

The Adaptation of Ethnic Minority Groups: Defining the Problem (Case of Lithuania)¹

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ABSTRACT. This paper reviews the adaptation strategies among various ethnic groups in Lithuania. The four variants – assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation – are seen as the specific outcome of status, social relationships, and ethnic identity. The context of the four strategies is conceptualised through discussion of the relevant notions of ethnic studies, the importance of status groups, and adaptation challenges. The specific contents of the four are analysed on the basis of survey and interview materials that cover the topics of identification, social distance, closure of social networks, and civic activity. The specific sampling approach was worked out in order to achieve a reliable cross-group comparison of five ethnic samples (Lithuanian, Russian, Polish, Jewish, and Tatar). This study aims to overcome the tendency to see minority integration as an issue that can be fully solved politically, and to reveal the contents of ethnic relations and remaining social challenges through sociological analysis.

Ethnicity in contemporary society

Ethnic group, ethnic minority, diaspora: theoretical view

The concept of ethnicity that entered the discourses of Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the communist block quickly established itself as an essential part of social science. However, does it represent any specific methodological view or has it merely replaced the older terms of the languages in the region such as ‘nationality’? In fact, ethnicity indeed corresponds to the Lithuanian word ‘*tautybė*’ that was formerly translated as ‘nationality’ – yet this meaning of the term is only valid in a limited number of fields such as applied studies or statistics. In analytical studies, ethnicity is given preference due to its background in social science. At the same time, this preference for the term ‘ethnicity’ is strengthened by the fact that the original words related

¹ This text is related to a research project carried out in 2001-2002 (supported by grants from the State Foundation for Science and Studies (No.398; No.A-564) and the Open Society Fund-Lithuania) and reviews many points of the monograph based on that study: Kasatkina N., Leončikas T. (2003) *Lietuvos etninių grupių adaptacija: kontekstas ir eiga*. Vilnius: Eugrimas (forthcoming).

to the term 'nationality' in the languages of the region are ideologically loaded and belong to everyday usage rather than to terminology theorised in a scientific way. Whatever the loose usage of the notion of ethnicity in social science is, it refers to identity based on common descent and solidarity and takes the issue of social constructing into account. In this paradoxical way, the looseness of the concept of ethnicity becomes its strength: It allows one to refer to a wide range of social groups and identities that have an ethnic dimension – in contrast to the rather strict meaning of 'nationality', which reminds one of the institutions and boundaries in which it is embedded. Further on, we can turn to what specific social characteristics ethnic groups may have; ethnic group, minority, and diaspora can be viewed as the terms that characterize the specificity of the social groups based on ethnicity. Who are the groups based on ethnicity that live in Lithuania: just ethnic groups of the same kind, minorities, or diasporas? It is a question to be considered if we wish to understand where the prevailing modes of adaptation lead to. Like the term 'ethnicity,' ethnic group remains a rather loose notion without precise definition – which, again, may be among the reasons for the term's popularity. A short look at the usage of the term nevertheless enables one to see that it is probably the best and most flexible term to name the varying components of the ethnic composition of society.

Ethnic minority is a term that is widely used in legal and political discourse where it is rather descriptive even though it often goes without a definition² (sometimes intentionally). In sociology, however, the term minority is more an analytical category and refers to social stratification and inequality rather than group size³. An ethnic group that gets situated in an unequal position or becomes an object of discrimination without being able to counteract it becomes a minority. Regardless of formal conditions for equality, the subjective perception of the situation by the group members is a crucial factor. This perception is shaped not merely by the legal acts establishing equality but also, or even more, by collective experience, symbolic interaction with the majority, and the attitudes of the majority. When minority members perceive their subordinate position as common and join in their wish to preserve their cultural identity, there is a basis for a diaspora to emerge.

² Moreover, there are parallel functioning terms such as ethnic or national origin or 'national minorities' that is more usual in European documents of international law. E.g. Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Council of Europe), etc. See *Human Rights in International Law* (1991) Strasbourg.

³ See Smelser, N. (1988) *Sociology*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall; Simpson, G.E., Yinger, J.M. (1985) *Racial and Cultural Minorities. An Analysis of Prejudice and Discrimination*. N.Y.; Feagin, J.R. (1984) *Ethnic and Racial Relations* (2d edition). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, etc.

Besides cultural features such as idealisation of homeland, diaspora communities have often developed specific social organisation⁴. The historical task of minority group adaptation used to be finding a niche in a host society, finding a place in a system of social roles and labour distribution – often in a hostile environment. The cultural features of diasporas both helped them to be assigned to those niches and contained their social mobility. That is why diasporas have often developed corporatism, strong communal solidarity, and professionalism as features enabling survival. At the turn of the 21st century, the problem of diasporas has not lost its importance regardless of the apparent spread of individualism and decreasing group competition on an ethnic basis. The collapse of the USSR or Yugoslavia and migration in the developing countries or to the West result in millions of people that happen to be in the position of minorities – challenged to adapt to the changes. In this respect, diasporas are not at all a phenomenon of the past.

It seems reasonable to assume that the processes and results of adaptation have to do with the model of social organisation that prevails in the ethnic group. For contemporary Lithuania, three types of ethnic relationships (and their outcome: minority, diaspora, or citizenry) seem relevant. Minorities can be created by real or perceived inequality. The minority groups can find a solution in organising themselves as diasporas, but this may occur at the cost of fully-fledged relations with the majority. And thirdly, there could be a community of equal and participating citizens, where non-dominant groups would appear as “integrated minorities”.

