

Does ethnicity matter? Everyday group formation in three Swiss immigrant neighbourhoods

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Abstract

How important is ethnicity for group formation in immigrant societies? Multiculturalism and the racialization (or ethnicization) hypothesis give opposing answers to this question. This article provides an empirical contribution to the debate by looking at patterns of group formation on the level of social categories and personal networks in the immigrant neighbourhoods of Basel, Bern and Zürich. We find that ethno-national categories are secondary principles of classification only but that the social networks are ethnically largely homogeneous even in the second generation. We conclude by advocating the use of more differentiated analytical tools to explain this variability of patterns.

Keywords: Immigrant neighbourhoods; ethnic categories; racialization; multiculturalism; social networks; Switzerland.

1 Multiculturalism versus racialization/ethnicization

How important are ethnic culture and community in the process of immigrant incorporation? This question represents one of the main fault lines in immigration research since its establishment. The classical assimilation paradigm of American sociology assumed that cultural differences would gradually be levelled, parallel to the dissolution of ethnic boundaries due to upward social mobility and intermarriage. In contrast, the multiculturalism of the 1970s and 1980s banked on difference and still found traces of ethnic communal organization and cultural autonomy even in groups that had been established for generations (Conzen 1996). Immigration societies were described as conglomerates of ethnic communities, whose internal dynamics and external relationships were to be described.

Since the early 1990s this multiculturalist research programme has adapted to respond to a new concern with globalization and transnationalism. Instead of looking at individual immigrant communities in their respective national contexts, the trans-border relationships between various such immigrant groups of the same origin have become the focus of attention (see the overview in Vertovec 1999). Like the 'ethnic communities' in multiculturalism, these newly discovered 'transnational communities' represent relatively stable, culturally bounded and socially integrated groups (cf. Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

While some exponents of this tradition have declared, notably in the United States, the final triumph of the multiculturalist view (Glazer 1997), another trend has been established, mainly in Europe's academia. It moves away from the 'groupist' thinking (Brubaker 2003) characteristic of both multiculturalism and transnationalism (see Wimmer 2000a). Various strands of this new trend can be distinguished. Sometimes from a constructivist perspective, sometimes inspired by Foucault's writings on discourse and power, in Germany often starting from Luhmann's system theory, a new view on immigration societies was developed. Ethnic-cultural differences are now taken to be relevant only in the multiculturalists' descriptions of reality, but not in the everyday practices of immigrants or their working-class peers. Underlining cultural difference and communal dividing lines stylizes immigrants as ethnic or racial others, thus excluding them from the national core group. It is primarily state and para-state institutions that give birth to this discourse of exclusion and that implement it in immigration policy and in multicultural social work. This process of 'racialization' (in the German- and French-speaking world 'ethnicization') creates the cultural barriers that multicultural 'integration policy' then pretends to overcome. Before this racialization/ethnicization takes momentum, ethno-cultural or racial differences played no important role in structuring processes of group formation which were basically determined by class, gender and other structural factors. Far from representing naturally given social entities, ethnic or racially defined groups therefore emerge only through discursive construction and boundary enforcement from above. The racialization/ethnicization hypothesis, originally developed in the early nineties,¹ meanwhile belongs to the standard repertoire in social-science analyses of ethnic pluralism and dominates the publications of younger researchers in particular in the Old World.

It is astonishing how few empirical arguments are used in this debate, although multiculturalism and the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis both imply precise empirical statements about how immigrants themselves perceive cultural differences and what strategies of group formation they pursue – a field where rich data have been produced over the past decades on both sides of the Atlantic. Unfortunately however, most

of this research on ethnic identity and group formation is too closely interwoven with one or the other point of view to make an empirical 'testing' of the two opposing propositions feasible. The ethnography of 'the Pakistanis in Manchester' (Werbner 1990) or the analysis of 'inter-ethnic friendships' between Turks and Germans (Esser 1990), to cite two examples, already imply in the way that the research problem is formulated, that ethnic groups are the relevant units of analysis. This is true for most studies of particular immigrant groups in particular countries so typical for the multiculturalist tradition. Conversely, studies of the racializing or ethnicizing effects of immigration and integration policies usually focus on official discourse and categories and take it for granted, following the often cited 'happy positivism' of Foucault (1991, p. 44), that these *shape* social realities on the ground rather than being shaped by these. Thus, if researchers do find traces of ethnic communities in immigrant discourse and practice, they readily take them as secondary effects of official, multiculturalist discourse and policies (see the concept of 'self-ethnicization' in Bukow 1993).

However, there are also examples of research that evades capture by one of the two paradigms, either by taking spatial units of observation (mostly neighbourhoods), or studying social classes and their relation to ethnic heterogeneity, or by taking an individual-centred perspective. An example for the first group is a study of a neighbourhood of Cologne by Kissler and Eckert (1990). The authors wanted to understand how this neighbourhood is perceived from the perspective of the old-established, of new immigrants, and of members of the alternative scene. They found that the non-ethnic distinction between 'established' and 'outsiders' is the most pertinent social categorization for local residents. Another example is Gerd Baumann's (1996) fine work on a neighbourhood in London. He looks at how young people of Caribbean and South Asian background perceive and categorize their social environment. To his own astonishment, categories derived from the 'official' multicultural discourse ('Afro-Caribbean', 'Muslim', 'British', etc.) play a much greater role than he originally assumed, starting from a variant of the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis. His findings thus confirm the multiculturalist view while those from Cologne refute it.

The only example for the social class focused research strategy that I know of is Michèle Lamont's (2000) study of American and French working-class perspectives on the social world. Despite all differences between the views of white and black Americans, French and immigrants from the Maghreb, a common pattern emerges: a moral code that distinguishes between disciplined and lazy, responsible and irresponsible, straightforward and devious, and caring versus uncaring persons – similar to the criteria used in Cologne to distinguish outsiders from insiders. Multiculturalism as a mode of classification and a political ideology seems to be completely absent from their worldviews (*ibid*, pp. 68–71).

An example for the third approach is Mary Waters' (1990) analysis of ethnic identity choice by white American 'immigrants' of the third and fourth generation.² Her units of analysis are individuals and their strategic way of choosing and combining possible ethnic affiliations. In a later study on English-speaking Caribbean immigrants in New York (Waters 1999), she shows that even when faced with categorical ascriptions of an overwhelming exclusionary power – being classified by US state institutions and by the white majority as 'blacks', – immigrants may, at least in the first generation, exploit the space for strategic identity management. They develop a new identity as 'West Indians' by distinguishing themselves from African Americans, underlining their capability of hard work and the viability of their families, striking similar views to the white working-class perspective described by Lamont.

These and other studies show that neither thinking in terms of the 'ethnic community' tradition nor the top-down view of the racialization hypothesis are adequately grasping the everyday praxis of group formation in its variability and context dependency. This praxis seems to be structured by a moral code which follows a different logic than foreseen by the two competing paradigms.

2 Research design

This study aims at grasping this logic by a new research design. Like the Cologne and London studies, I choose spatial entities as units of observation in order not to presume the existence of ethnic-cultural groups. A team of three researchers studied an immigrant area close to the downtowns of Basel, Bern and Zürich respectively: the St. Johann, the Breitenrain, and the Hard neighbourhood. We originally suspected that the dynamics of group formation would also depend on the structural environment, more precisely on a city's position in the national and global political economy: Zürich characterizes as a global city in Saskia Sassen's well-known terms, while Basel represents an industrial town and Bern is the centre of national administration and politics. Our findings did not support this initial hypothesis, much to our surprise, and I will therefore not embrace a comparative perspective in this article.³ Like Michèle Lamont we interviewed blue-collar and clerical workers as well as small shop owners, in order not to fall into the trap of studying the discourses of powerful institutions and assuming that they shape (rather than reflect) everyday social realities.

