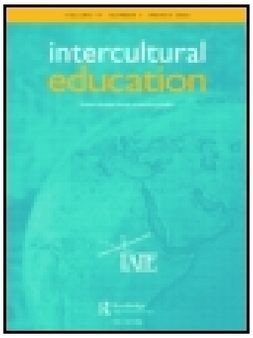

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Do *gitano* students feel discriminated against in their social and academic surroundings? A survey of schools in Granada, Spain

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ABSTRACT
This paper aims to study the perception of 208 students [37 *gitanos* (gypsies), 138 *payos* (non-gypsies), 22 mixed ethnicity (*gitano-payo*), and 8 other ethnicities] in areas and schools with *gitano* populations in the City and Province of Granada, Spain, considering nine factors related to the segregation, discrimination and racism towards the *gitano* community. A questionnaire with a Likert scale of 1–5 points was utilised to understand the perceptions of the respondents on the controlled variables and the reasons for their opinions. This study also gathered students' ideas on ways to help improve integration and social acceptance of the *gitano* minority. Perceptions of students (especially those of *gitano* and mixed *gitano-payo* ethnicity) show that despite efforts towards social inclusion, discriminatory beliefs and practices still linger and need to be actively reduced.

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Discrimination; racism; Roma; gypsy; gitano

Introduction

According to the 2015 Eurobarometer survey on discrimination, 64% of Europeans report that the most widespread form of discrimination is based upon ethnicity, and 21% attest to direct experiences of ethnic discrimination – an actual increase from 16% in 2012 (European Commission 2015). In Spain, this pattern of discrimination particularly affects the *gitano*[1] minority (1.4% of the population) and immigrants (about 13%) (MI 2009). Given that ethnic discrimination is so pervasive, it is urgent for educators to pay careful attention to this issue and to explore its impact on all areas of life, such as the school environment.

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Challenges faced by the *gitano* community

Most accounts concur that Roma are originally Judeo-Afghans from India who eventually settled in Africa and Europe after being pushed out by Turks. In Spain, the term '*gitano*' (Calé in Romani) is used to refer to Roma and '*caló*' to their language. Ever since *gitanos* settled in Spain in the fifteenth century, they have experienced serious obstacles in regard to integration (Salinas 2005). Although the exact number is not known, the European official census lists about 750,000 *gitanos* in Spain currently, of which around 40% (or 350,000) live in Andalucía (FSG 2010). In the Province of Granada, the *gitano* population is estimated at 45,000, with about 20,000 living in the capital city (FSG 2010).

The social situation of g*itanos* in Andalucía in general and Granada in particular is quite complex, despite recent improvements in living conditions and access to social systems (e.g. housing, health, education). According to the Fundación Secretariado Gitano (FSG 2010), many problems remain unsolved in regard to the following factors: impoverished living conditions in shanty towns and substandard housing; 'ghettoization', or the creation of ghettos in public areas with a predominantly *gitano* population; high levels of truancy and school dropout, especially in secondary education; social exclusion from dominant Spanish society (Salinas 2005); persistence of a negative social image as people who often steal and commit crimes; and repeated experiences of discrimination (FSG 2014).

The Centro Español de Investigaciones Científicas (CIS 2006) reports that more than 40% of Spaniards are bothered by having *gitanos* as neighbours, and one in four does not like having *gitanos* in the same class as their children. According to CIS (2006), the most pressing problems of *gitanos* are unemployment (38.1%), discrimination and prejudice (23.6%), racism (23%), and housing (18.5%). Among *gitanos*, the feeling of being rejected by *payos* is still the greatest concern (MI 2009). FSG (2006) confirms that *gitanos* have been victims of institutional discrimination for centuries, ever since 1499 when the first official law required them to practice known trades in their place of residence or else risk eviction. This restrictive policy continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century when the 1812 Constitution of Cádiz granted *gitanos* the right to be recognised as Spanish citizens. Nevertheless, in the twentieth century, especially during the Franco era, the Spanish Government, under the watch of the *Guardia Civil*, maintained discriminatory practices.