The ethnic composition of Lithuania

Population structure and migratory processes are objective elements in the context of adaptation. In comparison to the census of 1989, which was carried out in the eve of the great transformations related to the collapse of the Soviet block and the reemergence of the independent state of Lithuania, the 2001 census registered the highest rate of ethnic Lithuanians in the territory of contemporary Lithuania ever. In that sense, there is a small move towards ethnic homogenisation. The numbers and often the rates of other groups, most notably Russians, have decreased. Poles have replaced Russians as the second biggest ethnic group in the country (see Table 2 at the end). The reasons behind the ethnic changes have not yet been studied systematically, yet emigration and decreasing fertility are considered to be among the main factors; we also assume that some assimilation may have taken place too.

⁴ For how the social developments of a diaspora are related to the broader evolution of nationalism, see Gellner, E. (1993) *Nations and Nationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Ethnic diversity has a regional dimension. While most counties have 90 percent or more Lithuanians, some are different. A few areas have a significant Polish population; this prevails in the Šalčininkai area (89.5 percent non-Lithuanians), the Vilnius area (77.6 percent non-Lithuanians) and some other areas. The most diverse city is Vilnius, while the second most diverse is Klaipėda; Visaginas, the town next to the atomic power plant, is 85 percent non-Lithuanian (Russians make up 52.4 percent of its population). Ethnic diversity was a criterion in choosing the locations for our survey.

A short look through the typology of ethnic groups enables one to realize that there are indeed differing ethnic segments in Lithuania. The flows of migration during the Soviet period are important factors that account not only for ethnic diversity, but also for diversity within ethnic groups. Russians consist of people who came to the country at different times and because of various circumstances, with differing flows, to different places – yet often related to labour migration. Although processes of migration in Lithuania were part of flows throughout the entire Soviet Union, the position of the Russians in this country had some specific features. In comparison to the other Soviet republics, Lithuanian Russians had almost the smallest rate of intelligentsia (Остапенко 1997). Broadly speaking, Lithuanian nationalism in Soviet times was in a way successful in keeping the dominant social roles for ethnic Lithuanians. Russians, on the other hand, appear as less likely to be expected to have good preconditions for adaptation and self-organisation at a time of transformations than could be inferred from their generally dominant role in the Soviet system.

Ethnic groups included in the survey have some specific typological peculiarities that become apparent when considering ethnic composition and classification schemes. Russians and Russian-speakers are mainly postcolonial and labour migrants. The Polish community has a clear regional dimension, they have the legacy of being the border minority and they are challenged by the processes of elite formation. Tatars are an old territorial minority that have integrated many varying elements in their identity (the dominant language has changed several times over the years). An interesting relationship is connected with the so called ‘Kazan’ Tatars that are largely Soviet migrants and are usually considered to be ‘another type’ of Tatars than ‘Lithuanian Tatars’. Jews are the group that has undergone various aspects of diaspora existence. However, the Holocaust destroyed the evolution and the existence of Lithuanian Jewry; a large part of contemporary Lithuanian Jews are migrants from the territory of the former USSR (Goldstein & Goldstein 1997). The Roma (not included in the survey) exhibit one of the most typical characteristics of a diaspora: due to deep social exclusion, the social mobility of an individual depends on the mobility of the entire group.

Although one ethnic group may often fall into several categories, may consist of differing parts, etc., even a schematic account of social or migratory

segments allows one to better grasp the preconditions and context of adaptation. The adaptation challenges intensively emerged in the milieu of the changing political regime and social structure in the early 1990s.

Ethnicity in everyday life

The consideration of ethnicity is concluded with notes on how it appears in everyday life in Lithuanian society. For many people today, “ethnic relations” do not seem to be an important issue. There are no evident ethnic clashes or massive tensions. Ethnicity is, metaphorically speaking, mollified and calm. Does this mean it has lost all social impact? A closer look reveals that ethnicity remains quietly present in everyday life, influences interpersonal relations, and is reflected in opinions about various groups in society. The answers to the question “how do you recognise a person of another ethnicity?,” as a rule, referred to physical appearance. The classification of people by appearance seems clear, simple, and a matter of common sense, although the outcomes of such classification may not be that simple for those classified. Anyway, it comes as a surprise that the criteria of ethnic recognition that are common in everyday life are not consciously perceived by the respondents. Most inhabitants of Lithuania do not have very specific racial features, yet in everyday life we make guesses about their ethnic belonging. The most common criteria are surname and accent. Language is an especially important, if not critical, criterion of Lithuanian identity. While the linguistic criterion as a marker of ethnicity remains, its function has radically changed. At the beginning of perestroika, the non-native speaker speaking Lithuanian was an object of admiration; nowadays, he/she is an object of derision due to accent. Hypertrophied linguistic sensitivity results in constant recognition and reminding of ethnic boundaries and, at the very least, does not encourage the public participation of non-Lithuanians. Accent, surname, or appearance are banal and often misleading criteria, but their importance is in their presence. Obvious or less visible, ethnicity remains in everyday life. Ironically, often it does so without any efforts from cultural activists.

Minorities and status groups

The chapters on status and adaptation introduce the basic assumptions on which the research project was based.

