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## **Cultural Representations of Minorities in Hungarian Textbooks**

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**ABSTRACT** This article reports research analyzing cultural representations of minorities in Hungarian elementary school textbooks currently used throughout the country. A convenient sample representing more than 75% of first and fourth grade reading books was collected from three academic and public libraries in Hungary. Using content analysis techniques, images and stories from first and fourth grade spelling, reading and literature books were analysed for the presence of ethnic or national minorities or cultural 'others.' Findings demonstrate that minorities receive almost no attention within Hungarian school textbooks, and when they are represented, it occurs in narrowly defined or stereotypical ways. We focus attention on the portrayal of Roma in the sample and compare our findings with published data indicating that Roma are the victims of prejudice and discrimination in everyday life. We argue that school textbooks be viewed as cultural objects that affect relations between the majority and minorities, rather than merely as a by-product of pre-existing social relations.

### **Introduction**

Children's picture and literature books are a significant source of information about the world children live in. They simultaneously reflect and teach cultural values and norms. Books enable children to learn about the society in which they live, and more generally the world beyond their immediate community. They also provide children with cultural representations of social identities and roles: 'images of what they can and should be like when they grow up' (Weitzman et al, 1972, p. 1126). The content teaches children both positive and negative cultural values. Some books present narrow and ethnocentric views of the world, while other books provide children with empowering, multicultural portrayals of the world that sensitize them to issues of power, culture, and social identity. The links among culture, roles, inter-group social

relations and education have been studied for some time (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Apple, 1985). Over the last few decades there has been significant inquiry into the relationships between the content of books and the children who use them. Research has focused on a number of substantive and theoretical areas, including gender and sex roles (Weitzman et al, 1972; Grauerholz & Pescosolido, 1989a; Kortenhuis & Demarest, 1993; Turner-Bowker, 1996; Clark et al, 1999); race and ethnicity (Costello, 1992; Pinsent, 1997); the elderly (Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang, 1997); multiculturalism (Manna & Brodie, 1992; Pinsent, 1997); and how children construct reality (Grey, 1998; Murray, 1998).

The awareness of cultural and social difference begins early in childhood. Distinctions based on sex, race, and age are salient by age four (Kaplan, 1998; Papalia et al, 1999), and distinctions based on class are salient by age six (Davison, 1978). Social reality is constructed by the inter-subjective processes through which meanings are produced and reproduced. This includes face-to-face interaction with significant others, as well as interaction mediated through various cultural objects. One important cultural object through which children encounter representations of social identity is school textbooks. The pictures and stories that children engage with are conveyers of cultural messages about the attributes of members of various social groups (Dellmann-Jenkins & Yang, 1997), including racial and ethnic minorities.

This article provides a cultural analysis of how minorities are represented in contemporary elementary school textbooks in Hungary. We analyse the content of the Hungarian National Core Curriculum (NCC; Nemzeti Alaptanterv, 1995) and Hungarian children's school textbooks from the first and fourth grades, and demonstrate how structural changes in the NCC regarding multicultural education are not reflected in how ethnic minorities are represented in school textbooks. We treat both the NCC and school textbooks as cultural objects and analyse them within a larger discursive field typified by prejudice against ethnic minorities. After introducing our conceptual model, we briefly review the current state of minority affairs in Hungary with particular emphasis on the Roma, who are the minority culture most discriminated against (Örkény & Szabó, 2001). We then analyse the NCC and school textbooks, focusing on the extent to which a multicultural perspective is reflected in the material culture of the school system. Last, we link representations of the Roma, in school textbooks specifically, with existing studies of knowledge of and prejudice toward the Roma.[1]

### The Study of Culture and Cultural Objects

We mean to investigate how minority populations are represented in Hungarian school textbooks from a perspective that emphasizes the collective production of culture. Rather than seeing culture broadly as an

all-encompassing way of life, or narrowly as something created by an elite segment of society, we view culture as a collective creation that is dialectically linked to the relations among a society's members. Culture is created through the production of cultural objects, which are defined by Griswold as 'shared significance embodied in form' (1994, p. 11). Cultural objects refer to material or nonmaterial aspects of a society or group, which embody a shared meaning or significance. Nonmaterial examples might include values such as 'freedom' or 'equality,' religious or moral beliefs, and behavioral norms such as discrimination. Material examples include flags, pieces of clothing, music, or primary school textbooks. Cultural objects are meaning-laden and represent the shared values of a society or group. Emile Durkheim (1915/2001) argued that every society needed collective representations that demonstrated how a society's members were connected to one another. Through producing, distributing, and consuming cultural objects (which necessarily involves the negotiation of meanings attached to them), societal members regularly strengthen the ties that bind them together.

Scholars like Durkheim focused on the integrative functions of such objects: how collective representations carried homogenous cultural assumptions about the way a society ought to be. However, cultural objects do not represent all segments of a heterogeneous society, which is composed of various cultural groups that may be distinguished by language, race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Cultural objects created and distributed by a society's dominant culture are biased in favor of its cultural assumptions and therefore should be interrogated as to how they construct social reality with regard to the perspectives of minority group members.

