Race and Populist Radical Right Discourses: Implications for Roma Education Policy in Hungary

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Non-government organizations and policy makers agree that the best route to eradicating the widespread discrimination and poverty among the Roma is to improve the quality of and access to education. A cursory glance at the Hungarian Government website suggests that policy makers are on top of the problem with good laws and initiatives in place. Yet, indicators from non-government groups and academics suggest the situation remains bleak for the Roma, and practices such as the segregation of Roma school children persist. Progressive change in Hungary first requires a serious confrontation of the widespread and deeply ingrained racism against the Roma. This paper makes no attempt at such an ambition; however, the paper aims to begin acknowledging the role race plays in populist radical right discourses about education policies in Hungary using a discourse analysis method informed by Critical Race Theory. The paper advances two arguments. First, there is a mismatch between official policy and actual progress on Roma education. Second, an examination of how populist radical right discourses about the Roma are racialized provides insight into why there is a mismatch.

Les organisations non-gouvernementales et les décideurs publiques sont d'accord pour dire que la meilleure façon d'éliminer la discrimination répandue contre les Roms et la pauvreté généralisée dans laquelle ils vivent est d'améliorer la qualité de l'éducation qu'ils reçoivent et leur accès à celle-ci. Un examen rapide du site web du gouvernement hongrois laisse penser que les décideurs publiques maitrisent la situation grâce à des lois et des initiatives judicieuses. Toutefois, les indicateurs provenant de groupes non-gouvernementaux et de chercheurs portent à croire que la situation des Roms demeure sombre et que des pratiques telles la ségrégation des élèves roms persiste. Avant de connaitre une évolution positive en Hongrie, il est nécessaire d'affronter efficacement le racisme généralisé et profondément ancré contre les Roms. Cet article ne prétend pas entretenir une telle ambition; il veut plutôt commencer à reconnaitre le rôle que joue la race dans les discours de groupes populistes d'extrême droite évoquant les politiques hongroises en matière d'éducation. La méthode employée est celle d'une analyse du discours appuyée par la théorie critique axée sur la relation entre la race et la loi. L'article fait deux affirmations : d'abord, il y a une inadéquation entre la politique officielle et les progrès réel quant à l'éducation des Roms et deuxièmement, un examen de la racisation des discours de groupes populistes d'extrême droite portant sur les Roms offrent des explications sur l'existence de cette inadéquation.

Introduction

This article focuses on the problem of discrimination and educational outcomes for Roma children in Hungary. While there are several minority groups in Hungary, the largest minority group is the Roma. The Minority Rights Group International (2012) notes that some groups estimate that the Roma comprise 9 to 10% of Hungary's total population, which was 9,877,364 in 2014 according to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (2015). The Roma are also the most persecuted group in Hungary (and Central Eastern Europe) facing deeply rooted discrimination at the state and social level, a situation which has drawn much criticism from the European Union (EU) and international community (Mudde, 2005). This is troubling because the health of minority rights and protection is a key component of a successful and healthy democracy where all citizens are represented and have the opportunity to fully participate in social and political life (Article 2, Treaty of the European Union, 2012). In response, the countries of Central Eastern Europe (CEE) that are EU members have ratified several international conventions regarding minorities, such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (Mudde, 2005). A notable internationally led effort is the 2005-2015 Decade of Roma Inclusion. NGOs and policy makers agree that the best route to eradicating the widespread discrimination and poverty among the Roma is to improve the quality of and access to education. A cursory glance at the Hungarian Government website suggests that policy makers are on top of the problem with good laws and initiatives in place. Yet, indicators from NGOs and academics suggest the situation remains bleak for the Roma, and exclusionary practices such as the segregation of Roma school children persist.

A Critical Race Theory (CRT) approach to legal rights offers an explanation of the disjuncture between policy and practice. CRT scholars insist that legal rights on paper are a good start, but not enough to impart meaningful social change on their own (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Williams, 1991, 1995; Bell, 1990). The racism experienced by the Roma community is entrenched within public discourses, attitudes, and institutions, and with the rise of the populist radical right these problems seem to be increasing. Racialized discourses are inherently exclusionary, therefore never neutral, and can bring minority issues to the forefront, shape public attitudes, and influence and justify policies. Illuminating potential problems and barriers for success within education policy requires a consideration of the wider social context. If discourses about the Roma can be understood as racialized, meaning that categories and policies are created based on race (despite the diversity of the Roma as an ethnic group), then it is reasonable to conclude that education policy aimed at the Roma community is also racialized. That means education cannot be disentangled and examined separately from race without missing important insights about how the two intersect. It is encouraging that policy makers are engaging in discussions about building a stronger education system for the Roma, but education is only one piece of a larger puzzle. Progressive change in Hungary first requires a serious confrontation of the widespread and deeply ingrained racism against the Roma. In this paper, I make no attempt at such an ambition, but, using a discourse analysis method informed by CRT, I aim to begin acknowledging the role race plays in populist radical right discourses about education policies in Hungary.

The paper advances two arguments. First, there is a mismatch between official policy and actual progress on Roma education. Second, an examination of how populist radical right

discourses about the Roma are racialized provides insight into why this is the case. The paper is organized as follows. First, in the interest of conceptual clarity, I discuss the features of the populist radical right. Next, I explain how the tenets of CRT can inform the discourse analysis method used in this study for how the Hungarian government frames the issue in its documents and statements. Then, for comparison, I examine EU and Council of Europe documents to determine the extent to which the assessment of Hungary's performance matches or contradicts Hungary's self assessment. More simply, the paper uncovers how Hungary self-evaluates on Roma education policy compared with how the EU and the Council of Europe evaluates Hungary. Then, I examine party manifestos and policy statements on Roma through a CRT approach to determine how race is used in these discussions. The paper concludes with thoughts on strengthening policy efforts, and suggests areas of further study.