Understanding status. Status group and its relevance

Apart from traditional status distinctions such as the differences between prescribed and achieved, ethnicity may become a status element in more subtle ways. The outcomes of adaptation are complicated when the statuses in minority and

majority groups do not correspond or contradict each other; the mismatching statuses may result in the marginalisation of such an individual. However, keeping both statuses can be a conscious decision by an individual, e.g. local ethnic community leader who otherwise is known as an average schoolteacher. The contradiction of statuses becomes a problem if an individual wishes to overcome it, but cannot do so. The social environment may strengthen certain status contradictions, e.g. when an ethnic party leader (say, charismatic leader of the minority community) is not allowed to take certain public roles (that are considered important by the majority). A minority can also punish a coethnic individual for a perceived venality or lack of support. Can statuses within minority and majority correspond? The exemplary case of status match are Lithuanian Karaites. Leaders of their tiny community are well known and respected by the majority. An example is H. Kobeckaitė, who has led the Minority Department, has been a representative to the Council of Europe, and who currently works as an ambassador.

A further issue is the relationship between status and social mobility. In a society in transformation, such as Lithuania, the formal criteria of stratification seem to say little about individual status. An office secretary in an auditing firm such as Deloitte & Touche and an owner of a few kiosks in an ordinary city district may both have the same level of education and income. Yet their status repertoire can be mutually exclusive: the respectable shiny townswoman and employee working in the city centre, and a small owner and employer, having no office and rarely reading a leading newspaper. The cultural aura of the status group rather than income or education alone seems to better express the social success or failure of a person. Therefore, we constructed a nine-item scheme of status groups that in one way or another symbolize status change during the last decade. This scheme was a tool to choose those individuals for the survey that have particular experience of changing status (adaptation), challenged either by pressures or opportunities of the great changes.

Minority groups

When society treats a certain characteristic as a special feature, it creates the preconditions for a minority identity to emerge. Depending on context, any feature can become to be seen as atypical. Yet, a specific criterion is inequality – minority members often experience injustice or feel like an object of collective discrimination. When discussing discrimination, sociology stresses the distinction between attitudes and behaviour, yet this distinction creates confusion when we try to assess the situation of minorities. One of the puzzling questions, often asked by journalists as well as our colleagues, was whether Lithuanians in Visaginas or Šalčininkai are an ethnic minority or not? A woman in Visaginas complained that her children were being sneered at for speaking Lithuanian. She also thinks that her career was limited since authorities of the atomic power

plant give preference to “their own kind” (i.e. non-Lithuanians). Formally, this person belongs to the country’s majority, but in her environment she feels isolated and constrained – that is why she is almost a classical example of minority consciousness. This example is important to grasp the significance of the subjective feeling that minority members have. Even when the conformity of a minority is successful, i.e. the majority is “satisfied” by the performance of a minority, we should consider the price that the minority members pay for this adaptation. Conformity has its psychological cost for an individual, and adaptation success depends not merely on the willingness and ability to adapt, but also on the degree of pressure from the majority, on the social space that is provided, and barriers that are confronted.

Links between status and ethnicity

It is largely in the informal sphere where the links between ethnicity and status exist in contemporary society (given that civil rights are recognised). Yet how could they be conceived? Let us consider what obstacles would matter for a non-Lithuanian seeking a higher social status. Clearly, it depends on the position sought (its place in the social hierarchy) and on the status boundaries (whether it is a common or exclusive status). However, social ties, social norms, and linguistic competence are specific factors that also have an ethnic dimension. According to our observations and the responses of the respondents, most groups of acquaintances are based on ties formed during one’s period of education. As a rule, education groups in Soviet times were monoethnic, and remain so to a considerable extent. The groups of political and social interests are also largely monoethnic. The very character of such groups reduces the chance for a non-coethnic to enter them. Social norms refer to acceptable ways of behaviour. In a society with a wide-spread practice of ethnic recognition (conscious or unconscious prescription of a person to a certain ethnicity), social differences in behaviour are often perceived as ethnic even though they do not necessarily preclude communication. Linguistic competence becomes increasingly important in a contemporary social climate where communication skills are among the crucial means of self-presentation. The language barrier can be encountered by very different people: a taxi driver may have difficulties with the spoken language, a sales agent may lack the proper terminology, and a university professor may be observed to make even small mistakes as she/he communicates to the educated audience. That is, the apparently individual problem can become a factor for ethnic mobilisation. But first of all, it creates isolation. Consideration of the preconditions for status achievement in the background of ethnicity suggests that adaptation may be a good indicator to analyse how the ethnic processes flow in contemporary society.

Adaptation: conception and methodological assumptions

Conception of adaptation

We understand social adaptation as a process of the combination of an individual's aspirations and expectations with his/her possibilities and expectations and the requirements of society. Why is adaptation so central for researching ethnic processes? It has to be noted that it used to be very popular to discuss so-called ethnic relations in post-communist countries and especially the Baltic States in terms of citizenship and minority rights. Understanding adaptation in broader terms is important because an individual may have not only more, but also quite different aims than acquiring a particular civil or national identity. The expectations of most traditional and liberal nationalists that minorities should follow the majority and learn its culture prevents them from seeing what really matters to minorities themselves. A non-dominant population may have wishes other than the majority wants to see: For instance, instead of active loyalty to the state, a minority may only wish to have social security. Civil virtues may be of secondary importance. That's why debate concerning civil society does not help to understand what the goals and perceptions of the adapting minority members are. Legal formalities related to civil status, place of residence, or property can be handled *as* formalities – without greater effect on identity, attitudes, or loyalties. Formally granted rights and orderly civil status does not tell much about civic virtues or the civic skills to use the rights and fulfil the duties. To extend the frame in which ethnic group adaptation can be better grasped, we shall present a theoretical scheme.

