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**Discourses of Inequality: Reproducing Gendered, Ethnic, and
Classed Subjectivities and Social Inequalities through Sexuality
Discourses in a Hungarian School**

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Abstract¹

In this paper I focus on the constitution of intersectional subjectivities and social inequality (re)production and discuss how class and ethnicity are (re)produced through gendered sexuality discourses and practices in a Hungarian secondary school, highlighting an aspect of intersectionality rarely explored in the sociology of education. The data used for the analysis come from a school ethnography I conducted between 2009 and 2011 in a combined secondary vocational-technical-grammar school in Hungary. The students of the school were mostly from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds and were ethnically mixed; i.e., there was a significant proportion of Roma students. I apply critical discourse analysis to interview excerpts with students and teachers to show how ethnicity and class are constituted intersectionally through sexuality discourses. Class is an important axis of subjectivity to include in the analysis of ethnic differentiation, as the two categories often converge. I demonstrate these processes of constitution through examples of teachers talking about students' sexuality and about 'Roma culture,' including specific references to ethnicized reproductive patterns, and a case of sexual harassment of a Roma girl by a white teacher with potential consequences for her future professional career and class positioning. I argue that the gendered sexuality discourses and practices I have identified and the subjectivities they constitute simultaneously create binary categories of race/ethnicity and class and allocate people within and outside these, leading to the re-inscription of social inequalities in schooling.

Keywords: intersectionality, sexuality, subjectivity, inequality, reproduction, education.

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1. Introduction

Schools are hierarchical institutions in which social inequalities are (re)produced (see: e.g. Schneider, 2018; Apple, Ball and Gandin, 2010; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1992; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991). Downey and Condrón argue that different streams of the sociology of education consider schools to be institutions that either reduce or compensate for social inequalities, or reproduce or exacerbate inequalities. They call for ‘a more balanced understanding of the relationship between schools and inequality, one where neutral, exacerbatory, and compensatory possibilities are all given serious consideration’ (Downey and Condrón, 2016: 218). While acknowledging the compensatory and exacerbatory aspects of education, in this paper (and in my larger research project, see Réдай, 2019) I focus on the (re)productive role of schools. I look at schools as places where individual subjectivities are positioned in hierarchical patterns in a network of power relations, within a broader social framework in which distinctions between social groups mean subordination, discrimination, oppression, and the exclusion of less privileged or powerful groups by more privileged or powerful groups. This distinction between individuals and between groups is based on – among other axes – gender, class, race/ethnicity, and sexuality. In this paper I inquire into how class and ethnicity are reproduced through gendered sexuality discourses and practices at the institutional level of schools.

To find answers to this question, I use data from research I conducted between 2009 and 2011 in a combined secondary vocational-technical-grammar school I call *Marzipán*, located in a large town in Hungary. The school had approximately 1000 students who mostly came from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds and were ethnically mixed. Due to the scope of this paper, I focus only on teacher-student relations.² I look at teachers’ discourses from their positionality, which is a relatively powerful one, although this power is limited to the school environment. In this sense, teachers are ‘street-level bureaucrats’ (see Lipsky, 1980), intermediaries of the state policies of a social system based on gender, class, and race subordination. The former and the school as an institution do have responsibility for the (re)production of social inequalities, although teachers’ discourses and practices reflect wider social relations, which are thoroughly explored in recent work by Kóczé (2011), Kovai (2017) and Szombati (2018), among others.

I refer to my respondents’ ethnic subjectivities as *Gypsy* and *Hungarian*. These are ethnic categories, not ones referring to nationality or citizenship. My Gypsy respondents never used *Roma* to refer to themselves, always saying *Gypsy* (*cigány*). Using the word *Gypsy* instead of *Roma* to refer to my respondents – besides following their self-naming practice – is socio-politically motivated: I use the word in order to interpellate Gypsy subjectivity in ways that offer the chance to ‘misfire’; to contribute to the performative reinscription process of the word (see Butler, 1997). I use the word *Roma* when I generally refer to the ethnic category. My respondents who identified as (ethnic) *Hungarian* used this label for

² See Réдай (2019) for an analysis of teacher-teacher and student-student power relations and discursive constructions of hierarchy within these groups.

themselves or for one another; they never used *White*. Concerning *Hungarian* vs. *White*, I use both categories: *Hungarian* when referring to respondents who identify as Hungarians, and *White* when I am analytically reflecting on their positionality as Whites.³

In *Marzipan*, students are streamed into three educational tracks. The technical and vocational tracks provide training for blue-collar work, whereas the grammar school prepares students for white-collar work and higher education. In Hungary, the completion of technical or grammar school track allows students to continue studying either in adult technical training or in higher education, whereas the vocational track does not, as vocational students do not complete a 'maturation exam.' According to Liskó (2008), within such a highly selective schooling system the proportion of youth from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds has doubled in vocational schools since the regime change in 1990: in the early 2000s, two-thirds of Gypsy youth in education were attending vocational school, and students' achievements in vocational schools were much lower, while dropout rates were much higher (about 30 per cent) than in technical (9 per cent) and grammar (4 per cent) schools.