School textbooks can be understood as an important form of cultural object. Cultural objects are themselves locatable within a larger 'cultural diamond' (Griswold, 1994). The cultural diamond (see Figure 1) conceptualizes the links between cultural objects, those who produce and consume them, and the social world. The six lines that link the four points highlight the various relationships that exist within a cultural context, without suggesting causality. The primary utility of a cultural diamond is that it anchors both cultural objects and the people who create and receive them to the social world. The creators of school textbooks have a relationship with the larger society, just as the children who consume those textbooks do, yet that relationship is clearly different. Likewise, the adults who create them have a different relationship with the textbooks than the children who consume them. Creators code textbooks with specific cultural narratives, which children then engage with in school culture.

Karl Marx noted that social relations influence culture: '[i]t is not the consciousness of [people] that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness'

(1859/1977, p. 389). Marx argued that the social relationships between groups (rooted in material conditions) explained resulting cultural expressions. From this perspective, one would expect that the relationship between majority and minority cultural groups is reflected in cultural objects that are produced by members of either group. How members of each group understand their relative social positions reflects pre-existing social relations. This assumption can be seen in researchers' claims that 'there is no reason to assume that the general-public's anti-Roma prejudice does not filter into the relatively closed world of the classroom' (Radó, 2001, p. 260). Yet such a reflection hypothesis is one-sided, for it has also been demonstrated that culture influences social relations. Max Weber (1930/1992) argued against material determinism by claiming that changes in a society's culture could explain subsequent changes in the social order. Rather than focusing on a single directionality of reflection theory, our use of the cultural diamond takes both possibilities into account by asserting the dialectic relationship between culture and society. Both are reflected in and influence each other. Thus, Hungarian primary school textbooks simultaneously reflect the relative social standing of minority cultural groups and teach a specific set of cultural values and beliefs about minority groups. We now turn to consider the first half of the society-culture dialectic by focusing on the social condition of minorities in Hungary.

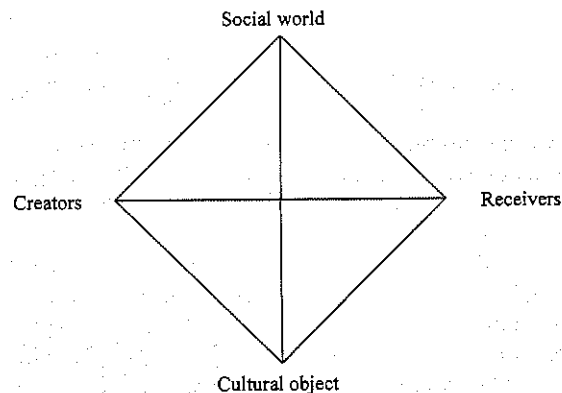


Figure 1. The cultural diamond (Griswold, 1994, p. 15).

### The Social: ethnic minorities in Hungary

According to the 2001 national census, Hungary's population is 10,197,119, with Magyars (ethnic Hungarians) being the largest cultural group. Based on a definition set forth in Hungary's Minority Act of 1993, there are thirteen acknowledged national and ethnic minorities living in

Hungary today: Armenian, Bulgarian, Croatian, German, Greek, Polish, Roma, Romanian, Ruthen, Serbian, Slovakian, Slovenian, and Ukrainian (Dávid, 2001, p.1). Statistical data about population numbers of these minority groups is inconsistent, for several reasons. First, what constitutes minority membership is not always clearly defined: it can be the first language learned, the ascribed social identity of one or both parents, or self-identification. The wide range of minority population estimates, combined with significant prejudice against some minorities, suggests that fear of discrimination may lead many people to avoid public disclosure of minority-based identities and instead attempt to pass as members of the majority group.

The discrepancies between population estimates are most obvious in the case of the Roma, Hungary's largest minority group. Figures from the 1990 census, which relied on self-reporting ethnicity, indicated a Roma population of 142,683 when the selection criterion was ethnicity, but a significantly lower number (48,072) when the criterion was mother tongue (Ligeti, 2000, pp. 40, 42). Results from subsequent surveys using alternative indicators, such as being labeled 'Roma' by non-Roma, reveal a much higher number, nearly half a million (Havas et al, 1995; Mészáros, 1995). Many researchers consider the latter a more accurate estimate, and the country's NGOs (non-governmental organizations) agree that Roma make up somewhere between 4.5% (Havas et al, 1995) and 7% (van Driel, 1999) of the country's current population (i.e. about 500,000-700,000).