We are mostly interested in socio-cultural adaptation, which encompasses both “external” social conditions and individual skills to participate in the surrounding society. For representing the links between cultural identity and social adaptation we turn to the typology of J.W. Berry (Berry 1997; Berry, Poortinga, Segall, Dasen 1992), who worked in the field of cross-cultural psychology and has distinguished four variants of acculturation. His scheme concentrates on individual attitudes along two lines: whether an individual wishes to sustain his/her cultural identity and whether contacts with groups of another culture are free and regular. According to the specific combination of the above two, assimilation, integration, separation, and marginalisation emerge as specific strategies. Our study builds on the former typology but extends it to the social sphere rather than merely discussing personal attitudes.

What matters for adaptation is not merely acculturation attitudes, but also how the surrounding social environment reacts. When there are informal obstacles to an individual's advancement, acculturation does not necessarily guarantee successful adaptation. The opposite is also true. If there are large groups that do not acquire the necessary skills (i.e. acculturation is limited) for main-

taining their welfare and participating in the larger society, their adaptation cannot be considered entirely successful. Both on an individual and a group level, the success of adaptation depends on expectations and aims and on whether a person finds a way to realize them in his/her society. If an individual has any particular ethnic features, implementation of his/her aims in social life has an extra dimension. There is the encounter with majority attitudes, and there is the question of maintaining (or not) the background identity – via family traditions, via choosing a school for children, via choosing friends, etc.

Types of adaptation

Berry's scheme concentrates on individual attitudes and assumes that they are consciously chosen – therefore it is quite legitimate for psychological research to consider the acculturation variants as strategies. In this study we emphasise the social context: Not everything is up to an individual; type of adaptation is therefore more than a strategy of individual behaviour. What can be considered a strategy is a bid for status: Everyone seeks success according to one's understanding. But the results of this attempt can vary: the desired status is either achieved or not, it gives satisfaction or not, ethnic identity either changes or not. The result of adaptation is the complex outcome of the pursuit of status and the social environment. In other words, when an individual strives for status and society reacts to his behaviour, the outcome is a result, or a type, of adaptation. And this result can be aptly grasped with Berry's concepts: integration, assimilation, marginalisation, and separation, as long as their contents include the social dimension. The adjusted scheme of adaptation types:

Adaptation type	Satisfaction with the achieved status	Ethnic identity maintained
Integration	+	+
Assimilation	+	-
Marginalisation	-	-
Separation	- / +	+

Guidelines for researching adaptation: survey themes and sampling peculiarities

Having the above considerations on status and adaptation in mind, we come to designing the methodology for adaptation research. The assessment of adaptation is based on a comparative analysis of responses given by five samples, each of which was drawn from a particular ethnic group. The main topics of the survey cover questions on identity, social ties, and self-assessment of one's social position. Identification tendencies were registered via a suggested list of catego-

ries and via the Twenty Statements Test. The character of social ties was analysed by comparing the ethnic composition of one's circle of friends, relatives, and job colleagues. Besides that, the degree of civic activity was assessed by answers about membership in organisations, participation in public events, interest in politics, and trust in public institutions. The attitudes of tolerance were measured with the help of the Bogardus scale. The perception of how one's social position has changed during the last 10 years was distinguished as one of the central indicators of adaptation success. The aforementioned theoretical scheme of adaptation types is a means to see what all those differences on a number of dimensions actually mean.

Sampling was one of the major challenges for the empirical part of this project, and we hope to have found a successful model for this research that enabled a valid comparison of the ethnic groups. A model of disproportional stratified sample was applied (non-probability sampling); the stratification criterion was ethnicity (as self-declared). A few non-titular ethnic groups were pre-selected, and approximately the same number of respondents was chosen for each of them. This model allowed the assessment of how the same variables (adaptation aspects) differed in different samples (in our case, in different ethnic groups). Sampling took sex, age, and concentration in particular towns of a given community into account, but the central emphasis in the logical model of this research was on the status groups. Expert groups were used for foreseeing and assigning particular individuals to a particular status group; in some cases, locations rather than individuals were specified (e.g. for finding the unemployed). Sample composition is presented in Table 1 (below).

Sampling phases. For territorial sampling, sites of different ethnic composition were selected (Vilnius as the centre and a case of ethnic variety; Visaginas, Alytus, Šalčininkai, and Klaipėda as locations with a higher concentration of Russians, Tatars, Poles, and Jews; Kaunas as a case where the ethnic majority prevails. Next there was a selection of individuals from the *status groups*. As was formerly discussed, we concentrate on the social positions which have a cultural-symbolic meaning in society and are considered to mean different social success (or success of adaptation) in the current social situation. We constructed the following status categories that bear 'coded' names:

- 1) "Tuxedos": extraordinary social advancement and income level; the establishment;
- 2) "Mobile phones": middle range managers mainly in the private sector;
- 3) "Conference participants": people of science and culture (as a likely case of clear and strong cultural-ethnic identity);
- 4) "Uniforms": policemen and military;
- 5) "Hairdressers": personnel of small enterprises (up to 10-15) that often tend to be monoethnic; the case of adaptation in the local social environment – hairdressing saloon, car-repair, kiosk, etc.

- 6) "Marketplace": self-employed, relying on active individual effort, non-adapted to the institutionalised labour market;
- 7) "Unemployed": socially critical layer, especially in a time of transition;
- 8) "Dormitory": residents of the dormitories that used to be built next to the great industrial plants for the migrant labour force; these building settings still remain ethnic and social enclaves;
- 9) "Pensioners": pensioners as a category of people who are at the end of their trajectory of social mobility and do not have another (stronger) social identity.