In each city, we chose a residential neighbourhood that had a high proportion of immigrants. Half of our interview partners were women. One third had a Swiss, another third an Italian and the remaining third a Turkish background. All had lived in the neighbourhood for at least three years. Half were first-generation immigrants who had arrived decades ago as guest workers or, in the case of Swiss, of a comparable

age group; the other half were children of guest-worker immigrants and Swiss between twenty and forty.

Semi-directed interviews and network analyses were the main methods we employed to grasp the social categories used to describe the neighbourhood and to understand processes of everyday group formation. Network analyses have a long tradition in urban anthropology (cf. Hannerz 1980, ch. 5; Rogers and Vertovec 1995, pp. 15–21), and are especially well-suited to describe patterns of interactions in open social fields. In more technical terms, we were looking for egocentric personal networks (Schweizer 1989, pp. 203ff.). As far as we know, we thus tread new paths in migration research, since network analyses have so far been used only to study migration decisions and paths (see, for example, Bauer and Zimmerman 1997; Koser 1997; Moretti 1999) and relations between immigrant organizations (Fennema and Tilly 1999).

We limited ourselves to a non-representative sample of seventy-seven persons who entertained a total of 819 social relationships. Given the high number of criteria (gender, ethnic background, generation, length of residence), our preferred method for choosing informants was quota and snowball sampling. Deviating from traditional network studies, we also wanted to include 'looser' relationships beyond family and close friends; so we asked about regular meetings and contacts that did not necessarily include talking about intimate details of personal life as is the case in standard network studies.

Parallel to gathering the network data, we conducted semi-directed interviews⁴ to understand how the informants perceive their social environment and what classifications they employed. For this analysis, we could have recourse to a rich sociological (cf. Karrer 1998; Waters 1999; Lamont 2000) and social-anthropological research tradition of analysing category formation in the framework of network studies and figuration analyses (Rogers and Vertovec 1995). Since for all three cities reports with extensive verbal citations of the interviews have been produced (Wimmer *et al.* 2000), I will restrain from direct quotations in this summarizing article. Finally, I should mention that owing to the limited number of cases and the far from representative sample, the ambition of this article is limited to generate hypothesis for further research with a larger sample or using different methods.

3 Conceptual framework

Having outlined the research strategy, I will now briefly describe the most important conceptual tools that I will use for interpreting the data. The general framework is provided by the theory of cultural compromise that I have developed over the last decade (Wimmer 1996a; an English version is provided in Wimmer 2002, ch. 2). In the present context, four elements are of importance. As a habitus I understand a series of

cognitive schemes organized as networks of meanings (cf. Strauss and Quinn 1997). The categories employed to describe a social field, to give an example close to the topic of this article, are generated and related to each other by such habitual schemes. The structure of these schemes can be derived through interpretative methods from the informants' discourses. The larger the number of discursive categorizations which can plausibly be shown to derive from a scheme the more valid the interpretation. Two processes are central for this interpretative procedure: variation and transformation. A scheme will generate different systems of discursive categories which nevertheless show similarities due to their structuration by one and the same cognitive operator. Similar categorical systems are thus taken to be variations generated by a common scheme (Wimmer 1995). Through mechanisms known from structural and cognitive anthropology (such as mirroring, inversion, etc.), the basic scheme may also be transformed into another, modified scheme. In this case we speak of transformation.

Secondly, assume that these schemes are adapted to social positions, or more precisely, that they are tailored, through processes of incorporation and routinization, to an individual's resource endowment. Depending on the amount and quality of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital⁵ (in more traditional terms: income, social networks, education, prestige), a milieu-specific habitus emerges, organized into a series of schemes that guide the production of discursive categories and strategies for action.

Thirdly, these discourses and actions encounter the discourses and actions of other individuals, which leads to a process of negotiating meaning and modes of cooperation. Depending on the balance of power (i.e. specific distributions of different forms of capital), a cultural compromise may emerge: a shared set of categories to describe and evaluate the social world as well as a set of expectations of solidarity.

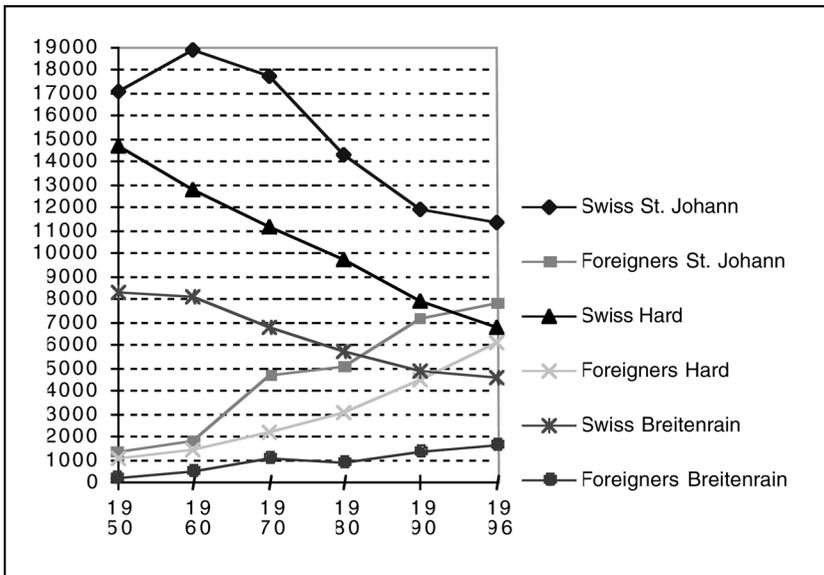
Based on such a shared understanding of who belongs and who does not, social closure leads to various more or less institutionalized forms of inclusion and exclusion. These are reflected in the network structures that individuals maintain. Closure can lead to the formation of ethnic groups (as the multiculturalist perspective implies), of gender groups, of national communities, and of class-specific groups (the view preferred by the racialization school). Depending on shifting distributions of the different forms of capital, cultural compromises dissolve and form again and new lines of social closure develop. This terminology allows describing the formation of ethnic groups as well as other modes of categorization and closure – it is, in other words, neutral with regard to the multiculturalism versus ethnicization debate. It neither foresees ethnicity as a primary principle of social organization, such as in multiculturalist accounts, nor does it exclude, on the other hand, that ethnicity emerges as a dominant pattern of group formation.

4 Socio-demographic shifts in Basel, Bern and Zürich

It is certainly useful to start the empirical part of this article with a description of the basic ethno-demographic transformations in the three neighbourhoods. They also form the major topic in most of the interviews with the residents. All three neighborhoods were founded at the end of the nineteenth century near the newly-built train stations and the industry settling around them. In the course of generations, a stable milieu of the ‘humble people’ emerged – blue-collar workers, tradesmen, and small-scale self-employed persons. After World War II, all three neighbourhoods, though to differing degrees, underwent a transformation from workers’ to immigrants’ neighbourhoods, a process promoted by the upward mobility (and thus moving away) of Swiss blue-collar workers and by the moving in of immigrants of the same income group who accordingly had to rent housing in the same locations (for a full analysis see Wimmer 2000b). The following graph gives an overview of these shifts

The three neighbourhoods differ solely in degree, not in the fundamental dynamics of this transformation. Developments in Bern appear to take place later than in Basel and Zürich. The neighbourhood in Bern contains middle-class elements and is therefore socially more mixed than the areas examined in Zürich and Basel. In Bern, traditional guest-worker immigrants (from Italy and Spain) dominate demographically,

Graph 1 Swiss nationals and foreigners among the residential population (in number of persons)



homogeneity of the neighbourhood's population and mechanisms of social control that developed in the housing cooperatives and workers' settlement seems to have favoured the formation of a specific urban working-class habitus. At the centre of this system of dispositions is what we have termed the scheme of order. This scheme still determines much of the discursive and network strategies of the old-established residents. 'Maintaining order' in the immediate spatial and social surroundings comprises not only the classic 'petit bourgeois' virtues, like cleanliness, punctuality, and quiet, but also stable social relationships and ties in the comprehensible field of the neighbourhood. In accordance with the low volume of economic and cultural capital available to the average resident of these neighbourhoods, the spatial radius of action is more limited than for the economic and educational elite. As perceived by the old-established residents, spatial, social, and identificational proximity converge. Everyday relationships, except those associated with the workplace, were as if bundled within the circumscribed space of the neighbourhood.⁷ Many of the basic characteristics of this scheme correspond with those which Norbert Elias described for the urban Dutch working class in the 1960s (Elias and Scotson 1993) and with those unrevealed by Kefalas (2003) in a Chicago blue-collar neighbourhood.