In Europe, vocational streaming is systemic in countries that use the so-called 'German-type' schooling system (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, and Hungary), while in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries it is much less common, and Southern European countries are mixed in this respect (Robert, 2010). Both Hungarian and international literature about streaming in secondary education shows that streaming 'increases inequality in educational outcomes and aggravates the effects of students' socio-economic status' (Robert, 2010: 435). Pfeffer (2008) found that educational mobility in countries with a highly stratified educational system, including Hungary, is low. Studies also show that parents' educational level influences school choice: more highly educated parents tend to send their children to grammar schools, and vocational school students tend to have parents with low education and low social status (Kogan et al., 2012; Robert, 2010; Horn et al., 2006). Pfeffer argues that 'the association of parents' and their children's educational status is higher in highly stratified systems' (2008: 546).

2. Theoretical framework

As the above-cited and other studies show, ethnicity and class intersect to reproduce social disadvantages and determine future socio-economic status and social mobility. This is why I find it important to include the concept of class in educational research. Class is a contested concept in Hungarian sociology, partly due to the state-socialist legacy; 'socio-economic status' and 'social stratification' are the preferred concepts, which do not entail cultural aspects of class. For my analysis of the constitution of subjectivity, I approach class from a cultural perspective. As Beverley Skeggs argues, 'what we learn to recognize as categorizations of race and class are not just classification or social positions but

³ What group names to use in studies about Roma and non-Roma people in Hungary is a recurring issue in Hungarian anthropological and sociological scholarship. Kovai (2017: 12–14) offers insightful reflections about the issue in a recent monograph.

an amalgam of features of a culture that are read onto bodies as personal dispositions – which themselves have been generated through systems of inscription in the first place’ (2004: 1). Skeggs understands class as a symbolic system and points out that class and other symbolic systems inscribe bodies simultaneously (2004: 3). She shows in her analysis that class has its history of being read onto bodies through moral discourses of sexuality (2004: 3, 85–90).

My analysis of how subjectivities are constituted through discourses is based on a Foucauldian understanding of the subject/subjectivities as constituted through the productive power of discourses (Foucault, 1994; 1980). In her theorization of performativity, Judith Butler argues that ‘(...) gender is not a performance that a prior subject elects to do, but gender is *performative* in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the very subject it appears to express’ (1991: 24; emphasis in the original). Gender is constituted through a ‘stylized repetition of acts’ (Butler, 1990: 140). Based on Derrida’s concept of citationality in the discursive constitution of gender, Butler also argues that gender comes to exist through the iteration of former citations of gender performatives, and this citational chain produces an illusion that there is an ‘original’ gender (1993). Butler claims that continuous reiteration opens up spaces for subversion; because of its repetitive nature, there is always a possibility that the interpellation misfires, and this way the interpellated subjectivity can be reinscribed (1997). Butler uses Foucault’s notion of discursive power and claims that as the subject comes to exist through citation, it simultaneously becomes positioned in discursive relations of power (Butler, 1997).

Butler’s gender performativity (1993; 1990) as a model can be applied to analyze how raced/ethnic and classed subjectivities become constituted. As Joane Nagel (2003; 2000) explains: ‘[e]thnicity is both performed – where individuals and groups engage in ethnic “presentations of self,” and “performative” – where ethnic boundaries are constituted by day-to-day affirmations, reinforcements, and enactments of ethnic differences’ (2000: 111). She adds that ‘[t]he relative power of various actors in ethnic transactions can determine an individual’s ethnic classification as well as the content and worth of the individual’s ethnicity’ (ibid.).

In an essay entitled ‘Gypsy Differentiation,’ Kata Horváth (2008) applies Butler’s theory of performativity to analyze how ‘Gypsiness’ becomes discursively constituted (see also Kovai, 2017). She argues that ‘Gypsy’ is not a pre-existing category but becomes constituted through a differentiation process between Gypsies and Hungarians. She considers the construction of ‘the Gypsy’ to be a process, not a product of a process. In other words, ‘Gypsy’ is constituted through the repetitive citation of differences between ‘Gypsies’ and ‘Hungarians.’ Gypsy differentiation not only happens through the act of calling oneself or someone a Gypsy, but also through referring to ‘welfare queens,’ ‘deep poverty,’ ‘pupils with special needs,’ ‘the minority,’ or ‘skin color’ for example, without uttering the word ‘Gypsy’ (Horváth, 2008).