Each of the five samples consists of the respondents of the same nine status categories. The samples are not representative of the entire ethnic groups they come from. Instead, everything possible was done to make all the five samples similar in terms of social characteristics such as status, income, and education. This model permits the assessment of how the same variables (various indicators of adaptation) contrast in different samples (in our case, in different ethnic groups). In other words, when social differences are controlled, it is more likely that the differences between the samples are due to the ethnicity factor (i.e. the effect of ethnicity is maximised). Whether and how the ethnic groups differ in their adaptation has been the main issue of this research project.

TABLE 1. Actual distribution of respondents by town.

	<i>Place of residence</i>							<i>Total</i>
	Vilnius	Kaunas	Visaginas	Šalčininkai	Alytus	Klaipėda	Other	
Lithuanians	38	35	36	19			1	129
Russians	32	36	36	1				105
Poles	39	8		34			1	82
Jews	34	34	1			31		100
Tatars	31	1	33		32			97
Others	11		34				1	46
Total	185	114	140	54	32	31	3	559

Features of Lithuania's ethnic groups (survey results)

The empirical findings of the research project are covered by a discussion of identification, social ties, and evaluation of one's social status. The data come from survey and interview materials collected in 2001-2002 from Lithuanians, Russians, Poles, Jews, and Tatars.

Identification tendencies

The strongest identification in all the surveyed groups is with the social categories such as coworkers or people of the same profession. Yet differences appear when the respondents evaluate the ethnic categories. When asked to mention the single most important category from the suggested list, Lithuanians, Poles, and Russians indicated one of the social categories while the Jews and Tatars more often mentioned an ethnic one (such as coethnics in Lithuania, diaspora members, or people who speak the same language). The historical diasporas have also declared a more intensive activity in NGOs.

Two largest non-dominant ethnic groups, Poles and Russians, exhibit quite different tendencies of territorial identification. Poles, as well as Tatars, are more strongly attached to various dimensions of Lithuanian territory, and in this way are quite similar to the majority ethnic group. In contrast, Russians and Jews have lesser attachments to the territory of the country. However, as far as Russians are concerned, the low importance of territory cannot be immediately thought to mean the diasporisation of the Russians since identification with coethnics living abroad is quite low (a little higher in Visaginas).

Additional data on how ethnicity is currently verbalised comes from interview materials. Often ethnicity is perceived in banal and schematic terms, which proves that it is a clear and usual part of everyday life. In some cases it is verbalised clearly and extensively, and we call it 'a mobilised ethnicity,' and in some cases it is verbalised vaguely and rather unwillingly, and we call it a declining ethnicity.

Ethnic toleration and social distance

Lithuanians proved to be more "selective" in their relationships with others than Russians or Poles did. There is a higher rate of Lithuanians who say that they can always recognise a person of different ethnicity, while a large portion of Russians and Poles declare they do not notice a person's ethnicity (see Table 3 at the end). Other surveys such as the European Value Survey (EVS) have also revealed that Lithuanians exhibit higher ethnic closure by declaring (43 percent) that ethnicity of spouses matters for the luck of marital life (51 percent think it is not important), while 70-74 percent of Russians and Poles think it does not matter (Leončikas 2000). On the one hand, we notice certain differences in the levels of closure or tolerance, but the hierarchy of disliked groups is very similar for all of the ethnic groups. Selective intolerance "unifies" all the groups against the most disliked categories such as Gypsies, Muslims, and Jews.

According to the EVS, the categories of identity that were disliked have remained stable during the last decade (data from 1990 and 1999). The negative reaction to other disliked categories such as drug-addicts or former criminals has changed, but the items of disliked identity remained on the same level and

in the same order. We link the high level of intolerance for the identity categories to the high prevalence of ethnic recognising that exists on a regular basis. For that matter we refer to Sartre's essay on anti-Semitism where he aptly grasped the consequences of ethnic recognizing. Sartre (Caprп 1991) described the situation during the Nazi-period, when strangers would encounter Jews who were already marked with a yellow star. Willingly or not, with compassion or with despise, the passers-by were looking at the victims and their looks were inevitably reminding the others that they were Jews – without any choice.

Ethnic insularity or exclusion?

A look at the data on social ties reveals the ethnic isolation of certain social segments. In spite of the present preconditions for structural assimilation (i.e. equal rights), there are groups in the sphere of employment that are ethnically isolated (separated). Although this is primarily a feature of small-scale business that is organised along family ties, almost a half of the surveyed Poles and Russians work in a monoethnic environment. A certain portion of respondents (13 percent of Poles and Russians, 17 percent of Tatars, and 21 percent of Jews) also indicated that they do not have Lithuanians among their personal friends.

Social participation is one of the key factors in adaptation of minority groups on a broad scale. Russians exhibit a striking indifference with regard to participation in public life and are the most passive group (see Table 4 at the end). Lack of participation may result in marginalisation of a considerable portion of the population. The satisfactory economic situation of a number of individuals does not tell everything about their perception of social life: Their perception may be greatly influenced by symbolic interaction and by lack of recognition, which results in withdrawal from public life.

It is interesting to note that one-fifth of the respondents indicate that it is important to be Lithuanian if one wishes to get a good job. Moreover, those who mentioned that they have encountered some kind of violation of their rights as minority members, tend to indicate that it happened in the sphere of employment. It all raises concerns about unequal chances for minorities during the process of adaptation.

