

**GENDER, “RACE”/ETHNICITY, CLASS AND THE  
INSTITUTION OF CHILD PROTECTION IN HUNGARY,  
1949-1956**

**Eszter Varsa**

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To Zsolt Vári, without  
whom  
this piece of research would  
not exist

## Abstract

My dissertation examines the regulation and practice of child protection in Hungary between 1949 and 1956. As intersectional research, it focuses on this field with attention to how historical processes informed the changing content of the categories of gender, “race”/ethnicity and class, and how child protection, in turn, reshaped these categories. I conceptualize the character of the pre-1956 Stalinist state by building on theories about the gender, “race”/ethnicity and class construction of welfare provisions, social control theories and the theory of the politics of need interpretation. I approach the state as a multi-layered entity defining and interpreting people’s needs at the levels of national policy-making and institutional practice also allowing for individual-level agency. I address in particular how, at these levels, child protection approached and acted on Roma, how gender roles were reconfigured, and how poverty was treated in early state socialist Hungary.

I pay specific attention to child protection constructing 1.) material need and the morality of productive work; 2.) sexuality, motherhood and family life, and finally; 3.) education. I argue that the introduction of a new welfare system in the early 1950s that related welfare provisions to employment, was accompanied by a shift in the definition of need manifest in child protection from 1953-1954 onwards. Hereby, the preconditions of children’s placement in state care for material reasons shifted from a postwar wider understanding of need to inability to work. Based on the 630 child protection cases of both non-Romani and Romani families from three different locations in Hungary in the early 1950s, I amend sociologist Lynne Haney’s description of early state socialist Hungarian welfare politics by highlighting the construction of motherhood as central to the family-centered regulative welfare politics of the state. Child protection shows that children provided an access for case workers to families,

and targeted primarily mothers whom they considered responsible for reproducing the family. This regulative approach aiming to shape women into “proper” mothers, at the same time, intersected with efforts towards the “racial”/ethnic assimilation of Roma in Hungary. Romani mothers had a special role in adhering to and transmitting a communist morality of work and family life.

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## Chapter 1. Introduction

In March 1953 Mrs. Szabó, the local council child protection officer at K., was greatly disappointed to learn that the mother of the two-and-a-half-year old Erzsike, did not consent to her daughter's adoption. She was convinced that Erzsike's foster parents, who wished to adopt her, were a very decent couple. The husband earned over 1000 Forints a month at a state company, and having no children of their own, the couple, living in K., already spent a lot of money on Erzsike and adored her.<sup>1</sup> They were raising her as if she were their own child. Mrs. Szabó's disappointment and belief that the best interest of Erzsike was to become part of this family grew even stronger when Erzsike's mother, Margit, inquired about the whereabouts of her daughter. By this time, Mrs. Szabó had already obtained Erzsike's father's consent to the adoption and discovered that he had a "disorderly family background" and did not financially support his child. Armed with this knowledge and some further background information about Erzsike's family, Mrs. Szabó wanted to secure her proper upbringing. She knew that Erzsike was a Romani girl born out of wedlock, and that her parents, although not married, had four children. From Erzsike's case file she also knew that about a year and a half earlier her father had left the family. In her difficult position and upon the recommendation of the local Social Policy Committee, Margit placed her eight-month-old daughter in state care. The decision of the Guardianship Authorities in August 1951 stated that Erzsike "hindered Margit from finding employment."<sup>2</sup> Knowing that Erzsike had been declared both materially and morally abandoned Mrs. Szabó decided that she was not going to inform Margit about where her daughter was placed. The case stretched on over several years. By early 1956 it was clear that Margit had still not been informed about her daughter's residence and she was

<sup>1</sup> This counted as a very decent salary at the time. The average monthly income of industrial and construction workers that were the best earning areas of employment was 1,059 and 987 Forints a month, respectively. *Statistikai Évkönyv, 1949-1955* [*Statistical Yearbook, 1949-1955*]. Budapest: KSH, 1957, 58.