Classed, ethnic, and gendered inequalities are (re)produced in education (see e.g. Apple et al., 2010; Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991). In a social system structured by power inequalities between social groups, the distinction between social categories (such as woman/man, Gypsy/Hungarian) is at the same time the hierarchical ordering of these social categories through which one group is subordinated to the other. School is a central institution in young people’s lives,

both as an institution and a space where groups of people spend a lot of time together and performatively constitute themselves and are constituted by others on an ongoing basis. Thus, subjectivity constitution is interrelated with the (re)production of social inequalities in school.

The intersection of ethnicity and class with gender and sexuality, and the performative constitution processes of ethnicized sexuality or sexualized ethnicity, are undertheorized in Hungarian literature, especially in the field of education. Some recent Hungarian studies about Roma people have explored the intersection of race/ethnicity and class in general (Szombati, 2018), gender, race/ethnicity and class in rural contexts (Kovai, 2017; Kóczé, 2011), and the intersection of race/ethnicity and class in educational environments (Neumann, 2017; Dunajeva, 2014). My aim in this article is to strengthen the axes of gender and sexuality in Hungarian intersectional Romani and education studies. By providing an analysis of performative subjectivity constitution processes in an educational setting, I wish to reveal a discursive layer of institutional social inequality reproduction, highlight the role of gender and sexuality in it, and contribute further aspects of ethnic inequality reproduction to a field of scholarship in which the quantitative features of the discussed phenomenon have been richly explored and documented (e.g. Hajdú et al., 2014; Szalai, 2014; Messing et al., 2010; Ladányi and Szelényi, 2006).

3. Research methodology

School ethnography as a qualitative research methodology is not commonly used in Hungarian educational research, and post-structuralist theoretical frameworks and reflexive self-positioning is relatively new. Two such pieces of work that recently dealt with Hungarian Roma are important to mention here. One is Eszter Neumann's (2017) school ethnography, in which she explores how streaming, ability-grouping, and behavior management influence students' educational trajectories and social positioning in the British and the Hungarian education systems. Her main focus is the intersection of class and race/ethnicity, but gender is present as an analytical category as well. The other work is Jekatyerina Dunajeva's doctoral dissertation (2014), which explores the development and mobilization of images of 'Good Roma' and 'Bad Gypsy' in formal and informal educational settings in Hungary and Russia, and analyses these discourses in a comparative framework.

The school where I undertook the ethnography had approximately 1000 students, mostly from lower-middle-class and working-class backgrounds, who were ethnically mixed. In the course of my fieldwork I used five methods of data collection: classroom observation during lessons; school space observation and informal conversations in breaks; small-group interviews; individual interviews; and data collection from school officials, the school nurse, and from the website of the school. The driving question for my research was how sexuality discourses constituted subjectivities and (re)produced social inequalities in the school, therefore the main questions in the interviews and focal points of observation were related to sexuality. I observed 34 sex education classes and some other lessons and conducted semi-structured, small-group interviews with cc. 90 students (ages 14–20) and individual interviews with the school nurse, five

teachers, and the school director. The single-sex small group interviews involved three or four students. Because of the intimate nature of some of the topics (e.g. relationships, sexual experiences) I presumed that a small group format would be better suited to the elicitation of information and views which students may feel more relaxed about discussing in small groups, but potentially uncomfortable discussing with me alone or in larger groups. Recruitment for the interviews happened on a voluntary basis in most cases (though in some cases teachers selected some students for interviews), and appropriate consent was acquired in the case of each respondent. Both the group and the individual interviews lasted one to two hours; they were audio-recorded, and the recordings were transcribed verbatim. The quotes in this paper are from the interview transcripts and are my translations. The names of respondents and the school are pseudonyms.

Through the manual coding of the transcripts certain dominant and alternative or subversive discursive patterns emerged, but the latter appeared rarely in comparison to dominant patterns. I had decided to focus on dominant discourses primarily, rather than non-mainstream, alternative discourses, as I chose the (re)production rather than the subversion of social inequalities as the main theme for analysis. I have tried to select quotes which best exemplify my arguments that emerged from carefully analyzing the discourses on the given topic.

The reason why I apply critical discourse analysis to explore the data generated by the interactions between my research participants and me (see Youdell, 2005) is that this approach takes discourse as a social practice; it is a form of social action, it takes the social-political-cultural context of the text into consideration, it highlights the discursive nature of power relations, the contribution of discourse to (re)producing or transforming power relations, and the ideological work it does in representing and constructing power relations (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997).