Roma have been the minority group most discriminated against in Hungary, as attested by several surveys published since the collapse of socialism (Lendvay & Szabó, 1994; Postma, 1996; Székelyi et al, 2001). Their demographic, historical, and cultural characteristics are very distinct from the profile of the rest of Hungary's population, including other minorities (Postma, 1996). Whereas population numbers in general have been decreasing for the past three decades in Hungary (Havas et al, 1995), high fertility among Roma women has resulted in a much younger Roma population. Roma under the age of 15 constitute around 35-40% of the entire Roma population, and those above 60 only 4-5% (equivalent figures for the country as a whole are 20% and 19%). This means that nearly half the Roma population in Hungary is school-aged. Yet, despite this, Roma children suffer the most from neglect within the Hungarian educational system. Of Magyar children who complete the eight years of elementary school, approximately half go on to secondary school, while only 3% of Roma children continue their education (Havas et al, 1995). This has drastic effects on the life outcomes of Roma. In the South-Transdanubian region of Hungary, for example, unemployment rates for Roma are approximately 90% and illiteracy is widespread (van Driel, 1999, p. 173). The quality of life for Roma is significantly lower than for other groups in Hungary (Havas et al, 1995). For various reasons, Roma

children not only tend to fail in education, but are also over-represented in terms of unemployment, poverty, and life outcome (compare Kovai & Zombory, 2002). This failure can be attributed to several factors, including cultural and structural patterns, which limit the potentialities of Roma throughout their lives. Part of the problem is structural – in the education system itself – but another important aspect is cultural; for example, how minorities are represented within cultural discourse.

### The Cultural: the Hungarian National Core Curriculum

During the communist regime and up until 1993, the Hungarian educational system was centrally administered. What was taught in schools, how subjects were taught, and what educational tools or materials were to be used was determined by a central educational board at the Ministry of Culture. General and specific pedagogic goals, as well as the ideology in which education was embedded, were established by this national agency. Every school at all levels had to comply strictly with these prescriptions and there was little leeway for local class-specific alterations.

Change came in 1993 with a new educational policy, which introduced the concept of a descriptive national core curriculum designed to replace the existing, strongly prescriptive curriculum. As a result of the curricular reform, schools and educators are now provided with general guidelines only, and local schools and individual teachers are granted more freedom in their decisions about specific content and form of instruction. The NCC (Nemzeti Alaptanterv, 1995) identifies 10 substantive areas that accommodate all the individual school subjects that had been employed in education in the past:

1. Mother tongue and literature (Hungarian grammar and literature; in minority schools: minority language and literature)
2. Modern foreign language
3. Mathematics
4. Humans and society
5. Humans and nature
6. Our planet and our environment
7. Arts
8. Informatics
9. Practical living (health and nutrition)
10. Physical education and sports

These areas are weighed according to their importance, and each field is assigned a certain percentage value at which it should be represented in the local curriculum. Within these larger content areas, schools can decide which subjects will be taught at each grade and which textbooks will be used. In this way, the NCC sets a framework to guide and lead

practitioners in their teaching, while enabling local systems to achieve NCC goals independently.[2]

The structural reform that gave schools and teachers greater freedom in making local educational decisions was a necessary and natural step for Hungary as a new democracy. So was ridding its national curriculum of Soviet-style political and ideological biases, and instead orienting itself towards European humanistic traditions as the foundation and guiding principle of Hungarian education. A logical and much-needed part of curricular reform was to recognize and embrace the diversity that has long characterized Hungarian classrooms and Hungarian society as a whole. Based on progressive structural developments and reflecting a more humanistic perspective, one would expect the NCC not only to emphasize multicultural education, but also to explicitly address its goals and how they can and should be achieved. The importance of such explicitness is all the more relevant because the NCC serves as a blueprint that guides not only educators but also schoolbook writers and publishers. Only a pervasive and specific treatment of multicultural aspects in the core curriculum can ensure that multiculturalism will be an integral part of everyday teaching practices.

### Methods

We analysed the Hungarian NCC and primary school textbooks to highlight both structural and cultural reasons for the existence of prejudice among Magyar regarding Roma and other minorities. Analysis of the NCC was primarily aimed at identifying references to multicultural education. Specifically, we analysed the document to see the extent to which multiculturalism was a fundamental pillar of the academic content and pedagogic principles set forth. As we argue, a curriculum that serves only as a rough draft must emphasize and specify multicultural goals if Hungary's minorities are to be sufficiently and adequately represented in schoolbooks and lesson plans.

To see how multiculturalism was realized in primary teaching materials, we also examined reading and literature books used in the first and fourth grades. In the first grade, we decided to look at images, since these outweigh text in children's school textbooks at this age. We hoped to find diversity at the level of pictures and representation of people as a sign of multicultural awareness. Similarly, we decided to examine the reading books used in fourth grade to see what kind of texts of or about minority cultural groups students are presented with, and in what quantity. We hoped to find an adequate representation of the minority situation of the country in both proportions and contents.

A convenient sample representing more than 75% of first and fourth grade spelling and reading books was collected from three academic and public libraries in a medium-sized city in central Hungary. Using

'contingency analysis' (Holsti, 1969), content from 18 first grade spelling and reading books and nine fourth grade literature books was analysed for the presence of ethnic or national minorities or cultural 'others'. The authors, along with a third coder, independently coded school textbooks from the first and fourth grades. At the first grade level, we looked at two types of textbooks: spelling books and books about children's environment and the surrounding world (i.e. world books). In the spelling books, we limited our analysis to colour images of human figures. We did not count any specific historical images or characters, nor did we count any anthropomorphized animal figures. Figures' faces had to be at least half visible to be counted; figures drawn from behind or with hair or clothing that concealed the face were excluded. Series of images such as a comic strip that focused on the same character(s) were only counted once. In the world books, we looked both at illustrated figures and at figures in photographs, but only those that were in colour (there were no photographs in the spelling books). Like the spelling books, we did not count any specific historical figures. Similarly, we did not count figures whose faces were concealed or not visible.