The stigmatization of neighbourhood residents by people higher on the social ladder, reflected in expressions like 'Scherbenquartier' (literally 'broken glass neighbourhood', association on alcoholism and violence) or 'Chreis Chaib' (literally 'horse cadaver district'), was fended off by pointing to the 'truly bad' neighbourhoods and by referring to the general validity of one's own ideas about social order. For the old-established working class, 'maintaining order' in one's own spatial and social surroundings was and still is a form of symbolic capital transferable into other capital forms: In the Zürich co-operatives, to give an example, those who after long years of keeping order had shown that they belonged to the chosen ones could move into higher floors, calmer apartments with better infrastructure, etc. (Karrer 2002, pp. 109f.). From the perspective of the old-established workers, the socio-demographic changes of recent decades, as described in section 4, correspond to a loss of this order and, even worse, to an overall devaluation of order as a central value, because immigrants and younger Swiss, especially those belonging to the 'alternative scene' that developed in the aftermath of the various youth movements, do not acknowledge this order and are unwilling to conform to it. The old-established experience this as a threat to their own realm of living and identity.

If we now look at the social classifications that emerge from this basic scheme, we discover that the groups seen as specifically dangerous for the maintenance of order vary over the decades. It seems that the major classifications are based, not on citizenship (Swiss versus foreigners), but rather on the perceived distance from the central paradigm of order.

Thus, newly-arrived members of the alternative scene are felt to be as 'foreign' and disturbing as certain groups of immigrants. They are considered outsiders, even though, holding Swiss passports since birth, they could be classified as belonging to 'us' just like the old-established residents of the neighbourhood, if national citizenship were the dominant criterion of classification. In contrast, the Italian and Spanish first-wave guest workers count as established, because they fit into the world of the ordered and decent. In this milieu, 'foreigners' thus does not mean persons without a Swiss passport, but those who have not been able or not wanted to integrate in the established system.

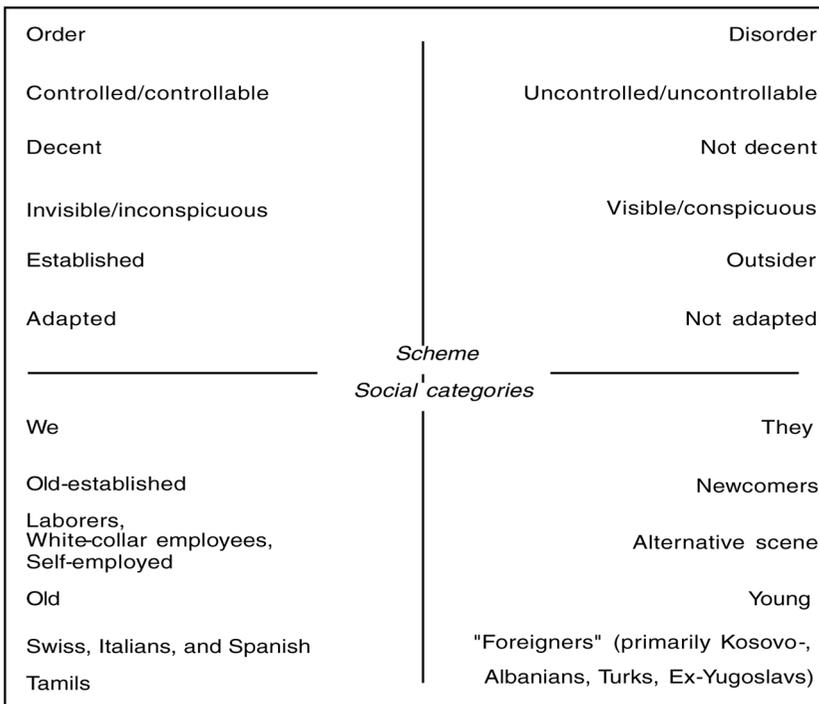
Perhaps overstated: it is more important whether the courtyard is kept tidy and the rules of the building are followed than whether a family is black or white or of Swiss or foreign origin. Native Swiss can be counted as outsiders, and immigrants as established. Accordingly, the degree of perceived assimilability into the system of order seems to decide whether a specific group of immigrants belongs to 'us' or to the alien and disturbing 'them'. 'Cultural distance' or 'racial barriers', which are often cited as the most formidable obstacles to integration, play only a subordinate role. In all three cities, to give a striking example, the Tamil immigrants are viewed, overall, as 'more able to adapt' than are immigrants from Turkey or ex-Yugoslavia. Perhaps I should clarify the relation between the scheme of order and ethno-national categories a little further. It is certainly true that ethno-national categories (Turks, Italians, Portugese etc.) are taken for granted and often used to describe the social world of the neighbourhood. Drawing the lines between us and them, however, is clearly governed by the scheme of order and not by these ethno-national distinctions themselves. It is the scheme of order that determines the place of an ethno-national category and not perceived cultural distance or notions of racial proximity. Our informants would certainly not have hesitated, we believe, to evoke such notions and to state that 'Tamils' or 'Turks' are intrinsically unable to assimilate and 'become like us' because of their culture or, in the case of the Tamils, because of a racial divide, as they would have done if a genuinely ethnic or racist logic were to drive their categorizations. There is, similar to US working-class environment (see e.g. Lamont 2000, ch. 2), almost no taboo on presenting such arguments in public. The discourse of order is therefore not a 'hidden way' of circumventing a taboo and of excluding groups on ethnic or racial grounds.

On the other hand, however, we assume that it is easier for a Swiss person to be counted among the rightful ones than for an African Muslim. The criteria for evaluating the behaviour of 'typical group members' are certainly less rigid for Swiss than for others. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to estimate how important this ethnic-racial 'colouring' of the scheme of order is, since we have no information on actual behaviour of neighbourhood residents but depend entirely on how this is portrayed by our interviewees.

The basic cognitive scheme and the categorization of social groups it produces can now be depicted in a diagram (Diagram 1). Its upper half shows the pairs of opposition (order versus disorder, established versus outsider, etc.) that together define the scheme without, however, putting these in a hierarchical sequence. The lower half lists the dichotomic categorizations (old versus young, old-established versus newcomers, etc.), again without implying a hierarchical ranking of these pairs.

This classification of groups corresponds for the most part to that which Kissler and Eckert (1990) found on the basis of a similar research design in Cologne's Südstadt district. As in Cologne, this viewpoint is shared by the old-established Italian and Turkish immigrants in the three Swiss neighbourhoods. This is the topic of the following section.

Diagram 1. *The scheme of order and the perspective of old-established residents*



6 Variation and transformation: The perspective of immigrants and their children

However, we also found differences between the views of Italian and Turkish immigrants and those of old-established Swiss. The former appear to dissociate themselves even more than Swiss from the newer immigration cohorts, especially those from ex-Yugoslavia or the developing world. The system of categorization is expanded by another dimension, namely the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate immigrants. The basis for this hierarchization is the ideal of a reciprocal exchange between immigrants and host country: The guest workers offered 'Switzerland' their labour power, indeed often sacrificed their health, and 'adapted to the existing order' in a difficult, painful learning process. In return, they received a stable income and finally, after many years, permanent residence status and all social rights. This exchange is not always felt to be balanced. In many cases, there is bitterness precisely about now having to share what has been achieved with the asylum seekers and refugees, who gave nothing in return for these privileges. According to this moral economy of reciprocity, refugees and newer cohorts of immigrants are not only a source of disorder, non-decency, violence and uncleanness, but also profiteers of a welfare system to whose erection the old-established contributed hard work and high taxes.⁸

Among first-generation Turkish immigrants, indignation over the newly immigrated is increased by the fact that the latter intensify the stigmatization of their own group and thus threaten to devalue the hard-won symbolic capital of 'decency'. On the other hand, as Muslims, they have access to other modes of classification that are implausible to the Swiss and Italians. Some older immigrants of Turkish descent reacted to the complications and manifold moral threats of a life in a Western European city by revitalizing and actively engaging in Islamic discourse and practices. Depending on the level of education and biographical circumstances, Islam then functions as a more or less intellectually articulated and coherent, more or less 'orthodox' pattern of orientation (cf. Schiffauer 2000). Interestingly enough, their mode of classification nevertheless relates almost seamlessly with that of established Swiss and Italians, as many of our Turkish informants themselves remarked. They underscored that the 'decent Swiss', with their characteristic esteem for work, cleanliness, order and other 'petit bourgeois' virtues, came very close to the Islamic ideal of 'leading a good life'.⁹ It can therefore be interpreted as one of the possible variations of the scheme of order.