4. The classed and raced positioning of students in the hierarchical structure of the school

Marzipan is a multilateral vocational, technical, and grammar school.⁴ Two thirds of the students were attending the vocational track, so that form of training was the major profile of *Marzipan* at the time of my fieldwork. The number of students in *Marzipan* in 2010 was approximately 1000, with nearly equal numbers of girls and boys, and about 20 per cent Roma students in my estimation.⁵ In this paper I primarily focus on the school perpetuating social hierarchies, not on the hierarchical structure of the school.

According to the 2008 Pedagogical Program of *Marzipan*, which was in use at the time of my fieldwork, 'the student population of the school is very

⁴ For an analysis of the rigid and complex hierarchical structure of *Marzipan*, see Rédei (2019: Ch. 4).

⁵ The ethnicity of students is 'sensitive data,' meaning it is illegal to record, therefore I rely on my estimation based on the self-identification of students participating in the interviews, and the estimations of peers and teachers. For a discussion of the complexities of students' ethnic self-identification in *Marzipan*, see Rédei (2019: 201–204).

heterogeneous. Approximately half of the students come from broken families;⁶ it is common, especially for vocational school students, to have one caretaker parent, and in some cases not even that one parent takes real care of the child.⁷ The document claims there are many Roma students and students from poor families. 'The socialization level of the vocational students is generally low, in accordance with the educational level of the parents,' according to the Pedagogical Program. The document claims that 'the learning motivation of technical and vocational students is not satisfactory, they are more interested in acquiring practical knowledge than in academic subjects.' As Reay notes, there is a widely circulated public discourse of 'blame culture' which views 'the working classes in terms of a range of cultural deficits that are then portrayed as the reasons for working-class underachievement. Most position the working classes as either victims or deficient in one way or another, and nearly all focus on the home as the locus of class practices' (2006: 397).

Although the picture I have presented about vocational schooling, family background, and socio-economic status corresponds with national trends, the Pedagogical Program also reveals something else: the school management's middle-class elitist intellectual perspective and prejudices against less well educated people. The discursive (re)production of social inequalities occurs on many levels, including in the former document, in which the authors (the school management) simply doom students with less educated parents to remain low educated. 'Socialization level' is a polite phrase for describing degrees of 'sophisticated' or 'uncultured'/'ignorant,' and implies that teachers label students on the basis of the educational level of their parents. I have observed that 'socialization level' is a preferred phrase among teachers, and they always use it to refer to socialization within the family, as if they, as teachers, do not actively participate in the socialization of children themselves. This complaint about the unsatisfactory learning motivation of technical and vocational students reflects a middle-class intellectual approach: even students trained for blue-collar vocations are supposed to be interested in academic school subjects, including literature, history, mathematics, and so on.

According to the school director, the ethnic proportions of students differ by educational track; in forms with approximately 30 students, 'in vocational training there are six or seven [Roma students] per form. In the technical strand there are either zero or perhaps one or two. Many of them drop out of technical school.' Concerning the reason for such differences between the vocational and the technical strands, the director expressed his belief that

[i]t's likely that they enter with such [a level of] background knowledge that they have no chance to get into technical school. I am convinced that they attend even the vocational school – with rare exceptions – not because they are so eager to learn but because education is mandatory and they have to go to school. (School director, interview)

⁶ 'Broken' or 'mutilated' family is a very commonly used Hungarian expression for single-parent families.

⁷ The quotes in this paragraph are my translation; they are from the 2008 Pedagogical Program of *Marzipan*, for which I do not provide a reference to preserve the school's anonymity.

What he says highlights a difference in the education and further employment chances between Roma and Hungarians (see Hajdú et al., 2014), but also between youth from different socio-economic backgrounds. Students from (multiple) disadvantaged family backgrounds are likely not to have received the best primary education due to poverty, poor access to education, an unsupportive family background (Csapó, Molnár and Kinyó, 2009; Liskó, 2008), and a high degree of school segregation in the case of Roma (Kertesi and Kézdi, 2009). At the time of my research, 48 per cent of Gypsy youth did not have any secondary qualifications, 28 per cent had a vocational qualification, 16 per cent had a technical school qualification, and 8 per cent had a grammar school qualification (Hajdú et al., 2014: 15). Although 99 per cent of Hungarian students who completed primary education enrolled in secondary school, and 95 per cent of Roma students did so, the dropout rates in secondary school show a huge difference: whereas the dropout rate among non-Roma youth was 9 per cent, it was 48 per cent in the case of Roma secondary school students (Hajdú et al., 2014: 27). Thus, the gap between students in primary education is carried on to secondary education, where it widens even further (Hajdú et al., 2014: 13–14). The compulsory school-leaving age was reduced to 16 in 2012, and in 2015 the proportion of non-Roma early school-leavers⁸ was 8.9 per cent, whereas among Roma youth it was 59.9 per cent (KSH, 2016).