Framework of Analysis

The Populist Radical Right (PRR)

Back in the 1970s, the rise of what scholars like Kirkham (1998) call the "new right" dramatically changed party politics and policy aims. Drawing on the work of Gunn (1989), Kirkham (1998) asserts: "While questions of economic management were central, issues such as the role of the state, the family, sexuality, race and national identity became politicized and contested" (p. 245). The new right presented an alternative to liberalism (and liberal concerns), and a return to so-called traditional cultural and social values. In Britain and the United States, the rise of the new right came with new articulations of racialized politics and discourses often couched in the language of equality and rights (Kirkham, 1998). That meant issues previously outside the purview of politics were now matters of the state. Nowadays, racialized politics and discourses are still observed throughout Europe, including the post-communist states of Central Eastern Europe where the "populist radical right" (PRR) is on the rise.

Populism, like many concepts used the social sciences, defies easy definition. Most simply, populism is understood as an appeal to the "common person," a "politics for the people" that denotes a particular strategy and line of argument that can occur anywhere on the political spectrum and is not inherently negative (Blokker, 2005, p. 386; Deegan-Krause & Haughton, 2009, p. 822). However, the PRR refers to a very specific party family across Europe with common elements, such as authoritarian leanings that compromise democratic liberalism and a style of populism that excludes certain minority groups from the "the common people" (Pirro, 2014; Mudde, 2007). Like populism, a right leaning position on the political spectrum is not inherently negative for democracy, but radical parties on the far right share common features to varying extents. The far or extreme right can be understood as, a "political ideology revolving around the myth of a homogenous nation—a romantic and populist ultra-nationalism hostile to liberal, pluralistic democracy, with its underlying principles of individualism and universalism" (Minkenberg, 2013, p. 11).

While there are enough commonalities to position the PRR in a single party family, there are key differences between Western and Eastern Europe. Gunther and Diamond (2003) note that populist parties in CEE often present a strong ideology that suggests they are just as much leaders of a social movement as they are political parties. Such rhetoric is often underpinned by strong narratives of the past, or historical legacies, conditioned by the particularities of the post-communist transition to democracy and eventual EU membership (Pirro, 2014, p. 247). As a

result, PRR parties in CEE express their ideas about the nation and who belongs in context-specific ways. Pertinent to this study, indigenous minorities and the Roma are the key targets of PRR discourses of exclusion (Pirro, 2014, p. 248). From a Critical Race Theory perspective, the next section elaborates on how stories and discourses of exclusion are racialized and how they impact policy.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theorists are interested in the role of stories. Implicit in everyday stories are narratives about our lives and the "way things are," which shape our views on how to interpret the social and political world around us (Delgado, 2000). Torres (2001-2002) points out that individual interpretations of stories can vary greatly according to who is telling the story, who is listening, and what "facts" are emphasized and/or omitted. Discourses work the same way. While stories and narratives are included, discourses entail entire frameworks of meaning and include specialized language, terminology, facts, knowledge, and appropriate practices (Foucault, 1969/1972). For Foucault, truth and knowledge are inseparable from power (Brass, 2000). The implication is that power is situated everywhere in the everyday. In this way, discourse is inherently political because power relations are embedded even in the things we claim to know, which in turn inform and shape law and policy. The more institutionalized and specialized discourses become, the more difficult they are to contest. Taking a CEE example, Will Kymlicka (2004) posits that how Hungarian minorities in neighbouring states are conceptualized determines if expressions of nationalism are perceived as either a legitimate claim of redress or as a revisionist security threat to sovereignty. Policy action is then taken accordingly to either work toward justice or to defuse irredentist sentiment.

A pertinent discourse that CRT scholars focus on is law. Discourses of law are highly influential and often unquestioned. Carol Smart (1989) asserts that this is because law is so professionalized, exclusive, and conceptualized as being at a higher level from competing discourses. It would seem counterintuitive for a layperson to question the elite knowledge and expertise of the law. Further, law is understood as fair and unbiased in liberal democracies (Bourdieu, 1987). CRT scholars rebut that liberal laws centered on equality, and minority rights and opportunities are not neutral or fair when not everyone is starting from an equal point. Further, CRT scholars are suspicious of rights as they often fail to address historical and ongoing practices of racism and discrimination (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). The contemporary role of racism in the law started after the horrors of Nazi Germany. The postwar world order focused on equality and human rights, spearheaded by international organizations such as the United Nations. Rights on paper, while well intended, can detract attention from new forms of racism that are more nuanced and commonplace (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). As a result, racism often goes ignored except for extreme cases. To illustrate, Mudde (2005) notes that while public officials in CEE have spoken out against racism, it is reactionary to widely publicized incidents of violence. Congruent with CRT, "cases of 'everyday racism' have generally been ignored or even marginalized. In some instances, it seemed that the main audience was the international rather than the national community" (Mudde, 2005, p. 176).