Despite efforts of the new democratic government beginning in 1978 to eradicate all discriminatory practices, CIS noted in 2005 that 25% of Spanish nationals did not want their children to be in the same class as *gitanos* and 40% of *payos* were bothered by having *gitano* neighbours (CIS 2006). Moreover, FSG (2016) notes that 45.5% of *gitanos* interviewed felt discrimination in the workplace, with 215,000 reporting experiences of discrimination either during the job interview process or once hired. In addition, CIS found 226 claims of discrimination in contexts of the workplace, home, health care, justice system, policies and communication

methods (FSG 2006). This discrimination is perpetuated by stereotypes from the negative social image ingrained in the minds of the majority of the Spanish population (FSG 2006).

The educational situation

The educational situation for *gitanos* is also extremely precarious (CNIIE 2014; MI 2009). Only 9% complete their high school diploma and/or intermediate vocational training, while just 2.6% complete advanced studies. 61.1% of boys and 64.3% of girls aged 12–16 dropout for various reasons: (1) they want to work (27.3%), (2) they have to take care of their siblings (28%), or (3) they don't like school or are bored (10%) (CNIIE 2014). Among *gitano* students who did stay in school, only 32% passed their classes from the prior year, compared to 58.1% of *payos* (MI 2009). The *gitano* school dropout rate is 64% as compared to the 13% national average. While *gitano* and *payo* students have similar levels of education up to 14 years of age, the gap increases dramatically after 16 years old, when only 20.8% of *gitanos* continue their studies in contrast to 71.1% of *payo* youth (Europa Press 2013).

The Ministerio de Igualdad (MI 2009) report concludes that high concentration of *gitano* pupils in segregated schools and special classes results in a lower quality education, increasing the risk of marginalisation and ghettoisation. It also warns of factors like the lack of attention to diversity in the curriculum, uniformity of teaching strategies, and inadequate ways of relating to families as contributing to discrimination. Finally, the report acknowledges that sometimes educators exhibit prejudices that manifest themselves as unfair treatment of *gitano* students (MI 2009). According to Poveda and Martin (2004), the root cause of school problems among *gitanos* lies in the lack of communication and understanding that arises from limited everyday interactions between *gitano* students and *payo* teachers. This pattern of segregation and discrimination against Romani children in schools is not unique to Spain and has also been detected in many other European countries (Albert et al. 2015; Farkas 2014; Sanda 2014). As Albert et al. (2015) point out, school segregation of Romani children is multifaceted (it adopts several forms), pervasive (it spreads everywhere), and entrenched (it has been ongoing for decades).

On the other hand, the *gitano* population in Spain has experienced major educational improvements in recent decades, thanks to the advancement of the welfare state, social services, and specific steps taken to offset inequalities. These government initiatives include the national strategy for social inclusion of *gitanos* in Spain 2012–2020, adopted by the Council of Ministers on 2 March 2012. Furthermore, compensatory education programs designed for disadvantaged children with special needs have provided abundant resources to meet the diverse needs of *gitano* students and improve their social integration (Salinas 2005). Although these compensatory programs have been under criticism for unequal access, several studies have shown their effectiveness in closing the gap in inequities between

students of different social classes and cultural backgrounds (Junta de Andalucía 2011; Madrid 2010).