Figures were coded into three categories: 'White'; 'Non-White'; or 'Ambiguous.' 'White' was defined as one who physically conforms to Magyar, Caucasian or Anglo-Saxon typifications. 'Non-White' was defined as one who does not physically conform to Magyar, Caucasian or Anglo-Saxon typifications, including African, Asian, Hispanic or Latino, Pacific Islander, Roma, etc. 'Ambiguous' was defined as one whose ethnicity could not be determined based solely on the image or photograph in the schoolbook. Typically the skin tone of an ambiguous character appeared different from that of other figures in the image, but no other ethnic markers were evident, such as Turkish shoes or a turban.[3] In cases of 'Non-White' and 'Ambiguous', we noted the circumstances under which the figure was presented. While 'Non-Whites' appeared both as cartoon figures and in colour photographs, the ethnicities attributed to some figures were based on the context within which the figure appeared in the schoolbook, while other attributes were based on the interpretive repertoires of two Hungarian coders.

For fourth grade textbooks, the Hungarian author and a second Hungarian coder looked at reading books and coded reading texts along two axes. Along the first axis, we categorized texts by genre and divided them into three subgroups: Genre 1, ballads, folk tales, myths, folksongs and folk-rhymes; Genre 2, classic literature (including all fictional writings with an identifiable author); and Genre 3, other, non-fictional texts (descriptive passages about animals, the physical world, historical events). Among the sample of fourth grade literature books were 42 texts from the Bible. We decided to exclude these texts from analysis, as the ethnicizing of such texts is problematic for children; rather, they are representations of the Christian world in general.

Along the second axis, we categorized texts by their culture of origin, whereby texts were assigned to one of four categories: texts of Magyar origin; texts originating from one of Hungary's ethnic/national minority groups; texts originating from a culture considered to be related to the Magyar people; and texts produced by other, non-Magyar-related foreign cultures. In our decisions, we relied first on information provided by the author of the book with regard to the origin of the texts. Second, we scanned each text to identify specific themes or the ethnic identity of main characters. This was necessary because the origin of a text was not always a valid indicator of its topic. This especially held true for the third category of genre, descriptive texts. Passages written by Magyar authors sometimes provided information about different cultures. In these cases, the theme decided to which category a text was to be assigned.

### Representing Culture in the NCC

The first chapter of the NCC explicates the cultural and humanistic assumptions that support the document, as well as the underlying pedagogic principles, while the remaining chapters deal with content requirements. According to the first chapter, the NCC was shaped by value systems represented in various national and international treaties and conventions, such as the Basic Human Rights and Children's Rights Agreement or the Agreement about the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities. While claiming a strong dedication to European humanistic traditions and emphasizing the importance of Hungary's link to the rest of the continent, the NCC places heavy emphasis on the cultivation of national traditions and on the development of a strong feeling of national identity and belonging, not only among Magyars but among all cultural groups in Hungary. The NCC also claims to promote openness and tolerance towards other cultures, as well as to develop an appreciation of the culture, traditions and lifestyles of other peoples. Further, it touches upon the issue of minority schools and grants a large degree of freedom in the preservation of ethnic identities, including instruction in the minority language, cultivation of traditions, customs, and music, and teaching about the history of the minority culture. However, these freedoms involve minority students in minority schools or programmes only, and there is no mention of minority students' rights within mainstream Hungarian school settings. Teaching about ethnic minorities and their cultures thus is far from assured in mainstream schools.

The NCC supports, at least in principle, the notion of multicultural education. But when it comes to detailed descriptions of requirements for substantive learning areas, a multicultural component is less apparent. Of the ten substantive areas, only in three is there any mention of other cultures, and even these are very brief, superficial and clichéd.[4] To mention just a few examples: of the educational goals to be achieved by

the end of the sixth grade in 'Modern Foreign Language', the NCC states that 'Students should become interested in the life and culture of other peoples' (p. 50).[5] What exactly this entails remains unstated. 'Culture' is reified, yet left as an abstraction: there are no guidelines regarding what constitutes culture, nor how students should be introduced to it, nor to what extent. As a minimum requirement in the content area 'Humans and Society', by the end of the fourth grade students are expected to 'list ethnic groups and a few nationalities' (p. 82), presumably those living in Hungary, although this is not made explicit. In the category 'Arts', children encounter other cultures in two different areas. For instance, music instruction should include songs of national and ethnic minorities (p. 173). General content requirements of visual arts instruction also refer to 'observing some old, folk objects also through some non-European examples (e.g. an igloo)' and 'comparing objects relating to the same activity from different cultures (e.g. a fork and chopsticks)' (p. 188). Most importantly, however, while these are made part of instruction, they are not part of the skills and abilities required to move on to the next instructional level.