Extreme and everyday racism are often seen within PRR political climates as issues of identity such as race and ethnicity are highly politicized by actors advancing nationalist and xenophobic discourse. CRT is appropriate for this study because the approach interrogates how racism occurs in both obvious and more nuanced forms. Moreover, CRT's focus on the law is

also useful as legal rights and reform are clearly linked with education policy. Ladson-Billings (1998) draws on the U.S. example of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, focusing on legal measures to ensure desegregation in schools, equal access to education, as well as equal treatment for African American students. Present day Hungary is grappling with these same issues for Roma pupils, and CRT can provide fresh insight to these problems.

Method and Case Selection

Critical Discourse Analysis

As a method, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has much to offer. Some of the key assumptions underpinning CDA pertinent for this research are that: structures and relations of power dynamics are discursive, discourse can be an ideological tool, discourses are only understood in their historical context, and CDA is an interpretative and explanatory method (Fairclough & Wodak, 2011). For this work, CDA is especially useful because it allows for a discussion of the context and meaning of policy discussion on Roma education in Hungary. CDA is a useful method for research interested in questions of power, hegemony, ideology, interests, institutions, and so on. These terms, among others, are what Teun van Dijk (2008) calls the vocabulary of the method (p. 87). A CDA begins with selecting the texts to analyze based on what the researcher seeks to explain. Next, the researcher reads the texts closely with the aim of identifying particular themes, words, references, narratives, and whatever other information is deemed useful, for instance, important statistics or facts. Because CDA is focused on context, the analysis includes close attention not only to *what* is said, but also to *how* it is said, in what way, and with what rhetorical strategies. Equally important for CDA is pointing out what is *omitted* and left unsaid (Bevir & Rhodes, 2002; van Dijk 2008 & 2011). The tenets of CRT discussed above inform the discourse analysis to gauge how race fits into the context of what is said. This is important because political rhetoric is the story political elites tell the public about particular issues.

Documents for Analysis

The first part of the study examines how Hungary self assesses the performance on Roma education policy in terms of what the aims are and what is being done. One text I selected to evaluate Hungary's position on their performance is the *2014 National Reform Programme of Hungary*, which is a self-assessment report all member states must present to the European Council (EC) to indicate how the country is responding to EC recommendations in different policy areas set out to meet *Europe 2020* strategy goals. *Europe 2020* is the EU's ten-year growth plan to address social, political, and economic goals for member states (2015b). I also consult *Hungary's National Social Inclusion Strategy—Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, The Roma* (2011). This document is prepared by the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice to address issues specific to the Roma in Hungary. I chose the *National Reform Programme* and the *National Social Inclusion Strategy* to reveal at the official level what legal measures and strategies are in place to improve the lives of the Roma, with attention to education policy initiatives. Next, EU and Council of Europe documents are analyzed to compare how the two normative watchdogs assess Hungary's performance. For the EU perspective on the two Hungarian initiatives, I consulted *The Commission's Assessment of the Implementation of*

Hungary's National Strategy (2014) and the *European Commission's Council Recommendation of the National Reform Programme of Hungary* (2014a), as well as The European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance's (ECRI) *2015 Report on Hungary*. The ECRI, created by the Council of Europe, is an independent watchdog group that reports on human rights issues relating to racism and intolerance. This document was selected to highlight how Hungary's performance regarding race is critiqued at the European level, as the Council is a continent-wide human rights organization.

The second part of the study examines data from two political parties in Hungary, Fidesz and Jobbik. Party manifestos and policy statements from party websites and news stories reveal how political elites frame Roma issues for the wider public. This is an important consideration because the general public gains knowledge of particular policy issues through political communication (party platforms, speeches, websites, etc.). Understanding how both the governing (Fidesz) and third largest and fastest rising (Jobbik) parties frame Roma issues provides insight into how PRR discourses set the context for the initiatives (and critiques of shortcomings) regarding Roma education. During this examination, I apply a CRT lens to pay close attention to how PRR discussions might be racialized, with thought to the potential impacts, particularly in the context of education. I also consult academic and NGO literature throughout the discussion to support the analysis.

Data and Discussion

This section of the paper is organized in three main parts. The first part of the discussion assesses how Hungarian government officials self-evaluate their performance in areas of Roma education policy. In the next two parts, I study EU and Council of Europe documents to demonstrate the differences between how these two watchdogs, independent of the Hungarian government, assess Hungary's policy performance on Roma education. The discussion wraps up by summarizing the key findings and differences on what the Hungarian government says it is doing compared with what is actually being done.

Hungarian Self-Evaluation

The National Reform Programme of Hungary (Government of Hungary, 2014a) reports on progress and goals in several policy areas but this analysis is narrowed to education and social inclusion. In Section III.6 "Education and social inclusion," the Government of Hungary (2014a) insists that their national education strategies parallel the goals of *Europe 2020*, namely to offer high quality education to prepare students for the labour market, create inclusive education strategies for the Roma, and improve access to education at all levels. Significant reforms have taken place since 2010 with special focus on implementing programs to eradicate early school leaving. Policy making has focused on early childhood to facilitate any necessary interventions such as identifying risk factors for learning disabilities. New legislation includes mandatory kindergarten attendance from age 3 (previously age 5) starting September 2015 as per the *Public Education Act*. There are many programs in place to support early school leaving interventions including government funding for teachers and resources. Scholarship programs such as the *Arany János Talent Fostering Programme* recognize the economic and material disadvantage many Roma children and youth face. There is also a *Public Education Development Strategy*, which, in addition to ensuring quality education for pupils, promotes high-level training and

support for teachers (Section III.6). Promising programs, such as the ones listed above among others, all suggest progress.

