressed private employers in the North- Western region of Romania. The study was conducted in the period of May 2012- June 2012.</p>
Analysis	<p>Our analysis includes two approaches. First, descriptive analyses using IBM SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) 19 software was employed. Second, for the open-ended questions, the answers were standardized.</p>

The results of this latter study are to a certain extent in line with other studies accounting for the social prejudices against Roma and eventually labour market discrimination (University of Bucharest, 2010). Although being constantly reminded while conducting our study that our analysis regards young Roma high school graduates, employers repeatedly reported that one of the main obstacles that would determine them not to employ young Roma high school graduates is their low educational attainment. This contradiction reveals that the stereotype of the “Gypsies” is so much well entrenched in people’s mindset, that they cannot dissociate poor education by having “Gypsy” status. Although almost half of the employers state they are willing to employ young Roma graduates, yet the share of the employers who have Roma employees is low. Policies promoting labour market inclusion of young Roma graduates have minimal influence in respect to employers’ willingness to employ young Roma graduates, with an important percentage of employers not having knowledge of their existence. In case employers state they have knowledge of these measures only a small share can denominate them and, most important, only a small percentage have benefited of this kind of support.

Finally, our empirical results account for the existence of a labour market structure that comprises weak policy measures interventions towards promoting Roma youth employment and at times ethnic discrimination as a common practice that is hardly acknowledged or sanctioned by the current legislation. We argue that dismantling the structure of inequalities reproduced through societal mechanisms call for the action of several actors, thus by no means can institutional determinants like actors in the school setting or actors on the labour market should be regarded as less influential in this process.

Figure 1- What employers declare that would positively influence them to employ young Roma graduates

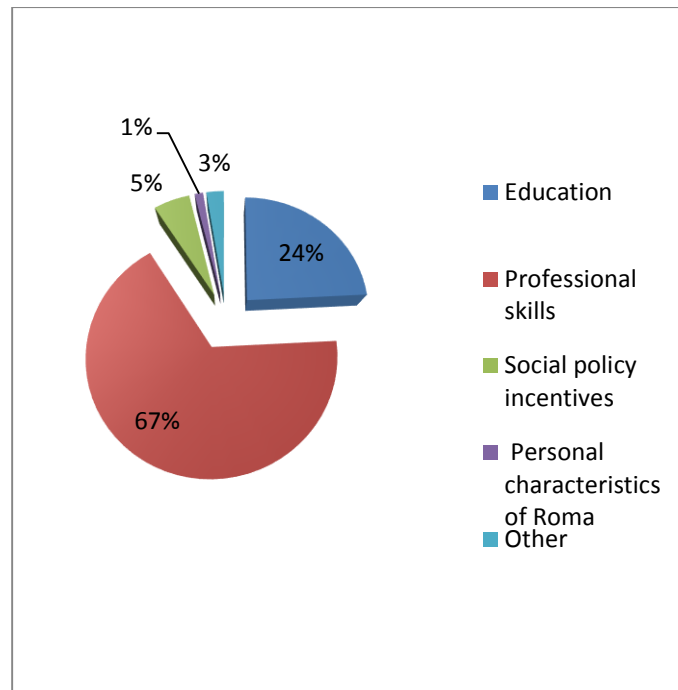


Figure 2 - What employers declare that would refrain them from employing young Roma graduates

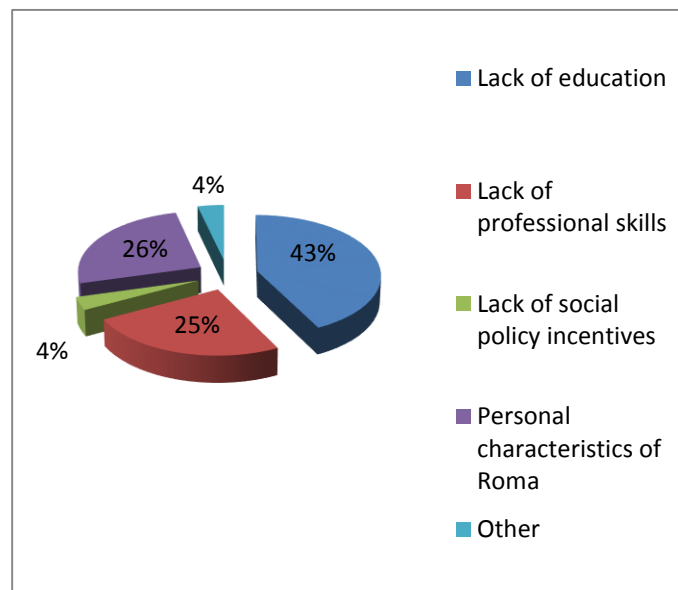
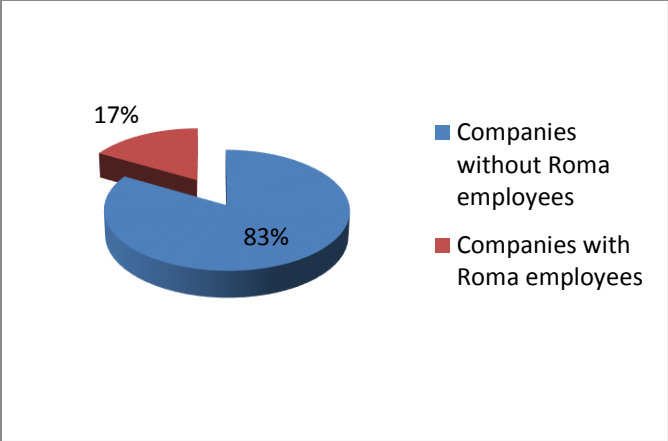