Issues of racism

Although very few Spaniards would consider themselves as racists, glimmers of racist behaviour still persist today. According to Rey Martínez (2014), the prevalent form of racism in Spain is barely perceivable, except by the victims. Yet, it is precisely the way in which this kind of racism is unconscious and accepted as normal that makes it so potent. Rey Martínez describes this phenomenon as 'liquid racism', distinct from the more virulent and conscious 'classic racism' which lay the ideological foundation of European conquest and colonisation. In contrast, 'liquid racism' is a kind of neo-racism, overtly favoring equal treatment and rejecting discrimination but masking deeply seated racist prejudices. Liquid racism occurs in multiple scenarios: when the security guard follows a *gitano* upon entering the department store; when someone is not hired simply because they are *gitano*; when a parent will not take his child to a school because there are *gitanos* attending. In these cases, the people responsible – and even some victims – are not always aware that their behaviour is racist because they think they are abiding by legal and moral norms.

Research methods

The importance of this issue led the authors to explore overall perceptions towards *gitanos* vis-a-vis intra-school, intra-class and extra-school cases of discrimination, segregation, and racism in several primary and secondary schools with high *gitano* populations in the City and Province of Granada. The primary researcher (Madrid-Fernández) administered a questionnaire to tap the perceptions of students on these issues and captured that data in an empirical-descriptive study. He used a Likert scale of 1–5 points for participants to quantitatively assess their perceptions regarding the nine variables of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1): (1) the supremacy of *payos* over the years, (2) teachers' expectations of *gitano* students, (3) tracking of *gitano* students in special schools, (4) attention paid to *gitano* students in class, (5) discrimination against *gitanos* based on ethnicity, (6) performance of *gitano* students with *gitano* teachers, (7) racism towards the *gitano* minority, (8) social image of *gitanos*, and (9) treatment of *gitano* students compared with upper class students.

In addition, the participants were asked to verbally justify the score they gave to each of these nine items. In the final part of the questionnaire, the students were asked to retell possible cases of discrimination that they, their families, or friends suffered in their school or social environment as well as to suggest ways in which *gitanos* might be better integrated or feel more accepted. Finally, the students were requested to provide ideas for improving the social integration of *gitanos*.

Participants

The sample includes seven schools that agreed to participate which are located in the Province of Granada: three in the City of Granada and four in nearby towns with high *gitano* populations. Within the City of Granada, the one primary school (80% *gitano*) and two secondary schools (one 43%, the other 15% *gitano*) are situated in the Almanjayar area, a predominantly working-class area with a very high *gitano* population. In Guadix, a town 54 km from the City of Granada, one primary school (25% *gitano)* and one secondary school (20% *gitano*) participated. The remaining two schools, one primary (18% *gitano*) and one secondary (5% *gitano)* are situated in Pinos Puente, 17 km from the City of Granada.

Attaining access to such institutions was challenging since this required official permission from local authorities. Fortunately, the primary researcher of this study was able to make contact with certain school superintendents and teachers who maintained a good relationship with the participating schools in order to obtain the correspondent authorisation. Therefore, the sampling of schools was not able to be chosen randomly.

Table 1 describes the breakdown of the sample.

Data collection instruments

Once the main problems facing the *gitano* community in Spain were identified, a questionnaire was designed to obtain information based upon the nine variables mentioned above. In order to validate the questionnaire, an expert panel was used, consisting of six participating school teachers (three primary, three secondary). They evaluated to what extent the items in the questionnaire were pertinent, clear, and adequate for the topic. Some changes in the wording of items were made following their recommendations.

Next the resulting questionnaire was piloted in one primary and one secondary school. While the students were completing the questionnaire, it was necessary to read the items aloud and explain them in detail, especially such concepts as social supremacy, teachers' expectations, ethnic discrimination and racism, and

Table 1. Participants who took part in the study.

Educational level		Number	Age
Sixth grade in elementary school		62	12
First year of secondary school		44	13
Second year of secondary school		29	14
Third year of secondary school		27	15
Fourth year of secondary school		46	16
Total		208	
Ethnic group	Elementary	Secondary	Total
Gitanos	19	18	37
Payos	30	108	138
Mixed ethnicity	10	12	22
Other	3	8	11
Total	62	146	208

integration of *gitanos*. Participants' perceptions were collected by distributing the questionnaire in Appendix 1. Primary school participants who were not able to understand the wording of the questionnaire were read each item aloud and then oriented in the implementation of the Likert scale. Secondary school participants also needed further explanation of the meaning of terms like 'expectations', 'discrimination', and 'racism'. Participants used whatever amount of time needed for completing the survey.