Another important report, the *Situation of the Roma population of the National Social Inclusion Strategy* (Government of Hungary, 2011), merges insights and recommendations from the *Making Things Better for our Children National Strategy* (Government of Hungary, 2007a) and the *Decade of Roma Integration Programme Strategic Plan* (Government of Hungary, 2007b). Section 7.2 "Education and Training" of the *Strategy* notes that policy reform is aimed at young children with measures to help include the parents to ensure better success. Further, the *Strategy* emphasizes and follows the *Making Things Better for our Children* (2007a) assertion that:

> In an educational system creating opportunities, **children**, regardless of whether they come from poor, under-educated families, live in segregated living conditions, are disabled, migrants or blessed with outstanding talent, **must receive education suited to their abilities and talents throughout their lifetime, without their education being influenced or affected by prejudices, stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination**. (Government of Hungary, 2011, p. 74, bolding in original)

This demonstrates that education equality laws are in place along with programs aimed at education for the Roma. However, problems are acknowledged in Section 3.2 of the *Strategy* (Government of Hungary, 2011) that highlight the challenges Roma children face in terms of barriers to education, and social inclusion more widely. One obstacle emphasized is the lack of coherent, reliable data and statistics, including follow-up data to measure policy program/intervention success. Another challenge to policy implementation is the segregation and ghettoization of Roma communities. Because the majority of Roma (over 60%) live in (mainly impoverished) rural areas, segregated communities are even further isolated. The *Strategy* also points out that social problems such high unemployment, lack of quality education, and high levels of personal debt are especially troublesome for the Roma and "segregation and discrimination are simultaneously the cause and consequence of these processes" (Government of Hungary, 2011, p. 25). This statement illustrates how Hungary's Roma are caught in a vicious cycle where bleak social indicators are caused by isolation and discrimination and vice versa. The situation is even worse for Romani women and girls. For example, only 5.8% of females have vocation skills compared to 17.5% of males (Government of Hungary, 2011). Such figures indicate intersectional discrimination by ethnicity and gender, further complicating policy solutions. In September 2014, the Government of Hungary made updates to the *Strategy*. Suggested reforms are targeted towards gathering better statistics and data, and, noteworthy here, including a cultural component into mainstream curriculum to foster awareness and appreciation for the breadth of Roma culture among non-Roma pupils. What remains undressed in the 2014 updates is the issue of segregation, which has come under international criticism (Government of Hungary, 2014b, September; United Nations, n.d.).

EU Evaluation of Hungary's Performance

The European Union serves as an important watchdog to follow up and monitor the progress that member states are making in key policy areas. The European Commission is responsible for producing many of these reports, accessible to the public. Pertinent to this study, the

Commission released their *Assessment of the Implementation of Hungary's National Strategy* (2014a). The *Assessment* points out key steps taken since Hungary's 2011 *National Strategy* while briefly highlighting measures needed to ensure efficacy. Regarding education policy, the *Assessment* notes that while measures have been taken to ensure equal access to quality education, more awareness must be raised to promote access. The report applauded efforts made to standardize and centralize curriculum to ensure that all Hungarian pupils receive the same level of education. While the policies on paper suggest a move in the right direction, the European Commission (2014a) asserts that impact assessments are needed to determine success. Another important policy initiative is the changes to mandatory school attendance. Children must begin pre-schooling at age 3 and pupils must stay in school until age 16. The necessary changes are aimed at ensuring the best possible start for children at an early stage and to target early school leaving by regulating attendance into the later teens. However, desegregation efforts are necessary in schools and this remains unaddressed (European Commission, 2014a).

The problem of segregation is not restricted to education; spatial segregation also occurs within neighbourhoods. In response, the European Commission's *Assessment* (2014a) also points out that desegregation efforts are also needed in housing policy. Segregation in schooling and neighbourhoods occurs in the larger context of discrimination against the Roma. The Commission (2014a) recognizes the need to tackle discrimination and calls for: strong laws in place, active efforts to eradicate anti-Roma rhetoric and hate speech, and raising awareness for Roma and non-Roma. The Commission notes these are the basic criteria for municipalities to receive EU funds conditionally targeted for improving equality and desegregation.

Council of Europe Evaluation of Hungary's Performance

An important watchdog group supported by the Council of Europe that keeps tabs on issues of human rights problems is the European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI). The ECRI takes stock of progress and draws attention to areas of concern. Like the *Assessment of the Implementation of Hungary's National Strategy*, the 2015 *ECRI Report on Hungary* expresses concern in areas of education and discrimination, but in far more detail. Echoing the other reports examined, the ECRI also affirms that, while there has been some progress made, serious problems remain, notably the uneven application of the law and ongoing anti-Roma discourse. According to the report, "the application of criminal law provisions on incitement to hatred remains extremely limited. A radical right-wing populist party [Jobbik] openly engages in anti-Roma, anti-Semitic, homophobic and xenophobic hate speech" (ECRI, 2015, p. 9). The rise of Jobbik in the polls is especially troubling as the party openly espouses racist rhetoric, even coining the term "Gypsy[1] crime," discussed further in the paper. Worse yet, the ECRI warns, "... hate speech is not restricted to extremist parties and groups but occurs across the political spectrum. State officials and members of mainstream parties have been implicated" (ECRI, 2015, p. 16).