Overall, reference to other cultures in the NCC is vague, lacks any systematic pattern and does not pervade the document. Whenever there is mention of the inclusion of other cultures, it generally involves transmission of facts; there is no suggestion that critical engagement should occur at all. Given the fact that the NCC serves as a draft or model from which local schools prepare their detailed syllabi, if minorities and other cultures are dealt with so randomly at the macro level, it is no surprise that the multicultural component is not being adequately addressed in teaching situations. Another concern we wish to raise is the way in which culture is treated conceptually within the NCC. The document is written with a humanist bias of what culture is. Culture appears to refer to music, visual arts, and other 'high' cultural artifacts. This is a one-sided view of culture that avoids engaging the more mundane aspects of culture – values, behavioral norms and rituals – that guide everyday experiences of minority group members.

### Literature in the First and Fourth Grades

The teaching of Hungarian grammar and literature shares this tendency. According to the NCC, this area should constitute 32-40% of the total available teaching time, a considerable amount. However, the NCC does not make any reference to other cultures or ethnic groups in its description of requirements for 'Hungarian Grammar and Literature'. We thus looked in the *Keretanterv* (curricular framework), which provides a more detailed and elaborate list of educational goals (Ministry of Education, 2003).[6] No discussion of non-Magyar cultures appears in the curricular framework under 'Mother Tongue and Literature' for the first

and second grades. This may be understandable, as students' abilities to read are still limited at that level, and rhymes or children's poems that are familiar to them in content or metre may be a more suitable choice. However, Hungarian literature and grammar classes constitute the core and bulk of students' academic focus in the first four years, and the desired multicultural awareness referred to in the NCC guidelines should be practised in some observable form. At the third and fourth grades, reference to other cultures appears under the heading of 'Reading Literature and Comprehensive Reading'. Students are supposed to get acquainted with classical and folk literature of foreign cultures, as well as that of ethnic groups in Hungary (pp. 9, 11). However, all reading material primarily supports the development of reading techniques and the practice of basic literary analysis. There is no suggestion that students should critically engage foreign texts or compare them with native literature.

### Cultural Representations in First Grade Textbooks

At the first grade level, we analysed 18 books containing 1936 images. In these images, we found 4045 human representations, of which 4026 were included in the final sample and analysed (see Table I).[7] Of the 4026 human representations, 3973 (98.7%) were coded 'White' and 53 (1.3%) were coded 'Non-White'.

A more detailed analysis of the 'Non-White' figures indicates the relative exclusion of national or ethnic minorities, in that only four figures out of the 53 'Non-Whites' represented a national or ethnic minority recognized by the State. Below, we give examples of the 53 'Non-Whites', focusing first on the two most visible minorities, Middle Eastern/Turkish and African, and second on the only minority recognized as a national or ethnic minority, Roma (see Table II for summary).

The images analysed usually accompanied a letter of the alphabet and were used to contextualize words that exemplified its use (e.g., an image of an apple next to the letter *a* and the word 'apple'). Although many images did not include human figures, many did. Other images accompanied folk tales. The most frequently observed non-white figure was that of a Middle Eastern or Turkish person. This category accounted for 23 out of the 53 non-white figures (43.4%).[8] One image contained a male Turkish figure wearing a turban, holding a lamp and flying on a carpet. This image was presented alongside the letter *dzs* and the word *dzsinn* (genie). Another image showing two male Turks accompanied a Hungarian folk story. One Turk wore a turban while the other sported a shaved head and a handlebar moustache. Both wore vests without shirts. A third image showed a male Turk selling a coat to a family of anthropomorphized hedgehogs. The Turk was set apart by being the only human in the image. In a fourth image, a young male Turk was shown

wearing shoes with curled toes and a hat with a tassel hanging from it. The image accompanied a Hungarian folk story entitled 'A Török és a Tehenek' ('The Turk and the Cows').

Schoolbook	'White'	'Non-White'	'Ambiguous'	Total
1	247	3	–	250
2	115	–	–	115
3	168	4	2	174
4	319	6	1	326
5	118	2	–	120
6	36	2	–	38
7	325	–	–	325
8	133	5	1	139
9	87	–	–	87
10	330	3	1	334
11	800	4	4	808
12	135	–	4	139
13	128	5	1	134
14	165	3	2	170
15	93	5	1	99
16	266	4	–	270
17	316	5	–	321
18	192	2	2	196
Total	3973	53	19	4045

Table I. Breakdown of human representations in first grade school textbooks.

Race or ethnicity	No. of occurrences
African	9
Chinese	6
Hispanic/Latino	3
Indian (East)	1
Middle Eastern/Turkish	23
Native American	4
Roma (Gypsy)	4
Other 'Non-White'	3
Total	53

Table II. Breakdown of 'Non-White' figures in first grade school textbooks.