Data analysis

The analysis of quantitative data and the statistical calculations was carried out with the SPSS statistical program 20. The primary researcher calculated the basic descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and subsequently applied Mann-Whitney, since the distribution of scores was nonparametric, to determine whether the differences between primary and secondary and between different ethnic groups are significant ($p \leq 0.05$). Cronbach's alpha was used to check the reliability and internal consistency of the questionnaire.

Results and discussion

The reliability of the scale used in the questionnaire was acceptable for both the primary and secondary groups, with a Cronbach's alpha of .73 and .79, respectively. An analysis of frequency of responses in the questionnaire (see Table 2) indicated that around 30% of students perceived that supremacy of *payos* over *gitanos* has existed for many years. Some students explained this dominance by saying that *payos* believe they are superior because they are of another race. Others said *payos* work harder and are smarter. Some thought the opposite, stating that *gitanos* feel superior.

The frequency analysis of variables 10, 11, and 12 shows that around 35% of the students recognised that at times teachers held low expectations of *gitano* students' academic performance, claiming that the *gitano* community makes little or no effort to study and learn, in part because sometimes Roma/*gitano* culture is 'oppositional to academic success' ('*Gitanos* could care less about studying'). Some commented that *gitanos*' low self-esteem can be observed ('*Gitanos* are more unskilled when working and sometimes do not understand things'), but in other comments *payos* observed the opposite ('some *gitano* friends are smarter than me'). Some people accused *gitano* families of not being interested in their children's academic performance, while others blamed teachers' discouragement on students' misbehaviour ('*Gitanos*' bad behaviour makes teachers not want to teach'). Among the 32% who agreed that *gitanos* are grouped in special schools or remedial classes, some said this happened because *gitanos* do not study or work hard enough, while others thought that tracking resulted from prejudice against *gitanos*.

Table 2. Frequency with which students chose each of the options on the questionnaire.

	Primary ($N = 62$) (%)					Secondary ($N = 146$) (%)					Primary and secondary ($N = 208$) (%)				
Variable	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5
1. Supremacy of *Payos*	16.1	6.5	29	17.7	30.6	8.2	8.9	32.9	30.1	18.5	10.6	8.2	31.7	26.4	22.1
2. Low expectations	25.8	9.7	11.3	24.2	29	6.2	10.3	45.9	30.1	6.2	12	10.1	35.6	28.4	13
3. Special schools	45.2	6.5	37.2	8.1	3.2	26	10.3	26.7	21.9	12.3	31.7	9.1	29.8	17.8	9.6
4. Students' lack of interest	66.1	14.5	12.9	3.2	3.2	28.1	19.9	28.8	14.4	8.2	39.4	18.3	24	11.1	6.7
5. Discrimination	43.5	16.1	25.8	8.1	6.5	23.3	16.4	32.2	12.3	15.8	29.3	16.3	30.3	11.1	13
6. *Gitano* teachers	40.5	4.8	21	8.1	25.8	19.9	6.8	21.2	17.1	33.6	26	6.3	21.2	14.4	31.3
7. Racism	19.4	29	22.6	16.1	12.9	7.5	22.6	22.6	21.2	25.3	11.1	24.5	22.6	19.7	21.6
8. Negative social image	16.1	19.4	33.9	14.5	16.1	6.2	10.3	22.6	36.3	24	9.1	13	26	29.8	21.6
9. Social class	69.6	8.1	12.9	4.8	3.2	29.5	20.5	17.8	9.6	21.2	41.3	16.8	16.3	8.2	15.9
	Payos ($N = 138$) (%)					*Gitanos* ($N = 37$) (%)					Mixed ethnicity ($N = 22$) (%)				
1. Supremacy of *Payos*	9.4	7.2	36.2	29	18.1	13.6	11.9	23.7	16.9	30.5	13.6	4.5	18.2	27.3	36.4
2. Low expectations	9.4	10.9	37	33.3	9.4	16.9	10.2	33.9	13.6	22	9.1	13.6	27.3	22.7	22.7
3. Special schools	31.2	11.6	29.7	18.1	8	35.6	5.1	28.8	16.9	11.9	27.3	9.1	31.8	13.6	13.6
4. Students' lack of interest	39.9	21.7	19.6	11.6	6.5	39	13.6	37.3	8.5	1.7	22.7	13.6	45.5	18.2	–
5. Discrimination	31.2	20.3	26.8	12.3	9.4	28.8	5.1	37.3	8.5	20.3	31.8		31.8	13.6	22.7
6. Gitano teachers	24.6	5.1	22.5	21	25.4	28.8	8.5	16.9	–	45.8	22.7	13.6	18.2		45.5
7. Racism	10.9	25.4	23.2	21.7	18.1	11.9	23.7	22	13.6	28.8.	4.5	22.7	31.8	13.6	27.3
8. Negative social image	8.7	13	24.6	34.1	19.6	8.5	11.9	32.2	20.3	25.4	4.5	9.1	22.7	31.8	31.8
9. Social class	41.3	16.7	17.4	8.7	14.5	44.1	13.6	15.3	5.1	20.3	31.8	18.2	13.6	9.1	22.7