Perceptions of changes in social status

The central piece of data in this study is a clear difference in the perception of how one's social status has changed. The largest share of Lithuanians think their personal situation has improved. Russians have the opposite opinion (see Graph 1 at the end). This opinion among Russians is noticeable in all of the towns and allows us to conclude that social status and the issue of recognition rather than formal political rights is a barrier to the successful adaptation of the Russians.

Moreover, there is a noticeable opinion among Russians and Poles that there is a constant danger for some of their family members to lose their jobs. The prevailing sense of social insecurity may be one of the basic indicators of the stumbling integration of minorities.

The data on identification, perceptions of social distance and change of social status reveal that ethnicity has different contents in different groups (see Graph 1, Graph 2 at the end). We combine various pieces of data to produce the brief sketches of what could be a 'portrait' of each of the surveyed groups.

Lithuanians. Given the various data that reflect the results of adaptation directly or indirectly, the higher rate of Lithuanians (in comparison to non-dominant ethnic groups) who acknowledge an improvement in their social status seems understandable. Also, there is a higher share of Lithuanians (and, by the way, Poles) that ascribe positive personal characteristics to themselves. As a majority, Lithuanians do not encounter ethnic obstacles in the process of adaptation to the social environment.

When comparing the data on self-evaluation and perceived change in status between Lithuanians and other ethnic groups (where the samples have similar social characteristics) we can make initial assumptions about the ethnic dimension of adaptation problems. These assumptions are strengthened by data that show the higher ethnic closeness of Lithuanians both in the field of primary relationships and in the groups of higher social status. Moreover, Lithuanians are more aware of ethnic stratification (admit that they recognise persons of another ethnicity).

Russians. Russians exhibit the conventional features of an ethnic group less than others: They identify less strongly with categories such as territory, co-ethnics in the country, and co-believers. Confessional or religious identity barely appears among the self-declared identities and is rarely given any importance on the list of suggested identity categories. At the beginning of the last decade there was a wave of religious revival, and it was anticipated that the Orthodoxy could become the unifying factor for the Russian community. However, this expectation didn't come true, unlike in pre-war Lithuania.

The opinion about worsened social status and the overall civic passivity among Russians suggest that there are more general problems of adaptation rather than a mere identity crisis. More specifically, there are great differences of opinion in the segments of differing social status. The greatest contrasts (of all the surveyed groups) in comparison to the majority opinions are noticeable in the Russian groups of low status and low education. This means that the integration of the Russians (social similarity to the majority) in Lithuania is related to their social status.

Poles. Poles experience smaller obstacles in their adaptation or/and feel certain about the backing of their ethnic group. Strong identification with one's

town or region testifies to the firm consolidation of this ethnic group. In some of the answers of the Poles, one can even see the signs of a traditional community. Apart from the relatively strong religious identity, Poles give a smaller significance to education and rather emphasise social background and ties with co-ethnics (in finding a good job). It was among the Poles that we saw the highest rate of ethnic Lithuanians among the relatives. This clearly contradicts a popular opinion about the prevailing separation of the Poles. On the other hand, the Poles who considered themselves typical did express an attitude of separation, yet their share in the overall sample is negligible.

Tatars. Tatars have the highest rate of individuals who are certain that they are typical representatives of their ethnic group. Generally Tatars (as well as Jews) are relatively more active in ethnic organisations, however, their attitudes are not always the same: For instance, there is a difference between respondents from Visaginas and those from Alytus and Vilnius. Respondents from the latter towns, who are more often the descendants of a historical diaspora, exhibit a higher rate of accommodation (assimilation) attitude to Lithuanians.

Jews. Among the major categories of self-identification, the Jews surveyed did not mention religious identity. Also, identification with the territorial aspects of the country is relatively weak. These features, at least at first glance, make the answers of the Jews and the Russians similar. It is possible that the similarity relates to the experience of both Russians and Jews as migrants of the Soviet period (which is common trait with a share of Russians and great portion of contemporary Lithuanian Jews). There is also a high prevalence of professional identity among the Jews that may have to do with a higher level of education in their sample.

To sum up, the major differences among larger ethnic groups such as Lithuanians, Russians and Poles versus historical diasporas are noticeable mainly in the strength of ethnic ties with other group members. Apart from that, data confirm that Russians still experience identity crisis and are likely to become a minority in a sociological sense. Among the surprising findings is that on many issues Poles tend to have the most similar opinions to those of Lithuanians. In the background of our study, we are led to conclude that Poles are likely to become the most successfully integrated group (in contrast to popular opinions).

Successes and failures of social adaptation

The interview materials explain how the specific processes of adaptation – integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalisation – appear in the social life of an individual. Obviously, processes of integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalisation are multidimensional. The qualitative analysis focused on

extracting the real content of those processes that is present and recognizable in individual lives. Empirical research (the answers of respondents) confirms that distinguishing the four types of adaptation makes sense. Sometimes surprisingly, sometimes not, all of them exist next to each other – sometimes in one family. In case of a particular individual, it may be complicated to unambiguously ‘assign’ a person to one type of adaptation. It confirms, though, that the choice of one or another type of adaptation is very conditional. It is dependent on the peculiarities of an individual’s status and social ties. To reiterate, the type of adaptation is less a well-planned strategy of behaviour than it is an outcome of how an individual combines his/her social status and ethnic identity.