The ECRI critiques the *National Social Inclusion Strategy* as ineffective based on the failure to confront the problem of segregation of school children. While there are laws against segregation, in practice there are appalling numbers of Roma children placed in special schools and classes with less challenging curriculum. Drawing data from the Roma Education Fund, the ECRI reports that between 20-90% of pupils in special education schools or classes are Roma. More troubling, many have been misdiagnosed based on little or no testing, and in some cases

without the child present during the assessment (ECRI, 2015). The ECRI (2015) insists the practice of inappropriately identifying Roma children as "learning disabled" must cease in order to meet goals of social inclusion, quality education for all children, and opportunities to escape poverty. The 2013 European Court of Human Rights judgment on *Horvath v. Kiss* offers hope:

> Two [Hungarian] Roma argued that because of ethnicity, they were wrongly placed in a school for the mentally disabled, and that their rights under Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the ECHR (right to education) and Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination) had been breached. (2015, pp. 30-31)

The Court ruled in their favour and ordered changes. Hungarian authorities have responded with new evaluation tests, teacher-training programmes aimed at inclusive education, and new laws with strict benchmarks for diagnosing mental disabilities in children (ECRI, 2015). It is too early to evaluate the success of the new initiatives. Time and close monitoring will tell how effective these changes will be in Hungary.

In Sum

In this section of the paper, the Hungarian self-assessment on progress in Roma education policy was compared to the EU and the Council of Europe's evaluation of actual progress to determine if there was a disjuncture between policy and practice. The evidence examined suggests this is the case.

From the Hungarian government's view, the picture of progress looks good. National education strategies are in line with *Europe 2020* goals of high quality education with inclusive education strategies for the Roma and improved access to education at all levels. There are significant reforms and many new programmes in place. However, segregation and discrimination are recognized as ongoing challenges. From the EU perspective, the situation is more complex and the problems of segregation and discrimination are serious and require immediate addressing beyond merely acknowledging the problem. According to the European Commission, there are initiatives in place but continual monitoring and data collection are needed. In another report, the Commission also summarized the European Council's recommendation that progress and efficacy of the new laws needs to be monitored (Section 15, 2014b).

The Council of Europe's ECRI report is particularly damning. The report acknowledges the hopeful reforms made to date and cites a landmark court case but the ECRI also insists that much more work must be done in order for meaningful change to occur. The report exposes how the hostile racist environment for Hungarian Roma at all levels of society informs and directs policy that results in dismal social indicators of progress. The next section of the paper grapples with why this disconnect between policy and practice persists despite good legal reforms and programmes aimed at combatting social exclusion of the Roma.

Populist Radical Right (PRR) Discourse: Framing Race

As noted in the previous section, the Hungarian Roma live with widespread discrimination leading to many social problems including low education levels, segregation, and intergenerational cycles of poverty. This situation persists even with laws, policies, and programmes aimed at eradicating exclusion. An examination of how the Roma are negatively

framed in populist radical right discourse helps explain why there is a mismatch between policy and actual practice. Discourses are never neutral and they are inherently political because how certain issues are framed (e.g., what the problem is, the extent, etc.) informs what policy action is taken. Political parties (like Jobbik and Fidesz studied here) are powerful agents of social influence. Jobbik and Fidesz are certainly not the only groups espousing racism toward the Roma in Hungary, but they are significant because parties in power make decisions and direct policy. For instance, Nagy et al. (2013) note that part of Jobbik's success is explained by their racist positions against the Roma, which resonate with the public that have long ostracized the Roma community. In this way, racist rhetoric fuels anti-Roma attitudes and justifies questionable policies. Furthermore, PRR parties not only influence the general public, but also other parties. In the case of Hungary, this is especially concerning because Jobbik—on the extreme far right—influences Fidesz, the party in power. As Nagy et al. (2013) put it, "Overall, then, we can see that the ideology advocated by *Jobbik* is being implemented by the *Fidesz* government (with its two-thirds majority in parliament) in a slightly watered down version, but without any major changes in its tenets" (p. 248). The analysis unfolds with an examination of how Jobbik, then Fidesz, frame Roma policy with attention to what is said, in what manner, using which rhetorical strategies, and where appropriate, what is left unsaid. Within the discourses revealed, race is located and the findings are critiqued. The analysis concludes with thoughts on possible implications.

Discourses of Jobbik

The analysis begins with Jobbik because this party represents the most extreme case of populist radicalism in Hungary. Jobbik's racist position is obvious and has been widely critiqued by groups like the ECRI who also describe the party as racist, fascist, homophobic, and hyper-nationalist (2015). Jobbik is a newer party, founded in 2003, and is Hungary's third largest party. The rapidity of Jobbik's success is remarkable. The party broke through in the 2009 European Parliament election. This was a big surprise as Hungary's party system was considered fully consolidated and locked in, leaving no room for new parties. Jobbik went from less than 1% to 15% in one year, a situation that is unparalleled among European far right parties (Karácsony & Róna, 2011). Nationally, Jobbik has been enjoying ever-increasing success, securing second place in 18 of 19 counties in the 2014 local elections. Jobbik's strong positions against the Roma are influential and resonate with the public (ECRI, 2015). Consider the images conjured up by the following excerpt:

> One Sunday morning in December 2007, some three hundred extreme nationalists dressed in black uniforms marched in military formation through a Hungarian village, protesting against what they called "Roma [Gypsy] delinquency." They then gathered at a rally, where speakers demanded that Roma be segregated from mainstream society. (LeBor, 2008, p. 34)

The extreme nationalists LeBor writes of were members of the Magyar Gárda (MG) (Hungarian Guard), a paramilitary group founded by Gábor Vona (Jobbik's leader) to protect Hungary's values and culture. While the MG was outlawed in 2009, the group quickly reassembled as the Új Magyar Gárda (New Hungarian Guard) and Jobbik's extreme stance against the Roma persists.