<sup>2</sup> Archives of the Child Protection Institution and Children's Home of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County (CPISZ), 1949/1952. This and all following translations from Hungarian to English were done by the author.

“bothering case workers all the time” by “constantly asking about the whereabouts of her child.”<sup>3</sup> Finally, Erzsike’s adoption was declared in spite of her mother’s lack of consent. The Guardianship Authorities’ decision stated that it would not be good to grant Margit custody of her child because “she could not provide for her upbringing” and secure that Erzsike would be raised “in the right way. She had four children who were not looked after properly, had ragged clothes and were filthy. Their flat consisted out of a single room and was on the verge of collapse. They had no furniture except for a bed, but had no bedclothes or any other clothes.”<sup>4</sup>

The story of Erzsike’s adoption, taken from the material that formed the basis of my dissertation, is a dramatic example of the existence of gender-, “race”/ethnicity- and class-specific meanings behind the working of child protection in Hungary in the first half of the 1950s. They are exactly these meanings that I set out to learn more about when I embarked on my research in the field of child protection. My dissertation thus deals with how gender, “race”/ethnicity, and class were constructed via the regulation and practice of child protection in Hungary between 1949 and 1956, and how in turn these regulations and practices were informed by preconceptions about gender, “race”/ethnicity, and class in this time period.<sup>5</sup>

Why would anyone care about what went on in child protection over fifty years ago? Child protection generally raises, and is mainly associated with contemporary methodological and

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<sup>3</sup> CPISZ, 1949/1952.

<sup>4</sup> CPISZ, 1949/1952.

<sup>5</sup> I operate with the notions of gender, “race”/ethnicity and class as socially constructed categories. By “class” I do not refer to the Marxian sense of this category but to a variety of characteristics of a layer or group in society, including type of employment, education, and living conditions. “Ethnicity” is usually applied to groups in society having an internally shared history and culture. “Race” is based on perceived physical differences and is most commonly assigned externally, implying differences in worth. As both hold true about Roma in Hungarian society, I use both “race” and “ethnicity” in my analysis to emphasize that they are closely linked and not mutually exclusive categories. I place “race” in quotation marks to distance myself from the biological connotations attached to the word, see: Stephen Cornell and Douglas Hartmann. *Ethnicity and Race: Making Identities in a Changing World*. Thousand Oaks, London: Pine Forge Press, 1988.

professional issues. Why look at its past, especially in a period that, if mentioned at all, is usually viewed as the “dark age” of child protection history. Initially, my curiosity was triggered by one of such contemporary issues, a hot spot in the field, concerning the present overrepresentation of Romani children in residential homes. Since I wanted to know how this situation came about, I had to go back to the beginnings of children’s large-scale placement in residential care, and that took me back to the early 1950s. The various challenges that faced me once in the field I discuss in Chapter 2. For now, what is important about my material is that child protection had important functions as an institution of welfare provision and education. This was especially so in the first half of the 1950s, when the effects of World War II were still lingering on and visible in the number of orphaned and half-orphaned children, and the general poverty of the population. Child protection offered welfare support to needy parents, and shelter and accommodation to destitute children. Children in residential homes were looked after day and night by educators and usually attended the primary schools within these institutions. Child protection institutions also tried to arrange children’s secondary school studies. Child protection thus served educational functions as well. With the beginning of women’s large scale entrance to the labor force in the early 1950s there was an increasing need for child care services that available facilities were not always able to meet. Working parents and case workers trying to assist women in finding a job turned to child protection institutions for assistance. Another question that arose while looking at my material was to what extent case workers and various authorities in touch with parents were also trying to regulate the lives of their clients.

Based on the availability of archival material and guided by information from my personal interviews, I focused my research specifically on child protection constructing 1.) material need and the morality of productive work; 2.) sexuality, motherhood and family life, and

finally; 3.) education. Related to the construction of gender, “race”/ethnicity, and class through these three processes, I address in particular how, at the level of national policy-making and institutional practice, child protection approached and acted on Roma, how gender roles were reconfigured and finally, how poverty was treated in early state socialist Hungary.