Note: 1 = never, 2 = almost never, 3 = sometimes, 4 = almost always, 5 always.

37.35% of *gitanos* and 45.5% of mixed ethnicity (*gitano-payo*) students thought that the *gitano* community receives a low-level education because the students often misbehave and 'teachers do not pay much attention to them' ('usually they are very annoying, teachers tend to ignore them'). In the case of *payos,* this perception decreased to 19.6%. Some students detected fear in teachers, believing that is why they 'give the *gitanos* power' ('they defer to them out of fear, they pay attention to the *gitanos* because they are afraid of them and they simply don't like them').

About 30% of students believed that *gitanos* are still discriminated against based on their ethnicity, despite efforts of teachers and school staff to combat this discrimination. While *payos* estimated that 51.3% of *gitanos* are always (31%) or almost always (20.3%) discriminated against, *gitanos* perceived this to a lesser degree: always (28.8%) and almost always (37.3%) (see also CIS 2006; Giménez and Saez 2012; MI 2009). Some students offered reasons for discriminatory practices, citing *payos*' prejudice against *gitanos* based on their different lifestyle and mannerisms ('*payos* think that *gitanos* are bad people'; '*Gitanos* are discriminated against because they are sometimes violent or have different customs'). As Brüggemann (2014) points out, *gitano* culture is often misunderstood as a barrier for educational success.

With respect to *gitanos'* academic performance, 26% of the students predicted that having *gitano* teachers would yield better results, but 31% believed that would never become a reality. 28.8% of *gitanos* versus 24.6% of *payos* believed that *gitanos* would get better grades if taught by a teacher of their same ethnicity. Most speculated that this would lead to a greater teacher–student understanding ('*Gitanos* understand each other'; '*Gitano* teachers understand us better and we pay more attention in class, they have a better understanding of and support for our race'; 'we feel more comfortable and better served'). This data aligns with Madrid's (2011) findings where students intuitively perceived greater empathy and understanding between teachers and students of the same ethnicity.