Eight Africans (15.1% of 'Non-White' images) were represented, in seven images from six different school textbooks. The first image showed a black male in a suit playing a saxophone. The image accompanied the letter *sz* and the word *szaxofon* (saxophone). The second image showed three men in robes, two of whom were white and the third black, and accompanied a Christmas story. They represented the Three Wise Men who visited the baby Jesus. The third image included three Africans

wearing loincloths, two carrying baskets on their heads. The image was presented with a story entitled 'Afrikai ház' ('African House'), which described how Africans build their houses out of mud. The fourth image consisted of a black male with a Turkish male and a white female. The black male had exaggerated lips, the Turkish male was wearing a turban, and the white female had long, blonde hair. All three figures were standing in a jungle with a mountain in the background. The image accompanied the letter *dzs* and the words *maharadzsa* (maharajah), *Kilimandzsáró* (Kilimanjaro), and *dzsungel* (jungle). The fifth image accompanied a poem entitled 'Csak egy van' ('There's Only One'), which described each person in the world as unique and special. The image showed three girls, one African, one Asian, and one white. Similarly, the sixth image, entitled 'Az Ember' ('Humans'), included three males: one African, one Asian, and one white. Finally, an image of a male African figure wearing a loincloth with a bone in his hair went with a story entitled 'Farsang' ('Carnival').[9]

Four of the 53 non-whites (7.5%) found in first grade school textbooks were coded as Roma, represented by three images in three different school textbooks. The first two images illustrated a story entitled 'A Cigány és a Szél' ('The Gypsy and the Wind'), a fable about a Roma boy who upsets the sun and the rain but befriends the wind. Each image showed a male Roma figure dressed in tattered clothes with patches and holes in his shirt and trousers. In one image he had no shoes. The third image was of a Roma man and a white woman standing together as groom and bride in a wedding ceremony and accompanied the letter *n* and the word 'nősül' (marrying a woman). The fourth image was a photograph of a young Roma boy watering houseplants. There was nothing otherwise remarkable about the photograph.

#### Cultural Representations in Fourth Grade Textbooks

We analysed a total of 1,156 written passages in nine different fourth grade literature books. Of these texts, 993 were of Magyar origin (85.8%), 34 were by minorities living in Hungary (2.9%), 26 stemmed from various (mostly Asian/Uralic) peoples said to be related to Magyars (2.2%), and 103 originated from other foreign cultures (8.9%). Table III shows the distribution of origins and the number of texts in the three genre categories.

We first examined how the 34 'minority' texts were distributed among the 13 minority groups of Hungary. In the first genre (folk tales and folk rhymes), 23 texts represented a minority culture. Out of these, seven were of German and six of Greek origin. Four texts had Roma origins; there were three Polish, two Slovak and one Romanian story. In the second genre (fictional writings and classic literature), ten out of the eleven texts were by German authors; the remaining text was a piece of



Polish literature. In sum, German texts constituted 50% of all minority cultural texts. There were no texts in the third genre category (descriptive texts) that dealt with a minority group living in Hungary. Table IV illustrates these findings.

Origin of text	Folk literature	Classic literature	Non-fictional texts	Total
Magyar	148	634	211	993
Minorities in Hungary	23	11	–	34
Related cultures	25	–	1	26
Other foreign cultures	44	47	12	103
Total	240	692	224	1156

Table III. Breakdown of fourth grade texts by genre and origin.

Origin of text	Folk literature	Classic literature	Non-fictional texts
German	7	10	–
Greek	6	–	–
Roma	4	–	–
Polish	3	1	–
Slovak	2	–	–
Romanian	1	–	–
Total	23	11	0

Table IV. Breakdown of fourth grade minority texts by genre and origin.

The minority texts in the nine school textbooks were unevenly distributed. Four books did not contain any folk tales or other folk literature from minority groups. The 11 texts in the second genre (10 German and one Polish) came from six different school textbooks. Table V shows the sources of the 34 minority texts, in both genres.

The content of folk stories and tales were similar. One German folk tale was about a poor boy who, through luck and courage, makes a fortune and becomes a king. The protagonist of another German story was a beautiful, hard-working but poor girl with whom a prince falls in love. The king forbids his son to marry her but the girl's cleverness and love for the prince reward her in the end and they get married. One Slovakian folk tale tells the story of a rich merchant who is forced to surrender his loving daughter to a monstrous animal, who in reality is a rich and handsome man under a spell. The tender care of the daughter relieves the man from his curse and they live happily ever after. Jan the Strong, the main character of a Polish story, comes from a poor family but makes his fortune through his physical power and bravery. The main

characters of Roma folk stories are usually poor but clever males who always know a way out of a thorny situation. Unlike the other stories in the genre, however, they do not end up with wealth or 'happiness'.

Schoolbook	German	Greek	Roma	Polish	Slovak	Romanian
1	3	6	–	–	–	–
2	6	–	–	4	1	–
3	–	–	–	–	–	–
4	3	–	–	–	–	–
5	1	–	3	–	–	1
6	–	–	–	–	–	–
7	2	–	1	–	–	–
8	2	–	–	–	1	–
9	–	–	–	–	–	–

Table V. Distribution of minority-origin texts in fourth grade school textbooks.