An analysis of the content of types of adaptation leads one to a critical assessment of the stereotypical evaluations attached to notions of “integration”, “assimilation”, “separation”, or “marginalisation”. Integration is not always an expression of social success or free choice. Of course, integration, when an individual can achieve a desired status and still sustain his/her identity, is an optimal social scenario for a democratic society. Yet what also has to be taken into account is the price paid for integration, i.e. the efforts. As a rule, the majority expects loyalty and active performance of civic duties by members of the minority. Also, the majority often controls how minorities internalise its culture. In this context, it is important to see that minorities are not always able to easily comply with the expectations of the majority. Therefore, there should be means by which the majority recognises, appreciates, or supports the efforts of minorities to adapt.

Assimilation is not always as dramatic as minority members often imagine it. On an individual level it may go smoothly and unnoticed – as long as both groups recognise the conversion and recognise the right for an individual to change groups and decide one’s identity individually. Thus, the right to assimilate can also be considered an expression of democracy. In theoretical discussion though, we should be aware of the difference between cultural and ethnic assimilation. Cultural approximation does not necessarily have to result in the loss of ethnic identity. But again, it has to be seen whether identity is preserved because one wishes to do so or because one is forced to.

Marginality is apparently widely spread in times of intensive social change. Fragmented identity, dissatisfaction with lowered social status, and limited social networks may happen to be characteristic not only to particular social layers, but to entire ethnic groups. In such a case, we encounter not only many personal problems of various individuals, but also a social entity whose behaviour is hard to predict. Marginality creates preconditions for deviant behaviour; marginal groups can be not only vulnerable but also manipulated.

Ethnic separation may sometimes appear as a regrettable state of affairs because it limits the social choices of an individual to a minority group. However, research has revealed that separation can be a well-calculated strategy for

a social career. Moreover, separation can provide an individual with full satisfaction with himself and his social environment. An ethnically mixed circle of clients was considered by some service-providers as proof that 'things are going right' without assuming for a moment that people of differing ethnicities can be partners rather than clients to each other. Separation provides comfort; that is why it remains a challenge for society that wishes to have its ethnic groups interrelated on equal grounds. Low civic activism precludes counter-separatist mechanisms from emerging. Surprisingly, even NGOs sometimes have a dubious role: Rather than providing links with the state and among various citizens, they function as a shelter for minority members both from the state and from other citizens.

Assessments and alternatives

The focus on adaptation enables one to discuss ethnic processes in a contemporary society such as Lithuania nowadays. Although this society is relatively calm and free of ethnic conflicts, ethnicity has not disappeared and is effectively present when an individual solves problems regarding his/her status, social aspirations, and identity. The empirical data and considerations in this study lead to a conclusion about the importance of the social (rather than political and legal) dimension in the contemporary adaptation of differing ethnic groups. In the beginning of the 1990s, the majority had great uncertainty about the political loyalty of the minorities and was concerned about potential claims of separatism. Lithuania's decision to grant citizenship to all permanent residents of the country truly brought political revenues at an early stage of independence. The adaptation of ethnic groups however remains a social challenge for a democratic society.

Regardless of equal rights for all Lithuanian citizens, one's own perception of change in status is not the same in different ethnic groups. Russians and Tatars exhibit the most negative evaluations, which at the same time are the most different from the evaluations of the majority group (Lithuanians). However, the negative evaluations are not exhibited in the place where they might be mostly expected. People in Visaginas have not indicated that their situation has worsened more often than respondents elsewhere have. This means that Russians see their situation as problematic in broad contexts, not only in the area of forthcoming industrial restructuring due to the closure of the atomic power plant.

Another crucial finding regards the ethnic isolation of certain social segments. In spite of the present preconditions for structural assimilation (i.e. equal rights), there are groups in the sphere of employment that are ethnically isolated (separated). Although this is primarily a feature of small-scale businesses that are organised along family ties, almost a half of the surveyed Poles and Russians

work in a monoethnic environment. Apparently, partnerships across ethnic lines do not emerge easily.

Analysis of individual instances of various adaptation types reveals that adaptation is not always a pre-planned and consequential strategy and significantly depends on the social milieu. That is why there cannot be a simple recipe for adaptation – be it adaptation of an individual or a group. Neither is there a universal solution for minority-related policies. Even an option of integration has to be viewed critically and should not be fetishised. Integration includes individual efforts – that we called ‘integration costs’. Moreover, integration is not necessarily an outcome of free choice and does not by itself help to escape the social niche prescribed for a diaspora. The historical diasporas of Lithuania, such as Tatars, are in a way deemed to ‘integrate’: Their members are often recognised and asked or reminded about their ethnicity; therefore they could not so easily opt, for instance, to assimilate.

For assessing the success of adaptation in minority groups on the broad scale, it is important not to overlook the problem of social participation. Lack of participation may result in the marginalisation of a considerable part of the population. Marginalisation has more expressions than merely social exclusion in its economic sense. The satisfactory economic situation of a number of individuals does not tell everything about their perception of social life: Their perception may be greatly influenced by symbolic interaction and lack of recognition, which can be a cause of withdrawal from public life. Those who do not take part in societal processes and who do not identify with the surrounding society can not be considered ‘integrated’. Spreading marginality among minority members may strengthen the process of an ethnic group becoming a minority. Minorities that are passive, indifferent, and infantile in public life can also easily become an object of political manipulation.

Marginality can turn into assimilation or separation. Assimilation, however, is not an easy solution for a minority member even if it is sometimes assumed to be. Individuals who lose their identity and the support of one group do not always acquire recognition and identity in another group. Again, marginality is never far away. Therefore we emphasise that participation rather than assimilation should be a focus of the state’s integrative policies. On the other hand, assimilation should always remain an open option for individuals, and all the ethnic communities should nurture toleration for individual choice.