However, this variation also produces, at least in part, different forms of classifying groups: Since the differentiations between decent and non-decent and between controlled and uncontrolled are elaborated according to the logic of a religious discourse, Muslim believers from the

Balkans, even if they emigrated only recently and – in the view of established Turks – have not taken the decisive steps towards assimilation, are also regarded as members of their own group.

The differences are thus not of a fundamental nature and allow us to characterize the first-generation immigrant and the old-established Swiss view as variations of a common scheme. Other, minor variations were discovered in accordance with differences in the structure and amount of a person's economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital and with his personal (immigration) history.¹⁰ It is perhaps not appropriate to discuss these differentiations here; they are the object of individual research reports that have been produced for each city.

In the second generation, we find more fundamental deviations from the system of classification described thus far. Whereas the younger Swiss reproduce their parents' model almost one to one, the viewpoint of immigrants' children appears to differ, sometimes fundamentally, from that of their parents. Let us start with the offspring of Turkish immigrants. Because the Swiss and the established Italians assign them, as Muslims, to the realm of disorder and equate them with Albanian and Bosnian immigrants, some children of Turkish parents come to identify almost completely with the perspective of the Swiss, as if to elude their own discriminatory classification and to harvest the symbolic capital associated with membership in the dominant group.¹¹ In other cases other modes of classification were established, for example the distinction between individualists and collectivists which can no longer be meaningfully related to the scheme of order. We thus assume that other schemes than the one described so far underlie these discourses and have not pursued this line of analysis any further.

Among neighbourhood residents whose parents emigrated from Italy, we find yet another pattern of classification. The majority population of Swiss meanwhile includes the Italian group in the category of 'we', and *Italianità* is well-regarded among Swiss urban professionals. The second generation's occupational and educational integration was mostly successful (cf. Bolzman *et al.* 2000), and the children of Italian immigrants are the largest second-generation group. The 'Secondi' have developed a strong self-confidence, which is expressed in their own subculture and in an explicit and well articulated group identity. Their view of the social world can be interpreted as a counter-position to the dominant classification developed by the Swiss working class, as a reversal of the valuations implied in the scheme of order. Disorder, with its attributes of uncontrolled, indecent, conspicuous, maladjusted, etc., is revalued as a positively connoted, Latin art of improvisation, spontaneity, and cordiality. In opposition to the narrow-minded culture of the petit bourgeois Swiss, they invoke the freer, more communicative, and more pleasure-oriented way of life of Southern Europeans.¹² Especially noteworthy is that the 'Secondi' regard not only their own group, but also the second

generation of Spanish, Portuguese, Greek, etc. immigrants as part of the broader ‘we’ of casual Latins. Unsurprisingly, this reversed and higher valuation of the culturally foreign does not lead to the disappearance of the category of outsiders or of corresponding attributions and attributes: They dissociate themselves from the new cohorts of immigrants less extremely than their own parents or than the old-established Swiss do; but the dichotomizations and stigmatizations still clearly fit within the dominant pattern of classification.

Perhaps this system of categorizations can therefore be presented as a transformation of the system of the old-established residents, one that arises, first, from the reversal of the latter’s negative pole, and secondly, from the adoption of the principles of exclusion toward a third group, so that we obtain the following diagram (Diagram 2).

Taken together we observe a field of competition between various modes of classification: different ways of defining symbolic capital and

Diagram 2. *The classificatory system of children of Italian immigrants*

Order	Improvisation	Disorder
Controlled/controllable	Spontaneous	Uncontrollable
Decent	(Erotically) Attractive	Not decent
Invisible/inconspicuous	Self-confident/Original	Conspicuous
Established	Worthy of Respect	Outsider
Adapted	Individualistic	Not adapted
<i>Scheme</i>		
<i>Social Categories</i>		
They	We	They
Old established	Second Generation	Fresh newcomers
Old	Young	
Swiss	“Secondi” (2nd Generation Italians, Spanish & Portuguese)	Ex-Jugoslavs, Albanians, Turks

allocating it among differently defined groups. Three characteristics of this field are especially remarkable.

First, official categories of citizenship (aliens-Swiss) and major 'civilizational' dividing lines (Western Europe versus the rest of the world, Christianity/Islam versus heathendom) are attributed hardly any significance. Ethnic categories are taken for granted but tend to play the role of secondary classifications only. Their positioning in the hierarchy of prestige depends on the perceived distance of 'typical' group members from the ideal behavioural pattern (derived from the scheme of order) and does not represent a primary mode of classification. All systems of classification therefore imply an ethno-culturally heterogeneous definition of 'us': {Swiss, Italian, and Spanish} for young and old Swiss; {believing Turks, Albanians, and Bosnians, as well as decent Swiss, Italians and Spaniards} for older immigrants from Turkey; {young second-generation Italians, Spanish and Portuguese} for children of Italian immigrants.

Secondly, it is conspicuous that all modes of classification stand in an almost exclusive relation to the present and seem to function in a *modus operandi* without memory: it is hardly remembered that, as late as the 1950s and 1960s, Italian and Spanish immigrants were still assigned to the realm of disorder and had to struggle against massive discrimination. Nowadays this seems to be insignificant for the dynamics of categorial inclusion and exclusion.

Thirdly, the various modes of classification can be interpreted as mutual transformations or as variations of a common scheme. Conformingly, all modes converge in one point: the exclusion of a large part of the new immigrants from Albania, ex-Yugoslavia, and the developing world. On the other hand, two lines of classification are disputed: first that of the first- and second-generation immigrants from Italy and Spain, which, from the perspective of the old-established Swiss and immigrants, belong to the group of the 'orderly', while the second-generation Italians themselves exclude the Swiss from their 'us'. Second, persons of Turkish descent see no line dividing them from the Swiss, while the latter hesitate to accept religious, old-established labour immigrants and their children in the world of order, especially because visible signs of religious affiliation, like wearing headscarves, contradict the idea of inconspicuousness and adjustment that are central elements of their definition of decent behaviour.

The patterns of group formation on the level of discursive strategies thus contradict the multicultural view: ethnic groups do not play a central role in describing and understanding the social world of our informants and the massive demographic transformations of recent decades. They do not divide themselves and others into groups based on culture of origin, but in accordance with perceived proximity to or distance from a central paradigm of order that differentiates between the established and outsiders independently of their ethno-national background – a mode of

classification that I have understood as the product of a basic mental scheme, part of the habitus of urban blue- and white-collar workers.

In the following I should like to leave the level of discourse and examine social behaviour. Do the classificatory distinctions that emerged so far correspond to the actual patterns of personal relationships? Is the everyday life of the old-established residents of the three neighbourhoods – Italians, Turkish, and Swiss – so interwoven that they mix without distinction in the closer circles of friends and acquaintances? Are neighbourhood residents of Turkish descent more likely to be friends or acquaintances with Swiss than the reverse, as the social categorization would lead us to expect? Do second-generation Italians interact mostly with each other and make friends with other Latin Southern Europeans? These are some of the questions derived from the two previous sections that I seek to answer in the following, based on the results of the network analysis.