5. Constituting gendered and ethnic subjectivities intersectionally through sexuality discourses

After the overview of structural inequalities between Gypsy and Hungarian students, in the rest of the paper I offer an analysis of discourses and practices whereby students' classed ethnic subjectivities are constituted by teachers through their talking about one or another aspect of students' sexuality, or, as in the final example, through acting sexually.

In an interview, the school director argued that those students who attended vocational training did not have the same 'sexual culture' as students attending elite grammar schools. When I asked him what he meant, he explained that vocational students used the school space to express their sexuality indiscreetly. The reason for this was, according to him, that

(...) they mature faster, and probably nowadays the kids that come to vocational schools, well, we can say, it's not a great joy, but it's a fact that they are not the most sophisticated kids. This brings with it a kind of culture, and I am not talking about the Roma here, but in general. (...) Because it's possible that if this was an elite grammar school they would treat the issue completely differently. (School director, interview)

⁸ When the school-leaving age was 18, young people dropped out of secondary school before 18. With 16 as the school-leaving age, however, youth who do not finish their primary education until the age of 15–16 are more likely to not even enrol in secondary school.

In his view, sexuality in the school space is related to ‘maturing faster’ and students coming from ‘not the most sophisticated’ background. By saying that students ‘mature faster,’ he means that they become sexually active at an earlier age. According to Liskó, the educational level of parents and the socio-economic family background of children directly influence which type of school they choose – if they have a choice at all: children from the most disadvantaged families go to vocational schools in the greatest proportion (2008: 96–97). The school director connects family and educational background with sexual behavior and draws a distinction between students in the vocational school track and imaginary students in an elite grammar school. In his opinion, students who pursue a vocational education have a kind of sexual ‘culture’ that is not acceptable in an institution based on middle-class values. As Lupton and Hempel-Jorgensen argue, ‘(...) schools are designed and resourced according to a set of assumptions about the school social relations and processes informed by middle-class norms’ (2012: 610). Such middle-class norms are supposedly represented by students in the elite grammar school he refers to, as opposed to vocational students in *Marzipan*, who bring with them a different kind of ‘culture.’

Not an ethnic culture, he quickly adds. As I observed in the interviews with teachers, ethnic differentiation in official teacher talk was taboo. Several teachers took care to reassure me that they did not see any differences between Roma and non-Roma students; it was rather the school track the students attended that characterized their behaviour. Not quite accidentally, though, the proportion of Roma students is the highest in vocational schools. By implying that he does not mean that it is Roma students who have this ‘different sexual culture,’ but vocational students in general, the director ‘whitewashes’ Roma students and hides racial differentiation under a blanket of ‘working-class culture.’ Moreover, he makes a distinction between what Skeggs calls ‘pure white and dirty white’ (2004: 91). These white(washed) vocational students represent a different type of whiteness than (elite) grammar school students because of their working-class ‘culture,’ which includes sexually excessive behaviour and vulgarity (see Skeggs, 2004: 100–102), which conflicts with the middle-class norms of respectable behavior in the school. As Skeggs argues, ‘[w]hen whiteness becomes a marker of excess (...), the working-class become offensively and embarrassingly racially marked as white’ (2004: 91). Thus, in an attempt to deracialize the students in question and classify them according to their ‘culture’ and type of education, the school director constructs two different groups of Whites who are subjected to a classed hierarchy that looks like raced hierarchy.

In the following sections I examine how intersectionally classed, ethnic and gendered inequality is reproduced by teachers through discourses and practices of sexuality. I argue that in White middle-class discourses of teachers, raced and classed discourses converge, while raced ‘cultural’ values and behaviors attributed to Roma students by White teachers are at the same time constitutive of the class positions of both students and teachers.

5.1 'Cultural levels' – constituting a lower classed 'Gypsy girl' subjectivity

In the following excerpt, Anna, a form tutor, constitutes a 'Gypsy girl' subjectivity through talking about reproductive patterns:

(...) [Gypsy] girls consummate very early. Technically speaking, they somehow make these girls come of age by this, and (...) quite obviously, the number one task of these girls is not going to be working in a bakery, but giving birth to children for a long-long time. This is what the family prepares them for (...) and that is what their immediate surroundings expect from them. Well, while [the parents] get the family allowance for them they go to school, but, from then on, school is not [a priority]. (...) [T]his is (...) a form of livelihood, giving birth to as many children as they can, because the more children they have the more the support, and (...) on this cultural level it is a biological expectation and a biological system. (...) If we look around among highly qualified young people with university degrees, then a European or North American person who has spent a lot of years in school, has read a lot, and has great insight into things, will not give birth at the age of fifteen, because she would expect, as an individual, that she would only give birth if the child can have its own room, if she can take the child to the doctor in her own car, and if she can pay five hundred thousand forints⁹ for a pram. (...) And how old is she then? At the age of 27, 28, 30–35 it is not such a big deal to have a child. [Gypsies] don't have such (...) social expectations. With a whi... sorry, so a non-Roma person, if a family has a third child, people wonder, 'Where will they get the money to raise them? They must be pretty well-off to take on a third one!' [Gypsies] don't make an issue out of it. (Anna, teacher, interview)

