Tremlett forthcoming (2012 or 2013) - PRE-PRINT VERSION

Paper Title: Roma, non-Roma and the modern working-class (familiar) stranger

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Publication details:

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INTRODUCTION

It is common to describe Roma (Gypsies) as a marginalised minority rejected by majority society, the ‘stranger from within’ who have ‘never been thought to belong’ in Europe (Goldberg 2006: 353). In Central and Eastern Europe, school is cited as the space where this rejection is firmly sanctioned, from the high concentration of Roma in special needs and poorly performing schools along with evidence of discrimination within mainstream classrooms. Teachers are described as instrumental in this process of marginalisation.

However, despite numerous studies on pupil performance in Hungarian schools and some attempts at close observations of teacher-pupil interactions, there has been little academic discussion focused solely on the teachers themselves, on their thoughts and their attitudes towards their Roma pupils. This chapter explores six ethnographic interviews conducted with a group of teachers who had been working at the same small suburban school in a central town in Hungary for more than two decades. The analysis attends to the voices of the teachers, showing how talk about Roma pupils was intrinsic to the representation of school life and the local area. Although there was evidence of the stigmatisation of ‘others’, the referent was not always fixed as ‘Roma’ but teachers used common cigány (Gypsy) stereotypes to describe modern ‘bad’ behaviour referring to (but not eclipsing) both cigány and non-cigány pupils and parents. The teachers’ talk points to a type of class stigmatisation built around Gypsy stereotypes, described in terms of people who display reprehensible behaviour in the
face of contemporary - seen as post1989 - life. ‘Not belonging’ or ‘the stranger from within’ are revealed as not always adequate descriptions of how cigány appears in the teacher discourses, cigány can form a part of the local (even if stigmatized) narrative.

BACKGROUND

This chapter is based on 15 months of ethnographic research carried out in Hungary during 2004/2005. Majority of the fieldwork was based in a primary school József Attila, in a suburb in the outskirts of a city I have named ‘Dombos’ of about 100,000 people in the ‘Southern Great Plain’ (Dél-Alföld) region of Hungary. The children were from similar local, low socio-economic backgrounds, with the school records showing that the majority of children (nearly 60%) came from families who were in need of some government assistance. Approximately 20-30% of the school’s pupils were from a ‘Hungarian Gypsy’ (magyar cigány) background. Whilst a few of these families were amongst the poorest attending the school, not all Hungarian Gypsy families were in this category, and there were some non-Gypsy families who were also deemed extremely poor in school records. The school had been built in the 1930s, and in the year I arrived there were 123 children registered. At under 200 children, this is considered to be a ‘small school’ (kisiskola) in Hungary. Being in this category, coupled with some local issues, meant the school was under threat of closure. At the time of research, teachers were under great strain to keep up pupil numbers.

The teachers represented in this chapter all had two decades or more experience of working at school. This was a great resource as their experiences were rooted in the transition from state socialism to post socialist democracy and capitalism. A total of six teachers were focused on in the fieldwork, and each of their life narratives were
bound up in József Attila school. The headteacher called the school her ‘hobby’ as well as her ‘life’; the deputy-head had attended the school herself as a pupil; the drama teacher’s mother had worked at the school as did her sister (who was the music teacher); and four out of the six had never taught at another school.

The backdrop to the teachers’ lives is the context of the post-1989 Central and Eastern European social and political changes – what is referred to as post-socialist transition or transformation (Kornai 2008). Amongst all this political change and economic upheaval, the country’s Roma (sometimes referred to as ‘Gypsy’ or ‘Romani’) minorities have had a presence in many public discourses. From the early stages of negotiations for European accession, European institutions have called for recognition of the deprivation and disadvantage of Roma minorities across the accession countries, requiring a firm, explicit commitment from governments to reducing inequalities (Kovats 2001). In Hungary, Roma minorities have surfaced in political and media discourses, mostly as a parasitic, hapless and unpredictable minority.

Whilst some human rights groups have reported a rise of verbal and physical attacks against Roma minorities in recent years as attributable to the ongoing economic crisis, other experts have warned against such direct linkage, arguing that extremism has always been present, and is a part of an increasing populism, anti-immigrant sentiment and hostility to liberal democracy evident in much of Europe today (Kushen 2009).