Let me briefly summarize my main empirical findings in these three fields. Concerning child protection as an institution constructing material need and the morality of productive work, my findings mainly concern the issue of poverty and welfare work concerning the needy in the early 1950s. Since, as it has been underlined by numerous analysts, poverty was declared eliminated and was not discussed in state socialist Hungary, I also hereby acknowledge that there was a difference between ideology and practice. Talking about welfare work in the 1950s might not sound straightforwardly logical since Hungarian sociologists usually describe this time period as one characterized by the disappearance of all types of welfare work. In case children were declared materially abandoned/endangered and placed in state care for so-called material reasons, parents were exempt from contributing financially to the costs of state care. Families turned to this option in an attempt to strengthen their financial situation at a time when around 70 per cent of the population struggled with some form of poverty. I therefore identify the placement of children in state care for material reasons as a form of poverty alleviation.

This raises a number of questions about how need was defined and whose need was alleviated. I argue that the introduction of a new welfare system in the early 1950s that related welfare provisions to employment, was accompanied by a shift in the definition of material need manifest in child protection from 1953-1954 onwards. The preconditions of children’s

placement in state care for material reasons shifted from a postwar wider understanding of need to inability to work. In the early 1950s, in spite of women's large-scale entrance into the labor force and speedy industrialization, employment opportunities were not equally available to all. The family background of children declared materially abandoned/endangered confirms sociologist Lynne Haney's findings that balancing employment and family responsibilities placed single mothers in an especially difficult position.<sup>6</sup> Erzsike's placement in state care in 1951 illustrates well that case workers were trying to enable not only non-Romani but Romani single mothers as well to enter the labor force. This highlights in the first place the extent to which women were identified as active wage earners at the time. The fact that Erzsike was placed in state care in order not to hinder her mother from finding employment also suggests that there might not have been other options available, such as crèches. Child protection regulations and practice not only reflect the increased responsibilities of women as productive workers as well as those responsible for social reproduction but testify to case workers efforts towards regulating their lives in these two fields. At the same time, we should not forget that Erzsike's case workers were non-Roma, a fact that might have played into their preference for state care as opposed to finding out about other alternatives available in Margit's wider family network.

Embedded in Erzsike's case is thus another question, concerning the regulative power of case workers at the time. For years Margit was denied information about the whereabouts of her child and finally, against her will, her daughter was placed out for adoption. What made case workers so secure about the correctness of their decision? The theoretical field of the relationship between the exercise of power and welfare services I deal with in greater detail in my next chapter. Based on my empirical findings about child protection as an institution of

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<sup>6</sup> Lynne Haney. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, 76-85.

moral control my answer to this question is related to the gendered regulation of young women and both Romani and non-Romani mothers via the placement of children in state care.

While fundamentally relying on Haney's conceptualization of welfare provisions in this dissertation, I also amend her description of early state socialist Hungarian welfare politics. Based on child protection regulations and cases of both non-Romani and Romani families in the early 1950s, I argue for the construction of motherhood already in this period as central to the family-centered regulative welfare politics of the state. As I point out in Chapter 5, children provided an access for case workers to families, and targeted primarily mothers whom they considered responsible for reproducing the family. This regulative approach aiming to shape women into "proper" mothers at the same time intersected with efforts towards the "racial"/ethnic assimilation of Roma. Romani mothers had a special role in adhering to and transmitting a communist morality of work and family life.

Another reason for state care besides material abandonment/endangerment was children's so-called moral abandonment/endangerment. I found that the values of communist morality that elevated family and work were translated into child protection regulations in terms of providing increased protection for single mothers and ensuring the complete legal equality of children born out of wedlock as well as emphasizing the centrality of the nuclear family. It was in the terrain of institutional practice that differences in the treatment of women came to light.

Emphasis on productive work is also the key to understanding the image of Roma constructed by the early state socialist practice of child protection. Roma were to assimilate into mainstream working class society by their employment in the state socialist sectors of

economy. At the same time, existing prejudices against Roma about their “unwillingness to work” contributed to seeing them in terms of work avoiders who needed to be educated about the necessity of participating in productive work. Romani mothers, like non-Roma were viewed as central to this process, disciplined by case workers towards “proper motherhood.”