7 Birds of a feather: Ethnic homogeneity

The following table shows one of the fundamental results of our study: Despite close spatial proximity, the Swiss stick together, Italians and ethnic Italians remain among themselves, and Turks and ethnic Turks stick together. Their networks of relationships comprise, respectively, 85.5, 68.9 and 66.6 per cent persons of the same ethnic-national background (Table 1).¹³

How should these figures be interpreted? Do they provide evidence for the multiculturalist point that ethnic communities do indeed exist and are the most important aspect of group formation in contemporary immigrant societies? While at first sight they certainly do, several points weaken this interpretation considerably. First, since we asked about relatively intense, regular, and in part even intimate relationships, the high degree of homogeneity is not surprising. For reasons linked to the obvious facts of immigrants' biographies, family members and closest friends very often have the same ethnic background. The following table illustrates the well-known basic rule that, the closer a relationship is, the more likely a partner shares one's own ethnic-national background (here and throughout, 'partners' refers to any, and not solely to intimate relationships; the technical term 'alteri' is also used here and there) (Table 2). This is shown with equal clarity in all three of the ethnic categories investigated here.¹⁴

Second, one could argue that the relative homogeneity or heterogeneity of social networks should be seen in relation to the demographic size of different ethnic-national groups because the statistical chances of relating with somebody from a large group are obviously higher than with a member of a small group or category.¹⁵ From this perspective, the Swiss cultivate almost as many close relationships to non-Swiss (15 per

Table 1 *Ethnic-national background of the alteri according to the respondents' nationality*

			National background of alteri							Total
			Swiss	Italian	Turkish	Ex-Yugoslav	Northern European	other Southern European	Other	
National background of respondent	Swiss	Number of relationships in %	206 85.5%	12 5.0%	2 .8%	2 .8%	14 5.8%	1 .4%	4 1.7%	241 100.0%
	Italian	Number of relationships in %	48 17.8%	186 68.9%	2 .7%	4 1.5%	10 3.7%	13 4.8%	7 2.6%	270 100.0%
	Turkish	Number of relationships in %	64 20.8%	12 3.9%	205 66.6%	12 3.9%		9 2.9%	6 1.9%	308 100.0%
Total		Number of relationships in %	318 38.8%	210 25.6%	209 25.5%	18 2.2%	24 2.9%	23 2.8%	17 2.1%	819 ¹⁶ 100.0%

Cramers V: 0.718; $p < .001$.

cent) as could be expected, if partners were to be chosen randomly (about 24 per cent). Thus, Swiss prefer Swiss in the choice of partners only slightly and, considering that family members make up a significant part of the networks, not decisively. Things are different among persons of Italian and Turkish descent, since these comprise only between 6 and 10 per cent and between 1 and 7 per cent, respectively, of the three neighbourhood populations, so that the preference for individuals of the same ethnic-national background goes far beyond what group size alone would suggest. The rather uninspiring standard hypothesis that migration research offers to account for this phenomenon tells us that the first generation remains dependent on relationships with persons of the same background because of language difficulties and because mutual aid among persons sharing a similar migration experience remains important for adjusting in a still foreign environment. Preferring partners of the same ethnic background therefore may result from everyday pragmatics of adaptation rather than from a conscious strategy of ethnic closure.¹⁷ To explore this argument further, it may be interesting to differentiate between generations (see Table 3).

Indeed, the second generation names far fewer partners sharing their own ethnic background than does the first generation. Other calculations on the highest level of significance, not presented here, show that, among children of immigrants, 62 per cent of the partners have the same background, as opposed to 73 per cent among the first generation.¹⁸ In contrast, among Swiss of the same age cohort, the degree of homogeneity is not lower than among their parents, as Table 3 shows. This parallels the finding that the old-established Swiss' basic scheme of classification and order is reproduced by the younger generation.

A final point that relativizes the ethnic homogeneity of the networks is that our data show the same high degree of homophilia for other criteria of belonging too: Women and men stick to their own sex in about three-quarters of their everyday relationships, blue-collar workers stay among blue-collar workers, long-resident immigrants among long-resident immigrants, office workers among office workers (on homophilia in general see Wolf 1996; McPherson *et al.* 2001). The fact that multiculturalist researchers would underline the ethnic-national dimension of endogamy, while the other dimensions go unnoticed, is understandable only against their particular research agenda. That the university-educated seldom cultivate personal relationships with those who have not studied and that they usually live in the same neighbourhoods is perceived as the 'normal case' of social segregation – a view which certainly would not make sense from the point of view of the racialization/ethnicization paradigm.¹⁹

Four points thus qualify the high degree of ethnic homophilia. Network analysis privileges intimate relationships; demographic conditions may explain the homogeneity among the Swiss networks; language

Table 2. Degree of ethnic homogeneity according to the type of relationship

Type of relationship	Kin	Number of cases	Degree of ethnic homogeneity		
			Relationships with persons of the same ethno-national background	Relationships with persons of other ethno-national background	Total
		218	218	21	239
		in %	91.2%	8.8%	100.0%
	Friends	Number of cases	149	60	209
		in %	71.3%	28.7%	100.0%
	Acquaintances	Number of cases	195	113	308
		in %	63.3%	36.7%	100.0%
	Neighbors	Number of cases	35	28	63
		in %	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Total		Number of cases	597	222	819
		in %	72.9%	27.1%	100.0%

problems could account at least in part for the homogeneity among the first generation of immigrants; and, perhaps most importantly, similar degrees of endogamy are found with regard to gender and profession.

However, looking at degrees of endogamy is just one way of analysing the network data from an ethnic point of view. In the following, we examine transethnic relationships, i.e. the roughly one fourth of friends and acquaintances who belong to a different ethno-national category than our respondents. Do such choices correspond to the categorical fault lines we identified in the last chapter and thus to a mode of classification that directly contradicts, as we have seen, the multiculturalist view? To a surprising degree they do. First, Swiss of the first and second generation maintain relationships primarily with Italians and Northern European immigrants, i.e., with the established and socially oldest immigrant cohorts. Also in correspondence with the modes of classification analysed in previous sections, first-generation Italians name primarily Swiss friends and acquaintances, markedly more often than do other Southern Europeans or immigrants in general.

Second, the children of Italian labour immigrants tend to expand and, compared to their parents, to diversify their exogamous relationships, at the expense of relationships to Swiss and in favour of immigrants from other Southern, but also Northern European countries and the rest of the world. This pattern corresponds to the dichotomization between

Table 3 *Ethnic-national origin of alteri according to respondents' national background and generation*

National background and generation of respondents			National background of alteri							Total	
			Swiss	Italian	Turkish	Ex-Yugoslav	Northern-European	other Southern European	Other		
Swiss	Generation	First	Number of cases	101	5	2	2	6	1	117	
			in %	86.3%	4.3%	1.7%	1.7%	5.1%	.9%	100.0%	
	Second	Number of cases	105	7			8		4	124	
			in %	84.7%	5.6%			6.5%		3.2%	100.0%
	Total		Number of cases	206	12	2	2	14	1	4	241
			in %	85.5%	5.0%	.8%	.8%	5.8%	.4%	1.7%	100.0%
Italian	Generation	First	Number of cases			27	101		2	3	3
			in %	19.9%	74.3%		1.5%	2.2%	2.2%		100.0%
	Second	Number of cases	21	85	2	2	7	10	7	134	
			in %	15.7%	63.4%	1.5%	1.5%	5.2%	7.5%	5.2%	100.0%
	Total		Number of cases	48	186	2	4	10	13	7	270
			in %	17.8%	68.9%	.7%	1.5%	3.7%	4.8%	2.6%	100.0%
Turkish	Generation	First	Number of cases			33	3	126	6		5
			in %	18.8%	1.7%	71.6%	3.4%		2.8%	1.7%	100.0%
	Second	Number of cases	31	9	79	6		4	3	132	
			in %	23.5%	6.8%	59.8%	4.5%		3.0%	2.3%	100.0%
	Total		Number of cases	64	12	205	12		9	6	308
			in %	20.8%	3.9%	66.6%	3.9%		2.9%	1.9%	100.0%

Switzerland: Cramers V: 0.199, p = 0.147; Italy: Cramers V: 0.247, p < .005; Turkey: Cramers V: 0.159; p = 0.166.²⁰

'casual Latins' and narrow-minded Swiss. The second generation of ethnic Turks also diversifies its network of relationships in comparison with its parents, but here in favour of relationships with Swiss and Italians, i.e., the most established groups. This, too, can be expected, given the dissociation from their own ethnic category that we described in the last section. Third, it is indeed persons of Turkish descent who are most likely to maintain relationships with immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia, whereby here, too, only weak ties exist, with about 4 per cent of all relationships. By contrast, there is an almost total lack of regular contact between the Italians and Swiss, on the one hand, and immigrants from ex-Yugoslavia, on the other – this, despite close spatial proximity and an almost 10 per cent proportion of ex-Yugoslavs in the neighbourhood population.