Majority pejorative attitudes to Roma in Hungary are said to be particularly evident in the education system, which explains the failure of Roma children at school. Teachers and classmates are prejudicial, racist, and hostile (Forray & Mohácsi 2001).
Discrimination against Roma by non-Roma teachers, school administrators and fellow students also contributes to low rates of attendance and attrition. Discrimination can both discourage children from attending school and affect the quality of education children receive in the classroom (Törőcsik & Lampek 2002). What makes the situation more difficult, is that gypsy children in primary school often have to settle into a prejudiced peer-group environment, and teachers do not know how to, or do not want to help them (Havas, Kemény & Liskó 2002). Frequently mentioned in the literature on Roma and education is the segregation of Roma children either within the classroom or through separate classes (see Acton 1998: 140; Havas, Kemény & Liskó 2002: 79-87; Kemény, Janky & Lengyel 2004: 157-8). Also mentioned is a differentiated behaviour towards Roma pupils that contributes to their alienation in the classroom (Forray 2000; Havas 2002).

In writing about Roma minorities, researchers from various disciplines have used similar ‘stranger’ idioms to describe minority/majority relations. For example: Crowe (1999:4) writes about the historical tradition of a ‘strong atmosphere of mutual suspicion and mistrust’ between Roma and non-Roma in Romania; whilst in Italy and Kosovo the stranger-labelling process is seen in policy creation (Sigona 2003); and Bhopal and Myers (2008) use the stranger idiom to analyse the uncertainty and ambiguity of non-Gypsy attitudes towards Gypsies and travellers in the UK. More broadly, Bancroft (1999: 4.7) talks of the stranger framework as helping ‘to explain the continued paradoxical position Roma have in countries in which they have lived for centuries.’ Similarly in Hungary, Roma have been called the ‘outside-insiders,’ indicating their position as embedded, yet marginalised group (Stewart 1997: 12).
In this chapter, majority attitudes to Roma are examined using ethnographic interviews carried out with teachers in which they looked back over their careers. From attending to the teachers’ voices there are two findings that develop the ‘outside-insider’ or ‘stranger’ idiom further: firstly, there are times when *cigány* is linked to discourse around the local population with a broad condemnation from the teachers about the behaviour of ‘today’s’ parents and children. This suggests that *cigány* children and their families are not the only stigmatized groups. Secondly, the ‘majority society’ itself is not represented as a central stable core, and therefore *cigány* cannot be represented as a polar opposite to a stable sense of ‘Hungarian society’. Whilst there are still discriminatory discourses specifically directed towards a racialized sense of *cigány*, these other formulations lead me to consider whether the insider/outsider or ‘stranger’ figure is adequate to capture the complexities of teacher attitudes to modern-day education in Hungary.

**TEACHER INTERVIEWS: BAD PARENTING IN MODERN SOCIETIES**

These teachers, all female, each had a minimum of 18 years experience at József Attila school, and were interviewed after nine months spent carrying out participant observation in their classes and other school activities. In my analysis, I not only look at the moments in which ethnic grouping was referred to, as then I would be in danger of finding ethnic discourses because I was looking for them. As Moerman (1993: 87) commented about anthropologists: ‘Anthropologists at work observe the world under the aspect of ethnicity. We are far more obsessive about it than our natives are.’ The labels ‘*cigány*’ (Gypsy), ‘Roma’ or ‘*kisebbség*’ (minority) were used 67 times across the six interviews, and often in certain clusters. In contrast, references to other
ethnic or nationality labels were less used and not so intensively: ‘magyar’
(‘Hungarian’) was used 16 times and ‘Magyarország’ (‘Hungary’) 8 times. The
analysis will first look at the prevalent motifs across the interviews, before focusing
on the concentrated moments when ethnic labelling was explicitly referred to, looking
at where and how they fit into the motifs.

**Prevalent motifs across the interviews**

In the two major motifs found in the teacher interviews, descriptions of the local
community did not necessarily bring up strong differentiations between ethnic
groupings. The first motif produced fond reminiscing about the teachers’ early careers
and how motivated they were to help local disadvantaged children. The second motif
then focused on problems with manageability in which the teachers described ‘then
and now’ scenarios, complaining that their present working lives have become
difficult because of the lack of good parenting skills along with a lack of respect
parents and children show towards authorities such as themselves. A close analysis
reveals that cigány is seen, at these certain discursive moments, as part and parcel of
the local community.