Figure 3 - The share of companies having Roma employees



Chapter seven: Conclusions

Chapter seven comprises a synthesis of our main theoretical and empirical findings, and it describes possible future research, informed by the present studies. In the last section, we advance the final conclusions in regard to the present dissertation.

Albeit accounting for the important role of parental support or socio-economic status in Romanian Roma adolescents' academic achievement and successful labour market entrance, our results bring into discussion the school setting, as well as actors and policies within the educational system and labour market as influential in this process. We argue that interventions aimed at enhancing Roma children and adolescents' educational attainment pay insufficient attention to the mechanisms within the school setting which reproduce social inequalities for the Roma. To put it in practical terms, although teachers can represent important resources for the Roma adolescents, as illustrated in our research, it appears that this is more the result of teachers' personnel choice rather than an institutionalized practice within the school setting. From this perspective, discrimination in schools needs to be addressed through a coherent and applicable legislative framework. In effect, although several studies point at discrimination and segregation as negatively influencing Roma adolescents' educational path, it is hardly the case that this ends up on the public and political agenda as a problem in need for intervention. If results are to be achieved, and especially long term ones, schools need to be acknowledged as partners throughout this process. To this end, prevention programs promoting ethnic tolerance and multiculturalism are to be designed for school personnel and students as well, by this we mean doing more than presenting the Roma culture as a curiosity and oftentimes, in a stereotyped manner. Given the worrisome data on Roma adolescents' low educational attainment level, corroborated with our findings, which demonstrate the centrality of school personnel in enhancing Roma adolescents' school success, and positive future orientation, we recommend the above mentioned interventions to be included as a regular practice within the educational system, eventually following models of international good practices. Moreover, discrimination should no longer be indulged as a matter of choice for the school personnel, but clearly highlighted and punishable as a misdemeanour, unlike its lack of clarity so far within the national Education Law.

In terms of labour market policies for Roma youth as a vulnerable group and the labour market entrance of the same group, our findings suggest a series of practical implications. Although policy measures have been designed, their impact is extremely low, illustrating the lack of coordination between the educational system, the labour market and the financing of these specific policy measures. Employers are to a little extent aware of the policy incentives, thus intervention is needed, taking the form of information campaigns and awareness raising campaigns targeting employers. Besides that, the financing mechanism for the incentives put up for employers hiring young Roma graduates needs to become transparent and reliable for employers, in order to avoid jeopardizing employers' economic activity and discouragement for the Roma employees. Finally, employers' discriminatory practices against Roma need to be constantly prevented and sanctioned where necessary, throughout a more active supervision at a local level of employers' activity. The Local Employment Agencies, under the overarching umbrella of the Ministry of Labor, Family and Social Protection are responsible for enforcing an anti-discriminatory policy for all economic units, which, according to our research, has not been yet perceived as mandatory for the employers.

One of our studies has addressed Roma high school students in three developmental regions of Romania, while the other two have addressed Roma high school students and employers in one important developmental region of Romania, the North-West region. Informed by our results, we argue in favour of national studies investigating factors influencing school success of Roma children and adolescents. In order to enrich our results, we believe studies including the school personnel's perception on this matter and their recommendations are equally necessary. A more in depth analysis of the impact of the current Education Law on enhancing Roma students' school attendance and educational attainment is also of interest for future research. Lastly, our interest goes also towards assessing the impact of social policies addressing Roma youth employment, as to be able to formulate accurate policy recommendations on this subject.

Combining quantitative and qualitative research and addressing different facets of the situation of young Roma in Romania has provided us with the valuable opportunity to understand what are, from their perspective, the protective factors for their academic success, as well as what are the resources and obstacles adolescents identify as shaping their occupational aspirations and perception on the attainment process. In addition, analysing employers' perception on young

Roma graduates employment opens the discussion to include employers and social policies promoting Roma youth employment as important influences when attempting a complex understanding of Roma adolescents' educational attainment and their entrance on the labour market.

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