Around 36% of students believed that a significant amount of racism persists these days towards the *gitano* minority (CIS 2006; FSG 2014; Giménez and Saénz 2012). Students justified the rejection and racism towards *gitanos* was due to differences between *gitano* culture and customs from the *payo* mainstream (Brüggemann 2014; Vargas Clavería and Gómez Alonso 2005), as noted in prejudices about *gitano* behaviour (FSG 2014) ('the *payos* see us as weird, people think that *gitanos* are thieves or drug addicts and almost all are violent, so these idiosyncrasies make them subjects of discrimination'). Nearly 40% of *payos* barely detected racism in the school environment, emphasising that everyone is equal ('teachers treat us all equally'; 'teachers do not discriminate against anyone'; 'I have a *gitano* friend who is awesome').

Interestingly, the majority (51.4%) of the student population thought that the social image of *gitanos* is never (or hardly ever) negative. Those who did see it as sometimes negative (32.2% of *gitanos* and 24.6% of *payos*) blamed it on negative prejudices ('Uy is g*itano*; then he must steal and grow marijuana', 'Many people

think we are bad just because we're *gitanos*', '*Gitanos* have a bad reputation for doing illegal activities'). On the other hand, some *gitano* secondary students in Granada felt pride in their ethnic identity ('¡*soy gitana y con mucha honra!* [I am *gitana* with much pride!]'), in contrast to Brüggemann's (2014) study that detected a certain '*apayamiento*' (wish to be *payo*) in academically successful *gitano* university students in Spain.

With regard to the treatment of students according to social class, 41.3% thought that higher class students are always treated better. As shown later, there are significant differences between the perceptions of *payo* and *gitano* students. Some comments rationalised differential treatment by saying: 'Teachers favor the upper class' (noted by a *gitano* student), 'If the parents are rich, children are "plugged in"'. However, some believed quite the opposite – that at times *gitanos* are treated better than *payos* due to being a minority recognised as marginalised. Notably, the percentage of students who witnessed instances of discrimination in the school and social environment decreased to around 20%, while the remaining 80% claimed not having witnessed any instance of discrimination.

Basic descriptive statistics of the scores on the questionnaire variables by ethnicity, measured with a Likert scale of 1–5 points show that *gitano* and mixed ethnicity students perceived a considerable degree of discrimination against *gitanos* (m = 3.67 and 3.75). They believed that the academic performance of *gitanos* would be higher if they were taught by teachers of their own ethnicity (m = 4.06 and 3.75) and that they still experience a significant degree of racism (m = 3.78 and 4). They also perceived a fairly negative social image of *gitanos* (m = 3.88 and 4.08) and that teachers sometimes treat students from a higher social class much more favourably (m = 3.5 and 3.58).

Statistical differences

Between levels of education

Primary and secondary student respondents coincided only on two variables; the power of *payos* over *gitanos* and teachers' expectations of the academic performance of *gitanos*. In all other variables, there were significant differences due to the fact that high school students tended to be more critical and to hold a more negative view of the controlled variables.

Between ethnic groups

Significant differences were found between *payos* and *gitanos* in primary education only with regard to variable 9 (treatment of students according to social class); the belief being that teachers sometimes favour *payos*, or those of a higher social class ($m = 1.93$, $Z = 2798$, $p = .00$). No differences were detected between the perceptions of *gitanos* and mixed ethnicity students.

However, in secondary education significant differences occurred between *payos* and *gitanos* in v5 (discrimination of the *gitano*) (Z = 3072, p = .00), v6

(achievement of *gitanos* being taught by teachers of their own ethnicity) ($Z = 2459$, $p = .00$) and v9 (treatment of students according to their social class) ($Z = 2694$, $p = .00$) in favour of *gitanos* in all three cases, due to the fact that most students think *gitanos* are sometimes discriminated against solely for being *gitanos*, get better grades with *gitano* teachers, and are treated less favourably than students from a higher socio-economic class (Madrid 2011).

These significant differences are more pronounced between *payos* and mixed ethnicity students. Here, the mixed ethnicity students almost always: perceived that teachers are less interested in educating *gitanos* ($Z = 2273$, $p = .02$), witnessed greater discrimination against *gitanos* ($Z = 2725$, $p = .00$), reported a high degree of racism towards *gitanos* ($Z = 2123$, $p = .03$), and observed teachers treating higher social class students more favourably ($Z = 2316$, $p = .02$). No differences were detected between *gitanos* and mixed ethnicity students in secondary education.