From Jobbik's (2015c) stated policies on the party website, they revere the historical role of

the Church and insist the Church will be vital to Roma integration, which suggests this is an important policy area. However, the Roma are curiously omitted from Jobbik's dialogue on ideas to reform youth, employment, and cultural programmes. In the *Education Policy* section of the website, Roma are not specifically mentioned except in the statement, "We will create a National Institute of Gypsy Methodology, whose purpose will be to develop and realize educational methods designed to alleviate the unique educational situation of Hungary's Roma" (2015a). The party does not go on to explain how they understand the "unique educational situation" or to clarify any details of the "educational methods" they mention. Further, this statement is at odds with inclusive education that the *Europe 2020* goals support. In another statement on education reform, Jobbik (2015a) states that, "We will set up a boarding school system for children coming from disadvantaged families." Although the Roma are not mentioned specifically, it is common knowledge that Roma children, and especially females, are the most disadvantaged group in Hungary in terms of poverty, education, housing, and health. By implication then, the Roma are the key target group for such a boarding school system. State legislated removal of children from their home communities into a boarding school system is chillingly reminiscent of the Indian Residential School system enacted by the Canadian Government in assimilation efforts to "destroy the Indian in the child" (Funk-Unrau & Snyder, 2007). It is further troubling that Jobbik's official position for solving inequality in education is further segregation, a policy that directly conflicts with the *Europe 2020* goals and the current national strategies and laws in Hungary.

In the *Party Manifesto*, Jobbik positions themselves as the defenders of the nation with a "get tough on crime" approach. They pledge to address "the situation of the Gypsy community" and later assert that, "We [Jobbik] cannot accept laws that guarantee more and more legal security for criminals and provide less and less protection for honest citizens!" (Jobbik, 2003, §3). In the *Manifesto*, Jobbik does not elaborate on what they mean by "situation of the Gypsy community" other than the obvious implication that the status quo is unacceptable. Later statements made by Jobbik clarify their intentions to solve the problem, namely by linking excess crime to the Roma community, even creating the moniker "Gypsy crime." Scholars like Vidra and Fox (2014) point out that the term "Gypsy crime" is dangerous because it becomes taken for granted and accepted by the general public. Use of such a moniker is an example of using lexicons or ideological positioning as a rhetorical strategy. A lexicon or ideological position happens when certain groups are stereotyped with particular behaviour to the point where the stereotype becomes a metaphor for the group (Gilbert, 2013). In this case, Roma becomes synonymous with crime and vice versa in both political discourse and in the public imagination. The term "Gypsy crime" casts a different light on Jobbik's earlier mentioned *Manifesto*, which differentiates criminals from "honest citizens." The discursive implication of labelling the Roma as criminal is blaming the group for deviant behaviour and creating further distance from mainstream society (Jiwani, 2009). Jobbik rebuts that the term is not evidence of racism; rather it is a policy problem the party is prepared to fix. According to the party website,

> Jobbik has suggested an approach to tackling gypsy crime that deals with both its cause and its effects. The combination of a dedicated rural police service, or Gendarmerie, on the one hand; and social security and educational reforms on the other. All such changes would be totally colour-blind and would apply to all. (Jobbik, 2015b, §4-5)

Despite the claim otherwise, the term "Gypsy crime" remains problematic as a lexicon and

even the solutions offered paint a "they need to be more like us" type of picture that shows disregard and lack of respect for cultural difference. Embedded in a term like "Gypsy crime" is what Critical Race scholars like Sherene Razack (1998; 2008) call a culturalist explanation for behaviour. A culturalist explanation conflates certain behaviours as inherent to the culture, thereby blaming entire ethnic groups as culturally flawed. Other examples include construing all Muslims as backwards with a propensity for violence, or all Indigenous peoples in North America as prone to alcoholism and criminality. This is a coded form of racism that implies certain ethnic groups have tendencies toward deviance. Additionally, Critical Race Theory is deeply critical of attempts to "white wash" laws and policies as seen in Jobbik's statement that "All changes would be totally colour-blind." Applying a one-size-fits-all model to policy can only expose and remedy the most extreme forms of racism and inequality and cannot address systematic, every day racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012).

Discourses of Fidesz

Viktor Orbán, the Prime Minister of Hungary, is the leader of Fidesz. Fidesz is the current and largest political party in power since 2010. Fidesz is commonly known as a conservative right party that began in 1988. However, in recent years there has been a great deal of media and scholarly attention pointing to Fidesz' far right rhetoric and illiberal policies. A striking example are the new constitutional reforms which weaken equality rights for minorities and include a complex amending formula that gives Fidesz a great deal of power. The point here is not to label Fidesz as a PRR *party*, but rather to emphasize and critique the PRR *discourse strategies* the party uses. The politics of Fidesz, such as the many anti-Roma statements made by the party and its affiliates, fit the definition of PRR strategy (Pirro, 2014, p. 261). On the surface, Fidesz appears much more moderate than the extreme right Jobbik, and the times when Fidesz has come under fire are often dismissed as atypical and excused as a vote-winning strategy. This is dubious because, "a party [can't] really take radical positions that are 'just strategic' for most of its existence" (Mudde, 2015, §12). Because Fidesz' discourses are far more nuanced than Jobbik's, CRT is especially useful for uncovering racialized frames.