When ethnic boundaries are emphasised, it may result in separatism. First, ethnic recognising reproduces ethnic boundaries in everyday life. The dividing line gets more problematic if it precludes social mobility. The measurement of both mobility and separation is always complicated, but it is reasonable to assume that intolerance, such as it is with regard to Roma, complicates the way out of the social margins. In such cases it is quite obvious that the efforts of one ethnic group may not be enough. On the other hand, we noticed that ethnic sepa-

ration, from an individual's point of view, could be a rational and satisfactory strategy of adaptation. That is probably why we see it present regardless of the fact that there is no tangible ghetto.

The successes and failures of adaptation is one of the ways to develop ethnicity studies. It is significant to realise that ethnic processes are part of contemporary life in a democratic society. In Lithuania, the challenge is to optimise ethnic relationships: Quite often minorities are not involved in the consideration of issues of common concern. They are not encouraged to take the role of active and responsible citizens. Unequal participation in civic life can result in marginality and separation, which in turn can lead to ethnic mobilisation. Moreover, ignoring passive citizens, such as minority members often are, raises the risk that they will not only lose civic participatory skills but also channels for inclusion. This could cause the old problems of ethnic mobilisation and undefined loyalty to reappear.

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TABLES AND GRAPHS

TABLE 2. Population of Lithuania by ethnicity. Census data (share of respective ethnicity in percentages)

Ethnicity / year	1923	1959	1969	1979	1989	2001	
						Perc.	Thousands
Lithuanians	69,2	79,3	80,1	80,0	79,6	83,45	2907,3
Poles	15,3	8,5	7,7	7,3	7,0	6,74	235,0
Russians	2,5	8,5	8,6	8,9	9,4	6,31	219,8
Belorussians	0,4	1,1	1,5	1,7	1,7	1,23	42,9
Ukrainians	0,0	0,7	0,8	0,9	1,2	0,65	22,5
Jews	8,3	0,9	0,8	0,4	0,3	0,12	4,0
Latvians	0,6	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,08	3,0
Tatars	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,09	3,2
Roma/Gypsies	0,0	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,07	2,6
Germans	3,4	0,4	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,09	3,2
Armenians	-	-	-	-	-	0,04	1,5
Others	0,2	0,2	0,1	0,4	0,4	0,18	6,1
Not indicated	-	-	-	-	-	0,94	32,9
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	3484,0

Sources: Lietuvos statistikos departamentas (1992) *Lietuvos gyventojai 1991*. Vilnius: Lietuvos statistikos departamentas.

Lietuvos statistikos departamentas (2002) *Gyventojai pagal lytį, amžių, tautybę ir tikybą. Surašymas 2001* / Population by Sex, Age, Ethnicity and Religion. Population Census 2001. Vilnius: Lietuvos statistikos departamentas.

TABLE 3. Ethnic recognition. Row percentages

	Can you recognise people of another ethnicity?				No answer	Total
	I can always recognise people of another ethnicity	I can recognise some ethnicities	It's difficult for me to recognise ethnicity	I don't pay attention to someone's ethnicity		
Lithuanians	27	28	11	33	1	100
Russians	12	17	11	60		100
Poles	11	13	11	63	1	100
Jews	25	20	11	42	2	100
Tatars	28	29	5	38		100

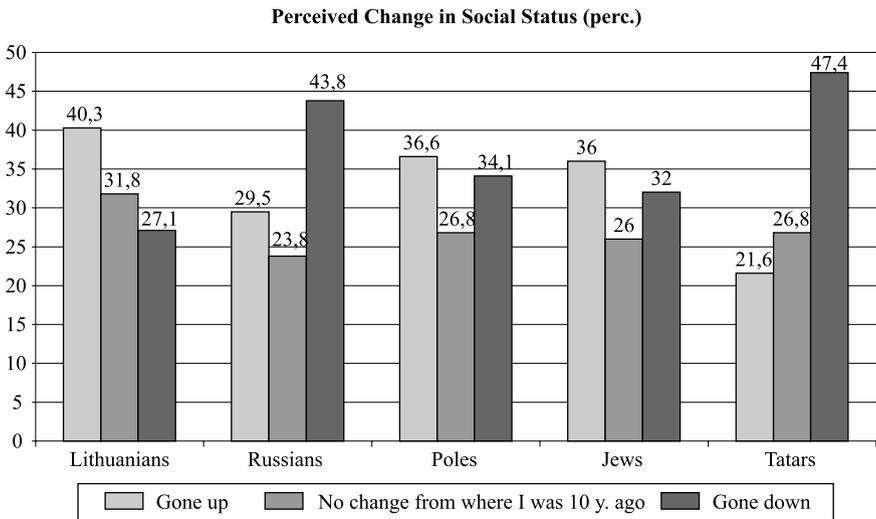
TABLE 4. Public activity. Row percentages

Question: Have you personally ever participated in the public events or decisions of your region or country and in what ways?

	Public events, decisions					
	Have signed political petition	Have donated money to movement or organisation	Personally have collected signatures	Participated in demonstration, public meeting	Participated in strike	Wrote my opinion to a newspaper
Lithuanians	35	29	15	33	2	15
Russians	18	11	7	8	1	10
Poles	23	24	11	24	6	13
Jews	20	24	3	20	2	23
Tatars	21	21	10	26	5	7

GRAPH 1. Evaluation of the change in social status

Question: Have you personally gone up or gone down on the ladder of social hierarchy during the last 10 years?



GRAPH 2. Identification: ethnic dimensions