Key findings

The above results lead us to conclude the following in relation to the controlled variables.

The domination/supremacy of payos *in a power role throughout the years*

48.1% acknowledged that *payos* have always controlled, or almost always controlled, political and social power for many years up to the present day. Students viewed *payos* as having exercised hierarchical supremacy over *gitanos* in institutions, while acknowledging that the *gitanos'* situation has improved recently.

Expectations of teachers with regard to the academic performance of gitano *students*

Just over a third of students noted low teacher expectations of the academic performance of *gitanos*, mainly from viewing these students as unmotivated. The students felt that teachers inaccurately believed that *gitano* families are not interested in the academic life of their children.

Segregation of gitano *students in special schools or remedial classes*

Around 32% of the students were aware of the school segregation/tracking of *gitanos*, but did not see it as negative; they justified this mistreatment by citing *gitanos'* poor performance and lagging skills in comparison to other students.

Attention and concern for gitano *students in class*

Both *payo* and *gitano* students (35% each) agreed that teachers demonstrate disinterest towards *gitanos*, mainly due to their alleged misconduct, lack of motivation, discipline problems, and negative attitudes towards school.

Discrimination of gitanos

A third of all *payo* and *gitano* students perceived that *gitanos* are often discriminated against because of their ethnicity due to social prejudices as well as classroom behaviour. However, 45.8% of *gitano* and 36.3% of mixed ethnicity students said they had never, or almost never, observed discrimination against *gitanos*. Thus, around 75% total stated they had not witnessed any cases of discrimination at school or in their social environment. Most likely, this is evidence of the 'liquid racism' referred to earlier, where discrimination against *gitanos* has become so normalised that it is barely acknowledged (Rey Martínez 2014).

The performance of gitano *students with* gitano *teachers*

Around 26% of students across the board believed that *gitanos* would get better academic results if taught by teachers of their own ethnicity. Students justified this fact by claiming that *gitano* teachers would show more empathy and understanding towards *gitano* students and their families (Madrid 2011).

Racism towards the gitano *minority*

Around 36% of students believed that deep racism is still exhibited towards the *gitano* community. To a statistically significant degree, mixed ethnicity students perceived a greater amount of racism in society as compared to *payos*. Students explained racist attitudes by citing cultural differences between *payos* and *gitano*/ mixed ethnicity students as well as the prevailing negative stereotypes with regard to *gitanos*' behaviour ('they steal, do not work, are violent'). However, a good portion of the *gitano* students (42.4%) never or almost never perceived racism in their social or school environment, which also could be interpreted as due to 'liquid racism' that often too goes undetected (Rey Martínez 2014).

The social image of gitanos

Most students (51.4%) thought that the social image of *gitanos* is never or almost never negative, while 32.2% of *gitanos* and 24.6% of *payos* noted negative prejudices towards *gitanos*.

Treatment of students by social class

58.1% thought students from a higher social class are always or almost always treated better. *Gitano* students and primary school pupils overall were more sensitive to these differences, perceiving them with more frequency and intensity than did *payos* and secondary school students.

Cases of discrimination at school and in the social environment

Finally, around 22% of students overall witnessed cases of discrimination in school and the social environment. However, among *gitanos* this percentage increased to 25.4% and for mixed ethnicity students to 40.9%. We found a significant difference between *payo* and mixed ethnicity students in that the latter reported observing more cases of discrimination.