### Prejudice towards Roma

Although research on prejudice in Hungary does not abound, existing studies show that Roma are the minority group most discriminated against today in Hungary. Our analysis of school textbooks suggests that material cultural objects play an important part in the relationship between education and prejudice. Our position is shared by Radó (2001), who claims that:

[d]uring the past 50 years or so, the Roma population in Hungary has lived, similarly to other minorities, in a kind of communication ghetto. Neither the media nor the educational system act [*sic*] as if Hungary is a multilingual, multicultural country. This is especially applicable to the Roma population which, on a reading of the textbooks, simply do [*sic*] not exist at all. (p. 269)

A comprehensive study by Lendvay & Szabó (1994) measured prejudice in adult Magyars toward ethnic and other minorities sociometrically. Results yielded a hierarchy of minority acceptability among Magyar respondents. Ethnic Germans were the most welcomed minority culture in all relationship types, ethnic Hungarians from Romania, Jews, and refugees from the Balkan War occupied the middle range, and members of non-white minority groups such as Africans, Chinese and Roma were the most socially isolated, with the Roma at the very bottom of the hierarchy. Most participants reported not wanting to engage in any type of relationship with members of these minorities.

A study with a similar research design was conducted among 14-year-old school students (Szabó & Örkény, 1995). Part of their investigation aimed at measuring the level of multicultural knowledge students had attained during their eight years of obligatory elementary



education. Researchers also wanted to obtain information about students' attitudes towards various minority groups in Hungary. They concluded that, in general, 14-year-old students were more accepting and open towards minorities than adult participants in various attitude studies. However, a substantial percentage (58%) of students would not want to sit next to any member of a minority group, with Roma topping the list of unwelcome minorities. 15% of respondents reported an unwillingness to sit next to Roma, but were willing to sit next to any other listed minority. Subsequent analysis (Örkény & Szabó, 2001) showed that, regardless of the type of secondary school attended, nearly two-thirds of all students surveyed expressed an unwillingness to have a Roma person sit next to them in class (60-61%).

### Magyar Children's Cultural Knowledge

Our thesis has been that the material culture of the Hungarian educational system does not provide a context where positive interaction with images of minority cultures can occur. It is thus necessary to consider the social and cultural sources of information on which children rely when expressing attitudes toward minorities. In order to measure the multicultural knowledge of students, Örkény & Szabó (2001; Szabó & Örkény, 1995) examined a great variety of topics, focusing on issues such as Hungary's geo-political situation, minorities in Hungary and Magyar minorities abroad, and historical figures and contemporary celebrities of Magyar and minority origin. They found that students displayed a very low level of multicultural knowledge and that their knowledge was unsystematic. For example, of students who reported a willingness to sit next to a Roma in a classroom, more than 50% reported being unsure whether they actually liked Roma people. When asked to name famous personalities (past or present) who were Roma, 84% could not answer. Further responses to survey questions revealed that students had difficulties differentiating between concepts such as nationality, ethnicity and citizenship. The researchers attributed the children's inability to name famous minority people in part to this confusion, while not ruling out a lack of factual knowledge as an explanation.

Overall, the findings suggested that eighth graders' multicultural knowledge was limited and unsystematic. As the researchers concluded, Hungarian schools do not have multicultural socialization strategies that incorporate knowledge and concepts about minorities; nor do they offer models of individual and collective behaviour toward such groups. The lack of knowledge about minorities reflects the educational culture within which children are socialized. Not surprisingly, researchers found that '41% of the respondents have a consistently negative pattern, whereas only 4% have consistently positive attitudes toward Gypsies' (Örkény & Szabó, 2001, p. 146). Since the general public is not empowered to assist

younger generations in building a consistent multicultural worldview, students are left alone to cope with issues concerning ethnicity, nationality and how they relate to the majority and minority populations they encounter in everyday life.

### School Textbooks and Culture

From the perspective of elementary school textbooks, Hungary appears to be a monocultural society. Haas defines monoculturalism as 'the practice of catering to the dominant or mainstream culture, providing second-class treatment or no special consideration at all to persons of non-mainstream cultures' (1992, p. 161; cited in Ricento & Wiley, 2002, p. 1).

In first grade school textbooks there was some introduction to foreign cultures, through the use of specific words as well as descriptions of children's environments. Children viewed images and learned words for Turks, Chinese, and Native Americans, among others. Yet acknowledgement of the cultural diversity within Hungary is literally non-existent in school textbooks. In only four of more than 4,000 figures were national or ethnic minorities represented (less than 0.1%). Of the four, two figures were visually marked as poor while the other two had neutral characteristics. Equally important, of the 18 first grade school textbooks, four contained no representations of minorities. The pictures in school textbooks provide representations of statuses that children are likely to have already encountered by the time they enter elementary school: doctors, police, teachers, firemen, smiths, cooks, mechanics, and so on. In our study, the figures that filled these important social statuses were invariably white. In first grade books, there was only one instance in which a contemporary status was represented by an ethnic minority: a quite exceptional image of a Roma man in an intercultural marriage.