Gypsy girls are positioned here as the bearers of their 'culture' (Yuval-Davies, 1997) and as being at a lower 'cultural' level than White middle-class women. This is manifested in their assumed attitude to work, reproductive patterns, and education levels (cf. Dunajeva, 2014). Anna practically questions the worth of educating Gypsy girls for a profession by saying that on their 'cultural level' the aim is not to work, but to have children. Echoing common public discourses, she positions White people as highly educated and middle-class and as having few children, and Gypsy people as poorly educated, low class, and having too many children, arguing that at the Gypsies' 'cultural level' it is a 'biological expectation and system' that they have many children. Excess (in this case, excessive reproduction) is also a characteristic projected onto the working class (Skeggs, 2004). Anna contrasts a vision of a monolithic Gypsy existence with that of a monolithic White middle-class 'European or North American' existence. In this comparison, 'Gypsiness' becomes a classed category as well, not only an ethnic one, contrasted with a classed category of whiteness. At the end of the excerpt Anna starts to say 'white' but stops and corrects herself to say 'non-Roma.' This suggests that she is using the word 'white' in a colonial sense, and she is aware

⁹ Cc. 1500 euros.

that it is considered racist to use it that way. She is not familiar with critical race theory and discourses about whiteness, but she tries to make sure she uses 'politically correct' language in the interview.

Anna uses the notion of 'cultural difference' a lot when talking about Gypsy students. While she takes great care not to appear racist in the interview, it is implied all along that, for her, 'cultural difference' is in fact a difference in hierarchical 'cultural levels' between Hungarian and Gypsy families, with the latter being on a lower level. Skeggs argues that in discourse 'race' has been exchanged by 'culture,' which involves a shift from biological essentialism to cultural essentialism. 'Whereas nature was used to legitimate racism, now cultur[e] performs this role' (2004: 138). The discourse of 'culture' comes in handy for Anna and other teachers, who are only aware that racist discourses about Gypsies are taboo, but they are not aware that they use the concept of culture in a way that rearticulates race/ethnicity-based distinctions, thus their 'cultural' discourse is disguised racism.

The reference to 'lower and higher cultural levels' also appears as a means of classed hierarchy construction in *Marzipan*, as we could also see in the school director's discourse about the culture of vocational students. In Anna's narrative, classed and raced discourses, which reproduce social inequalities and also hierarchical distinctions in positioning in the school, converge in the discourse of 'culture' and 'cultural level' or 'cultural difference' (see also Jensen and Ringrose, 2013). In her explanation about the different cultural levels of Gypsies and White people, Anna actually couples the cultural and the biological discourses by saying that 'on this cultural level it is a biological expectation and a biological system.' In my reading, she is suggesting that on different cultural levels there are different biological systems; that is, that culture determines biological functioning, i.e. reproductive patterns. The logic of her argument is intriguing: does culture determine Gypsy reproduction, and education and financial status determine White reproduction? If so, do Gypsies have a 'culture' and Whites an 'education'?

If 'culture' and 'education' as Anna means them are distinguished from each other thus, this may explain (at least in her thinking) why it is 'not worth' educating Gypsy girls. The educational institution stands for profession, work, income, high culture, and whiteness, and Anna suggests that most Gypsy girls will remain below the 'cultural level' of secondary professional education and all that it could bring to their life because of their dropping out, not learning a profession, giving birth early and many times, and living on childcare benefits. As I have discussed earlier, educational level and achievement strongly correlate with socio-economic and family background. However, the correlation is two-dimensional: students from disadvantaged and lower educated backgrounds are likely to follow educational tracks that grant lower level qualifications and spend less time in education. Therefore, they remain low-educated and the pattern is reproduced. Schools have a great stake in the reproduction of educational and, correspondingly, socio-economic inequalities (see e.g. Ball, 1993; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1992). Nevertheless, Anna (and other teachers) talk about education as if it had no part in the perpetuation of low-qualification, low socio-economic status, narrow life prospects – as if the family was solely responsible, as if family background overwrote everything education does. This is a common discourse

among teachers: by claiming that their job is ‘teaching only,’ they fend off responsibility for the reproduction of social inequalities.