The exclusion of new immigrant cohorts, characteristic for almost all modes of classification that we have discovered, is thus paralleled in actual social behaviour: with the exception of religious Turks of the older generation, individuals studied here maintain only very few ties to new immigrants and prefer to relate to each other than to establish linkages across the categorical divide. We can describe this behaviour as part of a process of social closure of the old-established against newcomers. The convergence of the different discourses describing the social world could be characterized as a minimal cultural compromise that leads to corresponding boundaries in the field of everyday group making which, in turn, makes the categorization of 'us' versus 'them' more plausible. At the end of this self-reinforcing process, categorical and social groups correspond and '*Gruppen an und für sich*' emerge, to paraphrase Karl Marx. These groups do indeed play an important role in the everyday politics of the neighbourhood, where established and newcomers are sometimes standing in explicit opposition to each other fighting over the control of public space and over the allocation of resources which the city administration is distributing through its neighbourhood revitalization programmes. This, however, would be a topic for another study.

8 Convergence of network structures

What if we ask, in order to avoid a fixation on matters of ethnicity typical to the multiculturalist research programme, not about the ethnic composition of the personal networks, but about their structure? Here, the finding is less ambiguous than that of the preceding section: The structure of the networks is astonishingly similar; the differences are mostly limited to the first generation and are of an obvious nature – a clear point in favour of the ethnicization/racialization view according to which persons of a different ethnic background share much more in everyday cultural and social practice than is assumed when dividing people into ethnic communities. In the following, I examine some of the more

important structural features of networks: the distribution of the *alteri* among types of relationship (kinship, friendship, acquaintanceship, or neighbours), the social context of beginning the relationship (workplace, school, neighbourhood, family), the degree of localization (i.e., the spatial distance between partners), and the extension of the network (measured in the number of relationships).

The table on the following page shows that relatives appear less often in the networks of the Swiss than in those of Italian and Turkish background, while more partners are classified as ‘colleagues’ and fewer as ‘friends’ (Table 4). But overall, the differences are rather weak and fall under the threshold of significance if we consider only the younger generation.

The quantitative extension of the networks (the amount of social capital) homogenizes from the first to the second generation: Whereas immigrants from Turkey still had a larger network of relationships (with a total of 176 *alteri*) than Italians (136), and the latter a larger one than the Swiss in the same age group (117), the differences mostly disappear in the second generation (132, 134, and 124). It seems that the habitual disposition to invest in social capital, as had emerged in countries of origin that compensate less-developed systems of social security with clientelist relationships between state and citizens, is no longer reproduced in the Swiss context. Social capital correspondingly falls to a level characteristic of the social milieu described here.

In contrast, differences in the contexts in which relationships are begun are intergenerationally relatively stable (Table 5). The region of origin plays quite a significant role for immigrants, whereas Swiss got to know about a quarter of their partners of regular and close relationship in associations and clubs. This is true for only 9 per cent and 8 per cent of Italians and Turks, respectively. If we consider only the second generation, the values are still 20 per cent for the Swiss, 13 per cent for the children of Italians, and 7 per cent for persons of Turkish descent. In the second generation, however, the region of origin is no longer of any importance. Civil society, so lauded today for its power of integration and fostering social cohesion, thus plays a much more important role for the Swiss than for immigrants and their children and certainly does not help much in establishing social relationships between immigrants and autochthons.

Also astonishing is that acquaintanceship with about 17 per cent of all partners was made in the neighbourhood surroundings – whereby differences between individuals of a different ethnic background are again minor.²¹ I attribute this to the fact that we interviewed persons who had long resided in the neighbourhood and whose parents all come from the same milieu of labourers, clerical workers, and the small-scale self-employed. Here, the milieu-specific disposition, which places great importance on spatial proximity and privileges a ‘neighbouring of place’

Table 4 *Types of relationships according to respondents' national background*

			<i>Type of relationship</i>					<i>Total</i>
			<i>Nuclear family</i>	<i>Other kin</i>	<i>Friends</i>	<i>Co-workers</i>	<i>Neighbors</i>	
Respondent's national background	Swiss	Number of cases	46	16	53	107	19	241
		in %	19.1%	6.6%	22.0%	44.4%	7.9%	100.0%
	Italian	Number of cases	44	43	65	95	23	270
		in %	16.3%	15.9%	24.1%	35.2%	8.5%	100.0%
	Turkish	Number of cases	56	33	91	107	21	308
		in %	18.2%	10.7%	29.5%	34.7%	6.8%	100.0%
Total	Number of cases	146	92	209	309	63	819	
	in %	17.8%	11.2%	25.5%	37.7%	7.7%	100.0%	

Cramers V: 0.106; p<.005

Table 5. *Social context of establishing relationships according to respondents' national background*

		Social context of establishing relationship								Total
			Kinship	Work- place	Neighbourhood	Club/Association	Circle of acquaintanceship	Region of origin	School	
Nationality	Swiss	Number of cases	50	37	39	58	48	1	7	240
		in %	20.8%	15.4%	16.3%	24.2%	20.0%	.4%	2.9%	100.0%
	Italian	Number of cases	74	37	44	25	68	18	4	270
		in %	27.4%	13.7%	16.3%	9.3%	25.2%	6.7%	1.5%	100.0%
	Turkish	Number of cases	76	45	59	25	65	29	6	305
		in %	24.9%	14.8%	19.3%	8.2%	21.3%	9.5%	2.0%	100.0%
Total		Number of cases	200	119	142	108	181	48	17	815
		in %	24.5%	14.6%	17.4%	13.3%	22.2%	5.9%	2.1%	100.0%

Cramers V: 0.186; $p < .001$.

Table 6. Residence of the partner according to respondents' national background

			Residence of alteri							
			Same part of neigh- bourhood	Same neigh- bourhood	Same district	Same city	Same canton	Elsewhere in Switzerland	Outside of Switzerland	Total
National background	Swiss	Number of cases	71	20	17	77	22	29	5	241
		in %	29.5%	8.3%	7.1%	32.0%	9.1%	12.0%	2.1%	100.0%
	Italian	Number of cases	54	35	23	105	26	11	15	269
		in %	20.1%	13.0%	8.6%	39.0%	9.7%	4.1%	5.6%	100.0%
	Turkish	Number of cases	72	50	15	95	36	26	10	304
		in %	23.7%	16.4%	4.9%	31.3%	11.8%	8.6%	3.3%	100.0%
Total	Number of cases		197	105	55	277	84	66	30	814
	in %		24.2%	12.9%	6.8%	34.0%	10.3%	8.1%	3.7%	100.0%

Cramers V: 0.142; p < .001.

over the middle-class-specific ‘neighbouring of taste’ (Zum Felde and Alisch, cited in Karrer 2002, p. 162) shows its effects in the practice of managing everyday relationships.