In the fourth grade school textbooks we analysed, there were no descriptive texts about any of Hungary's national/ethnic minorities. Although folk tales are an important factor in learning about other cultures, the folk stories analysed here were very similar in plot and the characters were highly comparable, not only among minority texts but also to mainstream Hungarian folk stories. One could argue that they do not sufficiently increase students' awareness of other cultures living in their country or provide adequate knowledge about the everyday realities of these minority groups. Descriptive texts dealing with real people and events would be more suitable to achieve an awareness of cultural diversity among Magyar students while conveying a sense of importance to minority students, and at the same time providing them with appropriate role models. School textbooks with passages describing the origin of minorities and portraying famous personalities from these

groups, as well as texts about important customs of minority groups, are vital in realizing a multicultural ethos in elementary education.

### Conclusions

By and large, minorities are either marginalized or excluded in educational discourse in Hungary. Cultural objects such as school textbooks are important for understanding hegemonic constructions of the social order (Grauerholz & Pescosolido, 1989b). This is reflected in the sample of school textbooks in our research, as well as in the most recent contemporary popular and scholarly histories of Hungary (Csorba et al, 1999; Molnár, 2001). As Jean-Pierre Liégeois (1999, p. 146) notes, 'education can validate ... Roma communities, propagating positive counter images to ... predominant negative stereotypes. Learning together and learning from and about each other cultivates the insight and understanding essential to respect.' Unfortunately, neither the picture books nor the literature books in our research provided realistic representations of the roles that national and ethnic minorities should aspire to. It is easy for us to imagine that minority children might feel displaced not only in the classroom, but also in Hungarian society, as a result of learning from such books. Magyar children suffer the same effect inasmuch as they are not presented with depictions of national or ethnic minorities in socially valued statuses. Rather, simplified and stereotyped images and stories 'present such a narrow view of reality that they must violate the child's own knowledge of a rich and complex world' (Weitzman et al, 1972, p. 1148).

Recently, changes have been made to the processes through which school textbooks are produced and approved for use in public schools, for example in Taiwan (Chen, 2002). Unfortunately, Hungarian school textbooks suggest a lack of attention to multicultural education at the national level. In the case of minorities such as the Roma, this lack of attention exacerbates an already desperate situation. There is a debate whether part of the problem lies in the Roma culture itself (van Driel, 1999; Radó, 2001), but the Hungarian education system shares the blame, in terms of both inadequate multicultural programming and monocultural textbooks. Although the NCC provides an open framework from which teachers can attend to multicultural classrooms and minority students, teaching materials continue to represent minorities in narrowly defined, stereotypical ways. We contend that 'as long as the image of the Roma population remains a product of an abnormally under-informed everyday consciousness, the integration of the minority group will remain a mirage. In this sense, multicultural majority education is at least as important as the minority education of Roma students' (Radó, 2001, p. 269). Because of the dialectic relationship between cultural objects and the social world, changing the cultural representation of minorities is necessary as part of

the larger goal of equality of outcomes for all Hungarian children. The NCC must engage minority education explicitly in order to ensure that all children receive a less biased education. Multicultural education should become a core element of teacher training curricula, and the material culture upon which teachers rely must be changed to reflect the growing global concerns of minorities. Only in this way can Hungary hope to build a peaceful, multicultural citizenry.

### Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this article was presented at the 2002 meeting of the Southeastern Association of Educational Studies in Atlanta, GA. Research was facilitated by a research grant awarded to Patrick Williams from the McClure Fund for the Study of World Affairs, Center for International Education, the University of Tennessee.

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### Notes

- [1] The authors contributed equally to this article and are listed alphabetically.
- [2] The research published here focused on the NCC that was in effect from 1998 to 2004. During that time modifications were proposed, and in September 2004 a revised edition was introduced which only affected the first grade, rather than all grades simultaneously. The 2004 NCC must be implemented at all levels by 2017. The 10 substantive areas remain unchanged, and we were unable to identify any significant improvements in the 2004 NCC regarding the multicultural component of educational goals and guidelines compared to the 1998 NCC.
- [3] The categories we chose could be problematized by noting that some ethnic minority groups in Hungary are white, for example ethnic Germans. However, our coding focus was specifically on the Roma minority in the country. Ethnic Germans and Austrians, for example, have mixed to a far greater extent into Hungarian culture than non-white groups such as Roma. Since Roma are usually differentiated primarily through skin tone by ethnic Hungarians, our categorization scheme is sufficient for the task at hand.
- [4] In line with the focus of this article, the examples and analysis primarily involve the sections of the NCC that deal with requirements for grades 1-4.
- [5] All translations of the NCC are our own.

- [6] These documents, introduced in 2001, were the obligatory reference point besides the NCC for local schools until very recently. Based on a September 2003 modification of the 1993 Educational Policy, curricular frameworks are regarded as non-binding recommendations.
- [7] There were 19 'Ambiguous' figures, and more than 800 additional images either drawn in black-and-white or with faces mostly or totally concealed, all of which were excluded from the sample. In more than 99% of the excluded full-colour images, skin colour was visible on the neck, arms, or legs, and most had blond, red or brown hair. Nevertheless, they were excluded in order to maintain sample validity.
- [8] Because of the high frequency of Middle Eastern/Turkish figures, we describe only a sample here.
- [9] The sixth and seventh images described came from the same schoolbook. Each other image came from a different school textbook.

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