5.2 Gatekeeping – constituting a higher classed ‘Gypsy girl’ subjectivity

In the following excerpt I describe how I asked Lujza, a literature teacher who mostly teaches forms in the grammar school track, whether she has Gypsy students in her current form. She explains that she has had two, one of whom moved to England with her family, while the other one is still in her form:

This other girl, this one’s mother is at home, they present a completely typical picture, they are this very closed [family]. (...) So, she is one of the girls who I would say is completely innocent, because they are really so well-situated, rich, they bring her here and take her home by car, so she is not really accessible. (...) They only allowed her to go anywhere after the father specifically made me promise that I would almost hold her hand, that I would not let her go anywhere, and if we went on form trips she would sleep in my room (...). [S]he is a very sweet girl, a bit dumb, but a very sweet, nice little thing (...), but they are very well-situated, and the mother has her own chauffeur and what not, so they are rich. But well, I think this is multiple transfer, I mean they didn’t come out of the ghetto just now, but they, I think, came out of there a long time ago, you can see it on both sides, with the mother and the father as well. (Lujza, teacher, interview)

Although gender, class, and ethnicity intersect in the positioning of the girl in an unusual way, in my reading this story does not offer a subversive potential for the constitution of Gypsy subjectivity in the Butlerian sense because it reiterates dichotomous distinctions between different Gypsy girls and reinstates a Hungarian–Gypsy hierarchy, even if this particular family seems to have stepped up in this hierarchy. The story of the girl involves a ‘traditional’ patriarchal setting (see Pateman, 1988): the Gypsy father exercises his paternal right over his daughter’s sexuality and entrusts the White teacher to take care of her virginity while at school or during extracurricular school programs. By cooperating to preserve the girl’s virginity, the two powerful adults constitute the girl’s ethnicity through sexuality.¹⁰ With the father entrusting the teacher to be the girl’s ‘caretaker,’ Lujza, the White teacher, becomes positioned as the gatekeeper of ethnicized social hierarchy in the school and also an honorary member of a family that is so rich that it makes their Gypsiness acceptable. In fact, they are not really ‘that Gypsy’ anymore, because they have gone through ‘multiple transfer’, as Lujza puts it. By characterizing the girl as ‘a very sweet girl, a bit dumb, but a very sweet, nice little thing’ and a girl with intact virginity, Lujza projects the image of a good future Gypsy wife in accordance with the father’s idea of what a good wife is like. The family’s high socio-economic status, in Lujza’s eyes, creates a hierarchical distinction between the girl from this particular Gypsy family and other Gypsy girls. This girl is positioned above other Gypsy girls who, as Lujza

¹⁰ For a discussion of the constitution of Roma girls’ ethnicity through discourses of virginity and marriage, see Rédei (2016), and Rédei (2019: Ch. 6).

argues in an earlier part of the interview, are oversexualized, vulgar, behave in a lewd way, and come from family backgrounds where it is accepted that girls get married at age 14–16 and have children. Not accidentally, this girl is a grammar school student; the other Gypsy girls Lujza refers to are vocational students. As I pointed out earlier, vulgarity and excessive sexuality are markers of both the working class and racial/ethnic minority groups and features of their perceived ‘culture’ in which class and race/ethnicity converge. Thus, the girl’s higher class position grants her a higher ethnic position as well: she is ‘almost White’ – though not quite White, exactly because of the attitude to virginity, attributed to ‘traditional Roma culture.’

5.3 Constituting the class positioning of a Gypsy girl through sexual abuse

In this last section I present an example of how the positioning of students in the school hierarchy by teachers is directly done through sexual behavior. Based on this example I argue that abusive sexuality is a means by which teacher power is deployed to construct a teacher-student hierarchy, and that sexual abuse and students’ response to it may also influence their future (intra-)class positioning.

The 2011 Report of the American Association of University Women (AAUW) on sexual harassment in schools defines school-based sexual harassment as including ‘sexual behavior that interferes with a student’s educational opportunities’ (Hill and Kearn, 2011: 6). This definition highlights a very important aspect of unwanted sexual behavior, namely, the impact it may have on the harassed person’s education. In recent years school-based sexual violence has received increasing attention in Hungary, but research studies and guides focus on student-student sexual harassment (see e.g. Buda, 2015; Simon et al., 2015). Despite the fact that news stories about teachers harassing students occur regularly in the media, no large-scale research data is available about this type of violation. This suggests that this is a particularly difficult issue to research in primary and secondary schools, with their specific power relations. Arguably, sexual harassment by a teacher may have specific consequences for the harassed student’s educational opportunities, as the following case shows.