In the Fidesz *Party Manifesto*, there is virtually no mention of the Roma except to state that, "the integration and advancement of Roma citizens is a common cause for all" (2007, p. 23). To achieve these goals, the party claims that education is the top policy priority, especially for children aged seven to eight years (2007). In the manifesto there is no mention of discrimination or racism in Hungary at all, and, while equality is discussed, it is only in terms of equality among new and old member states of the European Union. This demonstrates that Fidesz' conception of national inclusion and equality is for the ethnic Hungarian diaspora across Hungary's borders rather than acceptance and promotion of an ethnically plural Hungary (Fox et al., 2010). That means for Orbán, the diaspora community takes political and policy priority over the Roma. While perhaps unintended, the consequence is preferential treatment of ethnic Hungarians across the border that fit into the mainstream national norm and are, in the view of Hungarian policy makers, "more like us." This is a latent, yet still racist, position seen in other cases, such as Canadian immigration attitudes towards temporary foreign workers from Mexico (Gilbert, 2013). There are other examples of concerning attitudes and statements from Fidesz members and far right rhetoric is becoming more and more commonplace for the party (Verseck, 2013).

A recent Supreme Court ruling decided that an all-Roma primary school in Nyíregyháza, in

Northeast Hungary, did not constitute a legitimate case of segregation as parents could have sent their children via bus to another school. The school was closed in 2007 after the Chance for Children Foundation (an international NGO that advocates for at-risk youth) lobbied against the school based on concerns of racial segregation. Local authorities allowed the Greek Catholic Church to take charge and the school opened again in 2011, leading to an appeal to the Supreme Court (Hungary Matters, 2015). The ruling caused upset, and Fidesz member and Minister of Human Capacities, Zoltán Balog, backed the court decision and insisted that, "only a badly intentioned reading of the public education law passed at the end of last year could discern any legitimisation of school segregation" and that extra teaching resources would ensure the students received a quality education (MTI, 2015, §1). Opposition co-leader Timea Szabo disagreed noting that Balog's suport set a dangerous precedent for creating a segregation loophole in certain cases (MTI, 2014). The director of Chance for Children and Romani activist, Erzsebet Mohacsi, agreed with Szabo, noting that veiled forms of segregation are common in Hungary: "This is done all over the country. You can't find religious schools with mixed kids. They're either elite schools for the majority or Gypsy schools" (Simon, 2014). Minister Balog's failure to respond directly to these important critiques and simply stand behind the court ruling shows an example of a public official of accepting the word of the law as the most commonsense and legitimate form of truth finding. What remains unquestioned and unaddressed in a meaningful way is the ongoing problem of segregation both in schools and in neighbourhoods.

In a more blatant example of racist attitudes toward the Roma, Fidesz co-founder and personal friend of Orbán, Zsolt Bayer, was quoted in *Magyar Hírlap*, a daily national newspaper, saying, "a considerable proportion of the gypsies is not fit to live among people. They are animals. These animals should certainly not exist. The problem must be solved— immediately and no matter how" (Verseck, 2013, §9). The article stirred a great deal of controversy in Hungary and Europe, but Fidesz responded meekly by trying to distance the party from Bayer saying he was "stating his own view" (Verseck, 2013, §10). The ECRI notes another similar incident when, in 2014, theatre director Imre Kerényi, Orbán's personal representative on cultural matters was quoted saying, "the theatre world should be liberated from the 'lobby of the fags'" (2015, p. 16). Fidesz' reaction, or lack thereof, to incidents like Bayer and Kerényi demonstrate the "few bad apples" style of logic. This strategy suggests these are isolated incidents and not representative of the group. By allocating blame on a few individuals that may need reprimanding denies how racism is rampant and institutionalized (Tator & Henry, 2006). What remains unquestioned are the norms, beliefs, and values that underpin how such incidents can occur in the first place (van Dijk, 2008).

It is difficult to argue that such incidents of racism are not representative of Fidesz when they keep happening in different contexts, even from leader Viktor Orbán himself. In a public statement responding to criticism that Hungary was not pulling its weight regarding the Syrian refugee crisis, Orbán said:

> It is a historical feature of Hungary that it is home to hundreds of thousands of Roma citizens. This is a fact that no one can object to or call into question in any way. At the same time, however, we cannot require others [...] to follow suit and demand that they should also live with a substantial Roma minority. (Government of Hungary, 2015)

By comparing the Roma to Syrian refugees, Orbán is implying the Roma are not "regular" Hungarians who are a welcome part of the social fabric; rather, they are outsiders with whom

Hungary was historically burdened. The Roma community reacted to this statement and Acs mayor Bela Lakatos (Hungary's only Roma mayor) resigned from the party as a result (Escritt, 2015). Some scholars note that racism has become increasingly acceptable in Hungary (Vidra & Fox, 2014). Blatant and coded incidents of racism discussed above suggest they are right.

Implications

Racialized discourses by the Jobbik and Fidesz parties have far reaching consequences for Roma education in Hungary. Using racist and culturalist explanations, PRR discourses frame the Roma as outsiders and troublemakers. This translates into less attention and public pressure for politicians to remedy inequities in education, and instead shifts focus on the need for protection against Roma criminals and deviants. In the case of Jobbik, strong anti-Roma attitudes are prevalent and obvious. Assumptions about the Roma are highly racialized and culturalist, as exemplified by the term "gypsy crime." By framing the Roma as inherently prone to criminal deviance, they are seen as a problem and as outsiders posing a threat to peaceful (non-Roma) Hungarian society. Racist attitudes can often inform policy and, when that happens, discriminatory policies are unquestioned and become the logical, appropriate way to govern society (Razack, 2008). Patterns of racialized policy can become cyclical when ethnicity or race is used as an indicator of crime, which leads to over-policing certain neighbourhoods, resulting in more arrests that suggest further evidence of criminality (Quigley, 1994). This can further entrench Roma "issue ownership" and foster an "only Jobbik cares and can protect us" logic among voters. Increased popularity of Jobbik is a troubling prospect for minorities in Hungary.