**Early motivation with the local disadvantaged**

When asked to reflect on the start of their careers, all the teachers talked about their
enjoyment at thinking up teaching methods that would help the local disadvantaged
population. For example, Mária, the literature teacher whose mother had also been a
teacher at the same school and whose sister was the music teacher, talked about how
she noticed that drama with games seemed to help with the ‘not really super-talented’
children who attend the school. Similarly, Ibolya found that the puppetry classes she
gave as a young teacher trainee could be used as a teaching tool for ‘this kind of problematic child’. Virág, who was in charge of any special needs at the school, described the school as mainly populated by ‘children of “worker” parents’ who had to be ‘not just taught, but educated’ which for her was a ‘professional challenge’.

Whilst such descriptions of children do not suggest any particular ethnic markers, Virág’s use of ‘worker’ (‘munkás’) is a particular word used to describe blue-collared workers undertaking mainly physical work in Hungary, and, at least in official terms, the ‘worker’ included Roma people (Kemény 2005: 57-58).

Whilst the above examples do not specifically articulate ethnic grouping, the head teacher does include the name of a current pupil from a cigány background, Krisztofer Szabó, in her description of her motivation for teaching:

> It was a really big, a really huge professional challenge …For some reason fate decided, that for me this is…So what we do, we do for the school. And I am integral to it, and have been for such a long time. So for me my work is also my hobby. So in my opinion over the years, it has become crystal clear what we need to do to get those like Krisztofer Szabó to finish school.

(Zsuzsa, headteacher)

Without being explicit about labelling him ethnically, it appears that children ‘like Krisztofer Szabó’ are included in the children who come to the school, who have been the motivation for these teachers. So rather than always showing ‘hostility’ towards Roma, as literature on teacher attitudes claims, in these examples disadvantaged children, which can include cigány children, can appear as one element in the teachers’ explanations for their motivation in their careers.

**Modern parents ‘without values’**
In the first motif, teachers expressed satisfaction when looking back at their careers. There was a feeling they had achieved something with the creation of new methodologies to help the disadvantaged children from the local area. However, in the second motif, this feeling of satisfaction was displaced by frustration at the lack of respect accorded to teachers in the present, as the following extracts show:

> Whatever the teacher said, the parents would be willing to do it[...] [Now] they [the children] want to be the most important[...] And everybody is offended if they don’t find themselves immediately in the foreground. Before, it wasn’t like this. (Ibolya, drama and puppetry teacher)

> When they [the parents] come in [to school] they accuse us. So then it’s us who are at fault because their child doesn’t know something. Because of course, well of course it’s us that did something wrong! So the world has really turned on its head. (Eszter, headteacher)

Between ‘then’ and ‘now’, the relationships are described as having changed from teacher/parent instructing the child, to parent arguing with teacher, and child demanding attention and lacking ability. This motif does not seem to insinuate cigány parents or children in particular, as the teachers talked in general terms about the downfall of parent-teacher relationships. Similarly, when giving anecdotes of how these parents display such a lack of value, no specific ethnic identity is referred to, although the social grouping parental behaviour was often singled out for criticism.

Mária, for example, complained that parents no longer pay attention to their children or talk to them, using the television to ‘baby-sit’ them; Ibolya said that parents nowadays are only interested in money, and not in the welfare of their children; Zsuzsa spoke of mothers who no longer “darn socks” and instead send their children
in to school poorly dressed. Such ‘bad parenting’ discourses have been noted globally in contexts of burgeoning social inequality, but in Hungary these at times took on specific identifications. These complaints of modern day parents are extended through comparisons with specific Hungarian figures from the past: people raised on small holdings; and peasants, who have naturally better sense of ethics:

Well the parents [of two sisters in the school] were raised on a small-holding, and that’s why they always carry with them the traditional ethical norms [...] So they are respectful, they don’t talk back, they try hard, are diligent, so all of these things are in them. Somehow their frame of mind is different, they take things more seriously, and fight for it better. So that, when this kind of homestead-origin parent is, shall we say, unemployed, well then he doesn’t dare go to the local council to ask for benefits, whilst on the other hand the town people demand it for themselves, that they deserve to be given benefits. (Eszter, deputy headteacher)

In a similar comparison between ‘town people’ and the more traditional country people, Judit gives a strong image of modern-day smoking mothers in comparison to the hard-working peasant woman:

There are lots of mothers who smoke [...] well there’s only a few who, who says, “now I’m having a baby I’ll put down my ciggie!” Unfortunately that’s not the case [...] I don’t think, that the…the peasant woman skived with a cigarette hanging out of her mouth whilst she bent over the tub, whilst she washed the children’s clothes in the tub! (Judit, head of fourth grade)

The ‘peasant’ and ‘homestead’ figures contrast with others who smoke, skive, and collect benefits. In Judit and Eszter’s extracts, the peasant/town people divide was not used with a specific ethnic-type of label such as cigány or magyar. We therefore cannot determine whether Judit or Eszter were using cigány as the implied ‘other’ or not. This indeterminacy suggests that there are ways of directing explanations of the problems faced by the teachers without dividing the world up into either cigány or
non-cigány – in other words, there may be intra-Hungarian differences that the teachers are alluding to, which I will now move on to discuss.

**Explicit references to ‘Gypsy’ and ‘Hungarian’**

There were moments when cigány was referred to explicitly, particularly when describing a local poor housing area where mainly cigány families lived, known as the barak (‘barracks’) that had actually just been pulled down at the time the research was carried out, as a part of a ‘regeneration’ project with the residents housed elsewhere.

Two teachers talked at length about the barak. Similar to the first motif, both Zsuzsa and Ibolya had good memories of visiting the barak and encouraging children in their education in a similar way that they and other teachers reminisced about their original motivation to help disadvantaged children. However, they both complained in recent times that whilst it used to be an area they were willing to visit, it had gone really downhill:

[then] they tried, errr...to keep it clean, tend to it, look after it, as though...they practically competed to see whose [courtyard] was the nicest[...] in the recent past, so an apathy took over, errr, a d-d-different scale of values took shape. (Ibolya, drama and puppetry teacher)

...so in practice a few years ago we still dared to go into the barak, but in the last years nobody dared to go into the barak. (Zsuzsa, headteacher)

Similar now to the second motif, the present day is seen as a deterioration of values. However, there is a difference in how this deterioration of values is explained. In the explanations for general behaviour, we saw how teachers blamed parents for being lazy, or unconcerned with regards to both old values and their children’s education.
When asked to explain the deterioration in the behaviour of the people living in the barak, wider societal and political transformations are referred to:

...they expected it [the barak] to be over soon, and they will move and so this increased...the fact that they didn’t care and really they threw out everything and destroyed what they could. (Ibolya, drama and puppetry teacher)

And after the system change, it was then that the work places closed down, and then there were these unskilled uneducated people. In the old days they [the barak people] swept the yards of the factory, but then they had to work, and now they can’t do anything they just go permanently on benefits. (Zsuzsa, headteacher)

Ibolya frames the barak going downhill in terms of wealth inequalities, and the possibility that residents were reacting to the knowledge that the barak would be pulled down. In her explanation, Zsuzsa mixes the effects of the social environment with the negative behaviour of the barak residents. Zsuzsa reveals a devastating social backdrop – the system changed (i.e. the end of communism 1989/1990), work places closed leaving people without work or qualifications. In sum, both teachers propose social context as fundamental to the changing behaviour of the barak residents.

In contrast to this societal/political explanation for the cigány people’s positioning, there were episodes in the interviews in which the explanation for current bad behaviour was directly attributed to a racialized explanation of cigány people. Four out of the six teachers used a racialized talk to explain the behaviour of cigány students at the school. It can be noted that the teachers used extra sensitivity in this talk, shown through hesitations and particular use of terms such as ‘minority’ or ‘Roma’, when in everyday life I had usually heard them say ‘cigány’. This is presumably both in talking to me, a British researcher who already had a history of working with the cigány children in the school, as well as an awareness of the cultural
sensitivities of using the term *cigány* and anti-racist discourses. Nevertheless, this did not stop an essentialised, racialized version of *cigány* being the ultimate explanation for the bad behaviour of certain students. This is clearly shown in an extract from Eszter, as she attempts to describe the pupils in the sixth grade:

Now…..so you know the sixth grade, the composition, so, there are… those children…so really a lot of problematic ones. So problematic, that they have damaged nervous systems, so for example Gábor Bárány, or Zsolti Tóth, they suffer from pronounced nervous system problems. Then there is Péter…you know, Péter Szabó… (Eszter, deputy headteacher)

In the above extract Péter is identified from a wide angle – first the 6th grader, then ‘those children’ who are called the ‘problematic ones’. Eszter names three boys in the 6th grade as “problematic”. The first two, Gábor Bárány and Zsolti Tóth, (both who came from non-Roma families) are described as having ‘damaged nervous systems’ or ‘pronounced nervous system problems’. She then names ‘Péter’, introducing him with the phrase ‘Then there is Péter…’, so we may anticipate that Péter will have a different explanation for his behaviour.