One Gypsy girl, Imola, asked me in the interview what to do about a male teacher who had been sexually harassing her. She expressed her fear that if she complained she would be streamed into the lowest vocational track in the school hierarchy with the lowest chances of social mobility. She wanted to get a technical school qualification, pass a ‘maturation exam,’ and go to college. Harassment sometimes happened in the presence of Imola’s friend, Detti (also a Gypsy girl), but both girls felt that this fact did not help her prove her case:

Right, he always did it where there was no camera. And then what if Detti stands up and says, ‘yes, I saw it?’ He will say she’s my friend, and that’s it. I have nothing. But if they put me next year into [the factory worker stream], that will be a bit sticky. (...) When we were in his lessons, he was always fondling me, hugging me, I don’t know, it felt so unpleasant, I felt bad, like... he always said, aren’t you staying in after the practice class? (...) I was becoming afraid of him, afraid of entering the room alone. If he was in there

alone, with nobody else, I always called on the others to come. (...) Well, his practice classes were not so good, either. Because [Detti and I] really tried our best, we only went out to smoke if he allowed us, the others were laughing, they were eating more than working. (...) We [worked hard], we got 3 and 4, the others got 5.¹¹ (Imola, 17, interview)

This narrative shows clearly how this teacher used his power position to construct the vocational hierarchy in the school through abusive sexuality, and by extension, how he was able to influence the future class position of his student. Sexual harassment is a violation of personal rights and dignity in itself, but what makes it even worse is that this instance of power abuse is likely to determine the professional future of Imola either way: if she puts up with the abuse and lets it continue, she may get into the technical stream and later perhaps into higher education; if she reports it, she may be channeled into the vocational factory-worker stream. However, as it turns out from the teacher's grading practice that she describes, even passive resistance may put her at risk of ending up in the factory worker stream. Thus, her class position and potential class mobility will be influenced by how she responds to the sexual harassment by her teacher.

Imola, besides engaging in passive resistance and trying to avoid the teacher, made attempts to actively stand up against this abuse of power. She asked one teacher what to do, and the response she got was 'oh leave it, he won't do that anymore, you don't want to go to the police, it takes a lot of time, lot of fuss (...)'. (Imola, group interview). She and Detti were also wondering whether to complain to the school director, but Detti argued that it would be pointless because the latest incident had happened a month earlier, and she assumed that the director would turn them away, telling them they should have reported it the next day, not a month later. Then Imola asked me what to do, which may partly have been due to my being outside the school hierarchy, so perhaps she saw me as someone who could help her position in the school without negative consequence. In fact, I believe she was testing how far she could go with resisting: whether accessing external help could be a way to handle the abuse. It was very important for her to know how far she could go: she seemed to understand that to some extent she had to comply and accept the abuse or else risk becoming relegated in the vocational hierarchy. What she was trying to do – with her friend's support – was to resist as much as she could, and stop the abuse without risking her positioning. Although she did not say this explicitly, she knew that as a Gypsy girl who was shortly to be streamed at the end of year 10 following her teachers' decision, she was acting from the lowest possible power position, and if she complained her ethnicity would have likely contributed to her lower positioning in the school hierarchy and consequential severing of her chances of class mobility through higher education. The fact that her friend was also a Gypsy girl probably would not help, either. If they complained it was likely they would have to face the accusation that they were lying, which is one of the negative stereotypical behaviours routinely attributed to Gypsy people (see e.g. Bakó, 2006; Ligeti, 2006) and to women in general who report sexual abuse (Lawton, 2007). The fact that she failed to resist

¹¹ Grades run from 1 (fail) to 5 (top marks).

the sexual abuse completely also shows how difficult it is for those in lower positions to transgress the boundaries of the school hierarchy.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed how schools are implicated in producing raced, classed, and gendered subjectivities, and how the production of these subjectivities perpetuates social inequalities within the institutional structure of schools, using data from a school ethnography I conducted in Hungary. Instead of providing an intersectional analysis of a specific disadvantaged social group, I inquired into the discursive sites where intersectionality emerges (see: Butler, 1993; 1990). Within this framework I have directed the focus at a less well-explored layer of social construction: I have given examples of how students' sexuality was used by teachers to constitute their social positioning performatively via various discourses and practices. Teacher-to-student is not the only direction of power deployment and discursive reproduction, but an analysis of teacher-teacher and student-student relations, which I discuss elsewhere (Rédai, 2019), is beyond the scope of this paper. By involving gender and sexuality in the intersectional analysis of Hungarian Roma youth in education, I have enriched the existing scholarship on the intersectionality of race/ethnicity and class in relation to Roma people. By analyzing discourses and discursive practices, I have demonstrated how they can be directly implicated in producing raced, classed, gendered subjectivities, and how class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality can converge and create well-defined power positions in school, and how sexuality, in the form of sexual abuse by teachers, can directly affect the class positioning of students and perpetuate social inequalities within and beyond the walls of the school.

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