Table 6 makes this even clearer. The ethnic-national differences in the spatial structure of the networks are statistically significant, but negligible in size. Persons of Swiss as well as Italian and Turkish origin maintain highly localized networks, even though at least some of the questions were posed in a way permitting respondents to name spatially distant relationships (for example, those maintained by telephone). Roughly one fourth of all alteri live in the immediate surroundings, one third in the same neighbourhood, almost half in the same part of the city. Only one fifth of the relationships were established with persons living outside the city and not even 5 per cent live abroad. Thus, in the social milieu we studied, everyday relationships are maintained within narrowly defined geographic spaces. Nor is this result generation-specific: The differences between generations are not significant, and the second generation’s relationships tend to be even more locally oriented.

Considering the current trend in migration research to focus upon transnational networks of relationships and communities in order to overcome the traditional fixation on the host society, I consider this result to be of high significance. Our data show that, on the level of everyday life and daily interaction, established immigrants have developed a strong local orientation similar to the one of the non-immigrant population with a similar class background. Supra-local relationships play a very subordinate role, at least quantitatively. This corresponds to the latest research in the USA, which, based on a representative sample, showed that transnational relations of an economic (Portes *et al.* 2001) and political nature (Guarnizo and Portes 2001) are much less important for Latin American immigrants than was originally thought. Everyday transnationalism is largely confined to members of the middle classes.

9 Summary

Does ethnicity matter in processes of everyday group formation? In order to find an answer to this question, we chose a research design that does not assume the existence of ethnic groups, as is the case under the multiculturalist research programme. By choosing a spatial entity as our unit of analysis – instead of a particular ‘ethnic group’ – we avoided the groupist fallacy of multiculturalism and its recent offspring, transnational community studies. On the other hand, the network method allowed us to discover the formation of ethnic communities as one possible dimension of social reality – in contrast to the radical constructivism underlying most variants of the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis that reduces social reality to the discourses about this reality and the political gains that these may entail for those in power. Thus our research strategy is

suited to make a differentiated, empirically solid contribution to the debate between multiculturalism and the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis. We distinguished between the social categories used to describe the transformation of immigrant neighbourhoods and the everyday social networks of its residents.

I have tried to show that the various systems of classification are governed by a basic mental scheme – part of the habitus of the urban milieu of blue- and white-collar workers. The scheme distinguishes between order (the world of the controllable, decent, invisible, and adapted) and disorder (the uncontrollable, non-decent, etc.). I identified three variants and one transformation of this basic scheme. Old-established Swiss residents perceive the demographic transformation from a Swiss working class to an immigrant neighbourhood as a loss of the order represented by the established ones: Swiss, Italian and Spanish blue-collar workers (who ceased to be classified as ‘foreigners’ a long time ago), self-employed and clerical workers, the ‘upright ones’, whose little world is threatened by the representatives of the alternative subculture, by new immigrants from Albania or former Yugoslavia or from Turkey (the ‘true foreigners’).

Older immigrants from Italy and Turkey add another dimension by differentiating between legitimate labour immigrants and illegitimate refugees of more recent waves of immigration. Yet, for some older Turkish immigrants, religious decency and virtue are central values, so that they count believing Muslims from more recent cohorts among the established, along with themselves and the ‘decent’ Swiss and Italians. The children of Italian immigrants dissociate themselves and other second-generation Southern Europeans, as Latins more predestined to spontaneity and to living a self-determined life, from the Swiss who they perceive as petit bourgeois and narrow-minded – rejecting and simultaneously mirroring the mode of classification of their Swiss neighbours. In this transformation of the basic scheme, too, more recent cohorts of immigrants are excluded – the main point of convergence of all perspectives, which sets the old-established inhabitants of the neighbourhood off against newcomers.

The analysis of group categories thus leads us to contradict the multicultural view of immigration societies: While ethnic-national groups are taken for granted entities, they do not per se play a central role in describing and understanding the social world of our informants and the massive transformations of recent decades. They do not divide themselves and others into groups based on ethnicity and culture, but in accordance with perceived proximity to or distance from a central scheme of order. Our findings are compatible to those of other studies in two other European societies, more precisely in Cologne (Kissler and Eckert 1990) and Paris (Lamont 2000).

Are these categorical fault lines mirrored in actual behaviour, in the dynamics of everyday group formation? The network analysis led to a

mixed result. On the one hand, three-quarters of the partners with whom our informants discuss important problems, with whom they regularly talk or meet, or to whom they have some other continuous relation belong to their own ethnic-national category, thus somewhat contradicting the descent-blind distinction between established and outsiders. Exogamous relationships, however, *do* correspond to the categorical groups identified through discourse analysis: the social networks of second-generation Italians open to Southern and Northern Europeans; only Turkish citizens maintain a level of relationships worth mentioning with members of more recent immigrant cohorts; and the second generation includes markedly more Swiss in the sphere of friendship and acquaintanceship and maintains most diversified networks in terms of ethno-national composition.

The high degree of ethnic endogamy is qualified by the fact that network analysis privileges relationships to close families which are, by the simple facts of immigrant biographies, usually of the same ethnic background. We also found similar degrees of homophilia with regard to profession, gender and other non-ethnic variables usually overlooked by the multiculturalist account of immigrant societies.

This underlines the importance of structuring our data not exclusively around the question of ethnic composition. When doing so, we discover that with regard to other structural features, the networks mostly converged in the course of generations. The differences are mostly disappearing e.g. in terms of the relative importance of kinship, friendship, acquaintanceship; in terms of the context of initiating relationship; and in terms of the quantitative extension of the network. The networks of all our informants show the typical traces of a working-class habitus, namely a high degree of sex endogamy, a high emphasis on kinship, and a surprisingly great importance accorded to the neighbourhood as an area of networking. This certainly supports the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis maintaining that no fundamental cultural differences are found between immigrants and natives, although such differences may play a prominent role in the problem-generating discourse on immigration. For example, it is often taken for granted, in official documents of the city administrations, that Turks remain more than other 'groups' 'among themselves', live family centred lives, cultivate relations with neighbours (allegedly due to the culturally specific habit of *komsuluk*) and generally invest more than others in social capital – an image clearly in conflict with our research findings.

10 Conclusion

What conclusions does our study justify, if the empirical evidence points once in the direction of multiculturalism and once towards the racialization/ethnicization hypothesis? In terms of defining a meaningful research

strategy, it seems to make more sense to assume a principally open outcome of group formation processes in immigration societies. The emergence of durable ethnic communities (such as the 'Latino' second generation of Italians) as well as complete culture- and descent-blind integration e.g. along gender, professional or class lines (such as many second-generation Turks) should both have a place in the analytical tableau. Some groups conform to the multiculturalist model whereas others follow the path predicted by the ethnicization theory, while still others fit neither of these two opposing views. Overcoming misleading dichotomies is also the goal of the so-called model of 'segmented assimilation' (Lucassen 1997; Zhou 1997; Brubaker 2002, pp. 539ff.), albeit with regard to the older debate between multiculturalists and classic assimilation theory. The 'new' assimilation theory stripped the older Chicago version from its normative overtones and from its teleological assumptions and laid out the possible combinations of 'assimilative' outcomes along various dimensions of social life: upward mobility combined with a lack of 'identificational assimilation', as good old Gordon (1964, p. 71) had put it; downward assimilation in conjunction with identificational assimilation to 'black' America; upward mobility and identificational assimilation to 'mainstream' America, etc.

Our research adds to this emerging recognition of the diversity of immigrant experiences in three ways: First, by showing that outcomes may diverge also in the field of everyday group formation – an area of study that in assimilation theory was reduced to research on 'mixed marriages' as the main engine of 'social assimilation'. Second, on a methodological level, our study substantiates the question mark in the title of this article: It shows that ethnic groups are not naturally given social units: the groups that in classical assimilation theory were supposed to 'mix' and eventually merge. It thus contradicts both multiculturalism and assimilation theory which share the view that ethnicity structures processes of group formation – while they are firmly opposing each other when it comes to predicting *for how many generations* ethnicity matters.