Indeed, Eszter then goes on to say that Péter, already by the time he came to school, was ‘absolutely without upbringing’, adding that ‘his parents didn’t teach him anything.’ And then comes the label ‘Roma’:

...so as the case may be, well…he is Roma, and with Roma the…adult hood also has earlier m-maturity, so their biological maturity is a lot quicker, so already by the time they are twelve, well already…erm…it is said that sexually they are fully mature, and by twelve they are at such a stage, that it’s impossible to do anything with them at all […] Actually, this is a genetic determinate thing in the end. (Eszter, headteacher)
This idea of genetic difference is echoed by other teachers: Mária says that cigány girls get left behind because they ‘mature earlier’ and therefore ‘need a boy’ and get pregnant, ‘it’s in their culture’; Virág explains poor living conditions of cigány families as due to their love of living many people in a room ‘because no matter what, they move together again in the end, five or six families are together again, and they like it like this’, whilst Judit explains that the ‘minority group’ are ‘the fallen layer’ who ‘don’t really want to work’ and ‘don’t really behave as they ought to.’

These utterances are all classic examples of the ‘othering’ of Roma minorities, what Bhopal and Myers would call the ‘uncrossable borderline between Gypsy culture and non-Gypsy culture’ (2008: 1). Here I would just like to pause to ask: what the cigány here are being othered from? In the above examples the implication is that the majority of people in Hungarian society are sexually ‘normal’, hard-working, non-criminal and exist in nuclear family units. However, in the interviews, actual social actors that relate to the implied ‘Hungarian’ way of life do not appear. Only Eszter’s ‘small-holding-origin’ family and Judit’s ‘non-smoking hard-working peasant woman’ – both images from the past (and Judit’s interestingly focuses on the non-smoking female labourer as embodying national values) – conjure up Hungarians who conform to the implied Hungarian in racialized discourses around cigány. As we saw in the second motif, when talking generally about Hungarian society, the modern-day parents and children are described in very negative terms. Equally, where ‘Hungary’ or ‘Hungarians’ are explicitly referred to, they are described as having negative characteristics:

I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but here for example in Hungary it’s characteristic that they stare at a handicapped, or disabled person, they mock
them, ridicule them, a lot of the time they insult them, because there’s not really enough experience of people, that in their environment there are these type of people. They always isolate them. (Virág, head of development)

The biggest problem is that, you know, that they…well the parents do not have knowledge of, bringing up children, and that’s not only true about Roma, rather it’s true in the others, in Hungarian children as well. So it’s simply that the parents nowadays, they haven’t learnt how to bring up a family. (Mária, Hungarian literature and language teacher)

These examples show that although descriptions of cigány appear to be counterpoised to an idea of magyar as a stable moral norm, when we look for actual people who really embody this norm in a positive way, we cannot find anyone. Instead, when ‘Hungarian’ is mentioned, it is in a negative way, either to defend negative opinions about cigány or to complain that society is not as it used to be.

CONCLUSION

This chapter expands on the commonly held opinion that Roma minorities are used as scapegoats (Brearley 2001; Hancock 1999; Kenedi 1986), and that majority opinions of Roma in Hungary are racist (Kende 2000; Csepeli & Simon 2004; Stewart 1997). Majority discourses are said to be based on a Roma/Hungarian divide, with ‘Roma’ seen as the deficit different and ‘other’ from ‘Hungarian’.

The findings shown in this chapter add to the literature on majority discourses in two ways. Firstly, cigány was not always specified as a problematic outsider by the teachers. Secondly, cigány was not the only outsider described by the teachers. The use of cigány was not a clear-cut discourse of ‘us’ versus ‘them’. Instead, we saw that cigány people could be included in talk about the local disadvantaged area without being discursively separated or stigmatized as the cause of the disadvantage. The
teachers recognise the importance of social environment and that Roma can be an embedded element in that environment.