Jobbik is the not the only concern for social inclusion in Hungary. Fidesz has also engaged racialized dialogue, at times in more nuanced ways than Jobbik, at other times just as overtly. Either way, the prospects for a healthy democracy are bleak. Cas Mudde (2015) puts it this way:

> Mainstream parties such as Fidesz may be more harmful for liberal democracy than radical right parties such as Jobbik because they often have the experience, power and skills to implement illiberal policies. What's more, mainstream parties tend to have supporters in important political positions both within their own countries, such as within the bureaucracy and judiciary, and beyond. (§18)

We have already seen Fidesz' policies and exertion of power in practice, namely with the widely criticized constitutional reforms. Employing distancing strategies such as "a few bad apples" in the party and the generic nods to equality and social inclusion seen in the *Party Manifesto*, Fidesz effectively silences racism that is ongoing yet not confronted or questioned.

With either Jobbik or Fidesz in power, both espouse PRR discourse and inform policy in racialized ways. The result for the Roma is a hostile political climate intolerant of difference or diversity. Racism in society spells trouble for education policy and opportunity (Robbins, 2010). For instance, Ram (in press) asks how segregation of school children can be effectively tackled when mainstream society supports it. The problem is further complicated when officials support court rulings like the one in Nyíregyháza that create exceptions for segregation. There are some promising educational reforms but without studies and data to demonstrate their effectiveness it is unclear how these policies will play out in practice. With weak enforcement mechanisms, it is likely that the decade of reform and improvement will only yield partial results (Varga, 2013). More importantly, unless racism and discrimination are confronted, educational strategies and reform efforts will only perpetuate the status quo. Drawing on lessons from the African

American experience in the United States that relate well to the Hungarian case, Critical Race scholar Ladson-Billings (1998) illustrates how. First, curriculum will remain problematic. Embedded in what knowledge children must have are stereotypes, historical omissions, and a one-sided view of history and the now. Classroom instruction and teacher training can pose problems, too. Education policy is consistently aimed at finding the correct approach to teaching certain groups deemed as difficult to teach or a special case. Oftentimes, such approaches are evaluated in a success-fail binary:

> This race-neutral perspective purports to see deficiency as an individual phenomenon. Thus, instruction is conceived as a generic set of teaching skills that should work for all students. When these strategies or skills fail to achieve desired results, the students, not the techniques, are found to be lacking. (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 19)

Regarding how students are assessed, there is often a gap between what is being measured compared to what the pupil actually knows (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Educators around the globe have long critiqued standardized tests. Hopefully, the new evaluation tests that Hungary has adopted will be more sensitive.

Concluding Remarks

The purpose of this paper was to examine the role of race in Roma education policy in Hungary. The paper made two key arguments. First, how Hungary self-evaluates their performance in educational reform was compared to how the EU and the Council of Europe assessed Hungary's performance. This comparison revealed a disjuncture between official policy and actual progress on the ground. Second, the paper argued that a political climate of populist right radicalism, which espoused and fueled racialized discourses about the Roma, partially revealed why seemingly good laws and policies produced disappointing results in practice.

By way of concluding, the paper offers three key recommendations for improving the situation, and wraps up by suggesting further avenues of study. The first, and arguably most critical, recommendation for improving education policy involves seriously confronting the deeply engrained, structural racism about the Roma. Education policies are not created in a vacuum. They are written within a particular context, and so without tackling racism in wider society, education policies cannot fully overcome problems such as segregation, early school leaving, etc. Second, policies aimed at education are well meaning and this author agrees that for Roma children (the next generation) education is key, but the non-Roma, majority population must also be better educated about the realities the Roma face in order to achieve understanding and cultural sensitivity. This would need to involve a discussion beyond superficial caricatures about the Roma culture. Finally, the paper exposed the mismatch between how Hungary self-assesses compared with the EU and Council of Europe's concerns over progress. The mismatch shows that close monitoring and reporting (by the EU and Council of Europe as independent watchdogs) of segregation and other policies is required to ensure effectiveness and draw attention to potential legal loopholes (as suggested by the controversy over the Nyíregyháza ruling discussed earlier in the paper).

This study examined one small piece of Hungary's policy puzzle. Further studies that could surely produce fruitful results would be more theoretical work on how Fidesz' policies, while not as extreme as Jobbik's, are also implicated by systematic racism and more policy-oriented work

closely examining the intersection of race/ethnicity with gender on Roma policy. For now, there are several new policies and initiatives in place to improve educational prospects for Hungarian Roma. Although there is ample room for skepticism, only time will tell how these will play out.

Acknowledgements

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Note

1 "Gypsy" is the name given to the Roma people by outsiders who initially thought that the Roma migrated from Egypt, where Gypsy is a shortened version of "Egyptian." The preferred and more accurate name is Roma, derived from Dom, meaning a person or a human being in Sanskrit, the original language of northern India. The use of "Gypsy" in this paper is only to reflect the rhetoric of the people and organizations referenced. Otherwise, the terms Roma and Romani are used to acknowledge how the Roma identify themselves.

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