Third, our research illuminates some of the complexities of everyday group formation that are responsible for the diversity of outcomes. Pointing to these complexities may be rather obvious for most social scientists, especially from the micro tradition; however, they are still not taken enough into account in mainstream immigration research. I distinguished between two boundary producing mechanisms: discourse (social categories) and practice (networks), and tried to understand the relationship between them. A field full of tensions and contradictions thus appeared: different individuals appealing to different categorial 'groups' and linking up in their personal lives in different ways with a number of individuals – sometimes conforming to expressed notions about 'us' and 'them', sometimes contradicting these. Certain patterns emerged from this field of tensions: a basic scheme of categorizations with several

variations and a corresponding form of social closure – produced by similar cognitive dispositions and similar networking strategies of people that occupy a comparable position in the social space.

The major challenge ahead is to go beyond the descriptive approach of this and comparable research and to come up with an analytical framework that may explain the processes at play: why certain individuals prefer certain modes of classification over others; why their networks in certain respects do and in others do not conform to these categorical groups; under which conditions, on the aggregate level, the boundaries of categorial and network groups coincide, leading to groups *‘an und für sich’*.

I believe that the terminology used here to interpret the data may well be suited to proceed along this path towards a more powerful explanatory approach. Different endowments with social, economic, and cultural capital of immigrant families certainly will explain a part of the observed variance (Nee and Sanders 2001). The dynamics of local political fields, such as the three neighbourhoods discussed in this article, would also have to be taken into account if we want more fully to understand processes of categorial inclusion and exclusion. Institutionalized mechanisms of social closure in supra-local labour and housing markets will also be major variables in explaining the variety and complexity of group formation in contemporary immigrant societies. In order to arrive at a more comprehensive view, these various aspects and specialized fields of research would have to be integrated. An approach that systematically distinguishes between and at the same time relates a structure of resource endowments, cognitive patterns, everyday networking practices and the categorial fight for inclusion and exclusion may provide an adequate framework for developing such a view.

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Notes

1. In German sociology, the idea of a 'sociogenesis of ethnic minorities' was developed by Dittrich and Radtke (1990) and further explored by Bukow (1993). The most sophisticated analysis from a Luhmann point of view is given by Bommers (1999).

In the aftermath of the British studies of Robert Miles (e.g. 1993), Carter (Cater *et al.* 1996) and others, the 'racializing' immigration discourses and administrative measures in France (Silvermann 1992), The Netherlands (Schuster 1992), and Australia (Castles 1988) have been examined. Critics of the multicultural social policy of the United Kingdom (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), The Netherlands (Essed 1992; Rath 1991), Sweden (Ålund 1992), Germany (Radtke 1990) and New Zealand (Wetherell and Potter 1993) also orient themselves on this racialization/ethnicization perspective.

In the US, the most prominent exponent of the racialization view is perhaps David Goldberg (1992; 2002). Others are Small (1998) or Bonacich (1999). However, my impression is that thinking in terms of 'communities' is too strongly embedded in American popular and academic discourse to allow the ethnicization hypothesis to take roots.

2. Other examples from German sociology would be Esser (1980) or Schiffauer (1992).

3. For an account of this see Wimmer (2002).

4. Interview partners were non-randomly chosen among those informants in the network sample who were also willing to give a more detailed interview.

5. On economic, social and cultural capital see Bourdieu (1983), on symbolic capital Bourdieu (1985, pp. 37–42).

6. Other data and quantitative analysis show that also segregation according to ethnic-national background is much more marked in Zürich than in Basel and in Basel than in Bern (Wimmer 2000b). These differences relate to the general finding that segregation is more pronounced in larger cities, in part because of their more dynamic immigration situation (Friedrichs 1998, p. 171).

7. In Bern, too, we found a similar pattern, though here ties to the narrower residential field appear less pronounced than in Zurich (cf. Stienen, in print). This may be due to the fact that hardly any housing cooperatives exist in Bern and that the socio-geographic structure of the investigated area is less homogeneous and resembles rather a patchwork. But the basic normative patterns can be found here, too.

8. This figure of the new immigrants as parasites in the welfare state also forms part of the discursive repertoire of the Swiss, as some interviews have shown (Stienen, in print).

9. In a similar way, the universalist aspects of popular Islam are used by Maghrebinian immigrants in France to counter racist exclusion and to insist on being counted as equals with French and, more generally, with all other human beings (Lamont *et al.* 2002).

10. Thus, as could be expected, the topic of the welfare state plays a different role in the view of a welfare recipient in Bern than in the view of a highly assimilated Turkish family, all of whom are employed (Stienen, in print). It seems interesting to me that even persons whom many old-established residents classify as 'outsiders', namely the single mother on welfare or the Turkish family, reproduce the same system of classification, but consider themselves as belonging to the established group. Further, gender-specific variations emerge: Thus, unsurprisingly, the figure of the sexually aggressive, threatening, foreign man of Muslim faith plays a different role in women's discourse of exclusion than in that of men's. Among some women, lack of control and lack of decency, immorality and double standards are very pronouncedly associated with the male sex (Stienen, in print).

11. In one case in Zürich, this led to a marked dissociation with everything that could be seen as connected with Islam in any way. The result of this dissociation is a view of the social world in which ethnic-national origin and religion have hardly any recognizable significance and in which universalistic categories like occupation, subcultural differentiation, etc. dominate. Similar constellations can be found in two young women of Turkish background in Bern. Karrer (2002, ch. 12) reports from another study that he conducted independently, that this is a rather common strategy among Albanian and

Ex-Yugoslavian immigrants – the despised outsiders *par excellence* – living in the Hard neighbourhood.

12. A quite comparable symbolic reversal in their relationship to ‘foreign cultures’, especially those of Southern Europe, is observable among many middle-class Swiss. Thus, it could be seen more as part of a general ‘post-materialist’ value shift, which receives an ethnic-cultural teint in the case of the children of Italian immigrants.

13. Hartmut Esser’s study on interethnic friendships between Yugoslavs, Turks and Germans revealed similarly high rates of homophilia (Esser 1990).

14. What is astonishing, however, is that individuals of Turkish origin, who public opinion regards as the ‘most closed’ and ‘most inwardly oriented’ of the three groups, maintain the most open network of relationships. In contrast, the ‘most closed’ are the Swiss. But, due to the low number of cases, it is not possible to determine whether these group differences disappear when controlled for individual variables. This was the case in a similar study in Germany, in which persons with Turkish and Yugoslav backgrounds were asked, among other things, for their trans-ethnic contacts (Friedrichs 1990, p. 306).

15. In the tradition established by Blau, Quillian and Campbell (2003) discuss the ‘propinquity effect’ produced by spatial-demographic distributions; McPherson et al. (2001, pp. 419ff) call these ‘baseline homophily’, as opposed to the ‘inbreeding homophily’ that results from overprivileging co-ethnics beyond demographic probability.

16. Note that the units of analysis are relationships (a total of 819), not respondents (with a total of 77).

17. However, higher rates of homophilia are generally reported for groups in a minority position (McPherson et al. 2001, pp. 42ff) and explained as a consequence of the need to build strong support networks – independent of language difficulties and other adaptational problems.

18. Strictly speaking, the table cannot be interpreted, because too many cell values are too low.

19. The connection is rather weak, namely on the level of Cramers V 0.118, but highly significant (0.004).

20. This clearly shows how intimately the multiculturalist view remains tied to the perspective of the nation-state which defines immigration as especially problem-prone or even threatening to social integration and cohesion. This worry is mirrored in most other ways the social sciences have portrayed immigrants and is part of what has been termed ‘methodological nationalism’ (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002).

21. One of the classic network questions aimed directly at relationships with neighbours (‘If you were to go on a journey: is there someone to whom you give the key to your apartment so that they can water your plants and empty your mailbox?’). Does this make the importance of the neighbourhood in the networks an artifact of the research design? If all our respondents felt forced to answer this question with the name of a neighbour, then only 10 per cent of all relationships originated in the neighbourhood surroundings, rather than 17 per cent. It was possible, however, to answer the question with a ‘no’.

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