Student voices: strategies to combat discrimination and to improve inclusion

At the end of the questionnaire, students were asked to reflect on ways to improve the social integration of the *gitano* minority. According to primary school students, the situation could be improved by the following actions (in their own words): build soup kitchens and feed them; provide *gitanos* with food and a home; help *gitanos* with more charitable donations; get us jobs; treat us well, with respect, do not insult us; do not call us 'poor' *gitanos;* get *payos* to believe that *gitanos* are good people; create a good image of *gitanos*; g*itanos* must strive to improve their attitude.

Secondary school students related the following actions for improvement: give *gitanos* money and freedom; give *gitanos* more housing; accept *gitanos* as friends and treat them well; respect and get along with them; be kinder and more respectful; people need to understand that there are good and bad *payos* and *gitanos;* get together and hang out with *gitanos;* if there were more *gitano* doctors, teachers and lawyers, everything would be better; eliminate prejudices that exist in our society; integrate *gitanos* more into social activities; tolerate their beliefs, behaviour and lifestyle; celebrate more social activities of the *gitano* culture, g*itanos* should also change their attitude towards *payos* and not discriminate, g*itanos* should not be as aggressive, violent and hot-headed. If they tried to behave better, people would be more accepting of them.

The students' responses align closely with recommendations in the research literature on best practices to combat discrimination against *gitano*s in offering concrete structural changes. For example, Giménez and Saénz (2012) suggested creating a network of assistance centres for victims of ethnic/racial discrimination, developing a platform responsible for managing diversity and police services, and promoting awareness campaigns against discrimination of the *gitano.* Similarly, Santiago and Maya (2012) proposed several measures for better social integration of *gitanos*, such as ensuring even distribution of enrollment of *payo* and *gitano*

students throughout school sites and strengthening professional development at those sites. Interestingly, the students differed from these scholars in that they also emphasised a stronger sense of individual responsibility towards improving social inclusion.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this survey leave us with hope for the future. As one student wrote, 'We all must do a little more on our part', to build a society that is more just and inclusive. For the most part, the *payos* revealed consciousness of the racial discrimination still experienced by *gitanos*, and *gitanos* expressed a sense of responsibility to work harder in order to change negative perceptions of their community. This awareness can lay the foundation for *convivencia* – living together in harmony.

Note

1. In this article, we are intentionally using the Spanish terms used by the Roma, or Romani people in Spain, in order to represent their perspectives. They use the term '*gitano*' to refer to themselves and '*payo*' to refer to anyone else. The English translation of *gitano* – 'gypsy' – has a negative connotation that is not evident in the Spanish word as used in Spain.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Appendix 1. Survey on discrimination against the gypsy population

Educational level (indicates those that apply):
Grade / 6th grade course ___ Grade / course 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th Secondary
Ethnic group _____
Read the following questions and rate them from 1 to 5 indicating the option that best expresses your opinion on each point, given that
5 = Always, 4 = almost always/a lot, quite 3 = sometimes, 2 = rarely, a bit 1 = never, nothing
Do you think that …

1. The supremacy of payos and their power has been prevalent throughout the years and it still is even though the *gitano* situation has improved? Why?
2. Teachers' expectations on the *gitano* academic achievement are low? Why?
3. *Gitano* students are grouped in low-level special schools? Why?
4. The attention received by *gitano* students is low because teachers are not interested in them? Why?
5. *Gitanos* are still discriminated against for their ethnicity and that this exerts some influence in their academic achievement? Why?
6. *Gitano* students would reach a higher level of achievement with *gitano* teachers? Why?
7. Prejudice and racism still exist against the *gitano* minority? Why?
8. *Gitano* are still discriminated against due to a negative social image of them? Why?
9. Do you think that *gitano* students are treated worse than high social class students? Why?

Now express your opinion briefly:

10. Have you ever seen a case of discrimination against *gitano* students at school? If so, tell about it.
11. Have you ever seen a case of discrimination against *gitano* students outside the school? If so, tell about it.

12. Have your relatives and friends ever been discriminated against anywhere? If that is the case, tell about it.
13. How do you think the integration of gitanos could be improved in our present day society? Give some ideas.

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