Secondly, the current social environment raises a number of specific concerns with the teachers ranging from poverty to bad behaviour. *Cigány* was not the only ‘figure’ that teachers referred to as symbolising these issues. Instead, there was a general sense of parents, especially mothers, as not providing a suitable environment for the upbringing of their children (e.g. mothers who do not darn their children’s clothes; mothers who smoke; parents who are on benefits), as well as having a poor attitude to education. Teachers, all female themselves, interestingly used either ‘parents’ or ‘mothers’ to describe modern bad behaviour, the female’s behaviour being pinpointed as particularly representative of the fallen nation. As Imre states, nationalism in post-socialist states traditionally “placed the entire burden of representing the nation on men, a burden men could only fail to carry” (2009: 168). Perhaps the focus on mothers signals a shift in these discourses: men may fail in representing the nation, but women are the ones to blame for its downfall. The threat to ‘national purity’ is not only symbolised in the figure of the Gypsy (Halasz 2009) but also in the image of the bad mother.

This also has implications for how *cigány* is seen as an ‘outsider’. *Cigány* as a problem between ‘them’ and ‘us’ depends on there being an ‘inside’, that is stable enough to have a recognisable inside and out. The analysis of the teacher interviews has shown that their representations of their world are not as stable or secure. Instead, they talk about the present times as being fractured and full of tensions: from
problematic parents; from remembering and positioning themselves in a nostalgic past when relations were more authoritative and stable, to fear and anger and resentment at how they are no longer respected in their working lives. Along with this, the few examples that teachers give of ‘Hungarian’ or ‘Hungary’ are either imbued with negative criticism, or rest in ‘norms’ that are not expanded on nor further exemplified. ‘Roma’ or cigány is therefore not positioned against or opposing a solid set of ‘norms’ that might be taken as ‘Hungarian’.

Nevertheless, these two findings do not mean that we can become complacent about the discursive use of cigány. In these interviews cigány can still be produced discursively as something ‘other’, using essentialised images relating to biological or cultural difference that positions them firmly as ‘outsiders’. However, cigány was not a consistent ‘other’, nor a consistent ‘stigmatized other’. This is an important factor in the consideration of how the Roma minority are approached in public discourses as a ‘stand alone subject’ – for this only encourages more extraction of Roma from the societies into which they are embedded, and could potentially ignore ‘other others’ – i.e. Hungarians stuck in similar devastating or overwhelming social transformations as Roma people who might also be stigmatized.
References


Budapest: Gondolat.


Publication Series. Available at:


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1 This chapter was first presented as a paper at the XIV World Congress of the World Council of Comparative Education Studies, Istanbul, Turkey 14-18 June 2010. The research here was supported by the ESRC as a funded PhD studentship based at King’s College London.

2 In accordance with ethical guidelines names of the school, town and research participants have been changed. Signed ethical consent forms were obtained from the teachers interviewed, and the interviews were recorded with their knowledge. Some transcriptions were assisted by paid Hungarians, although all translations and any transcription errors are my own responsibility. A fuller account of the research process and the quotes in the original language (Hungarian) can be read in Tremlett 2008.

3 Being in the ‘small school’ category meant the school was threatened with closure in the year in which the research was carried out. At that time the government recognised the problems with falling birth rates which meant fewer primary-aged children, and coupled with financial difficulties was keen to focus on ‘size efficiency’ and was keen to introduce ‘measures of rationalization’ (Education in Hungary 2003: 11). At a local level, the problem of decreasing pupil numbers was also linked to the increased popularity of city centre schools that offered better facilities and with some primary schools attached to secondary schools, a better chance to get into secondary education.

4 According to a survey conducted in 1998-1999, 3.2% of non-Roma teenagers did not go on to study further after primary school (which finishes at age 14-16, depending on success rate and repeated years), compared with 14.9% of Roma children (Kemény and Janky 2006: 165). According to a survey conducted in 2003, one in five Roma children fail to complete primary education (grades 1-8 ages 5-15); and only 5% of Roma people complete any kind of secondary education; and just over 1% are studying in higher education, compared to 40% of non-Roma population (Kemény and Janky 2006: 165-6).

5 From a study based on 1000 questionnaires to Roma people in October and November 2002.
All data was collected in Hungarian without the use of interpreters. The translations here are my own. Although there is not enough space to discuss it in more detail here, the issue of researching in a second language (and a second culture) is considered very important in any claims of understanding the fieldwork context (see Borchgrevink 2003, Tremlett 2009).