Case files also showed that women’s long-term single motherhood with more than one child born out of wedlock induced case workers to lengthen children’s period of state care or place them in adoption. They used these forms of care to regulate such women’s behavior and lifestyle. The case files of children declared morally abandoned/endangered point to the existence of gendered differentiation behind the construction of both Romani and non-Romani mothers’ and children’s immorality. The latter is exemplified by the gendered understanding of children’s wandering in that young women were identified with sexual delinquency while in cases of boys’ wandering, there was no mention of such.

Finally, I also observed child protection as an institution of education. Here my focus fell on residential homes, where primary-school-age-children usually attended separate schools and spent the rest of their day under the supervision of educators in these homes. What really distinguished residential-care education from regular primary school education was an emphasis on labor, which was termed “education for work.” I argue that education for work, made up mostly of manual labor tasks, served to prepare children to be productive members of state socialist society. Through these work tasks children not only contributed to the maintenance of homes but were to internalize perseverance and punctuality, and the morality of work.

As Erzsike's case illustrated, child protection as a welfare institution, as an institution of moral control, and as I add by other examples in my text later on, also as an institution of education, was productive of gender, "race"/ethnicity, and class differentiation. Theoretically, my research therefore contributes to the field of the gender, "race"/ethnicity, and class construction of welfare provisions. The other theoretical field my research relates to concerns the relationship between state-provided welfare services and the exercise of power. There are also a number of methodological implications to my research. While I explain these in greater detail in the following chapter, it is necessary to mention now that I tried to combine gender, "race"/ethnicity, and class via the tool of intersectionality.

## **Chapter Outline**

After this brief introduction I proceed in Chapter 2 to discuss my theoretical contribution to the two fields my empirical research addresses. Here I provide an overview of the literature on the aforementioned two theoretical fields: the gender, "race"/ethnicity and class construction of welfare provisions, and the relationship between welfare services and the exercise of state power, and. Chapter 3 presents background information necessary for an understanding of my case study, which is situated in early state socialist Hungary; some basics about the long-term history of child protection, structural changes in the child protection system in the early 1950s and a reflection about my methodology. I devote special attention to the difficulties of carrying out intersectional research and the problems raised by identifying Romani clients. Each of my following research chapters focus on one of the three main subject areas I covered concerning the construction of gender, "race"/ethnicity and class in child protection in early state socialist Hungary. Accordingly, in Chapter 4, I analyze child protection as an institution constructing material need and the morality of productive work; in



Chapter 5, I focus on child protection as an institution constructing sexuality, motherhood and family life, and in Chapter 6, I look at child protection as an institution of education. In Chapters 4 and 5, the first half of my analysis observes the national regulation of child protection between 1949 and 1956. The second half of these two chapters concentrates on institutional practice based on 630 case files of children placed in state care for material and moral reasons and received by the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, Szolnok County and Szabolcs-Szatmár County between 1949 and 1956. Finally, in Chapter 6, I move from the field of analyzing children's inflow to state care to observing their education in residential homes. Here my analysis is based on national publications and educators' reflection about education for work. In my three main research chapters I also rely on a total of thirty personal interviews conducted with former residential home and child protection institution educators and directors, and representatives of child protection authorities as well as former residents of children's homes.

## Chapter 2. Theoretical Contribution and Methodology

In this chapter of my dissertation I discuss the theoretical fields my research addresses and then I present my data and methodology. This study of the institution of residential care in Hungary between 1949 and 1956, draws on theories about the gender, “race”/ethnicity and class construction of welfare provisions. My dissertation provides a glimpse of a particular section of child protection policies and practices. As intersectional research it examines this field with attention to how historical processes inform the changing content of the categories of gender, “race”/ethnicity and class, and how welfare practices, in turn, reshape these categories. Therefore, I address theories concerning the gender, “race”/ethnicity and class construction of welfare regimes, in particular related to welfare services aimed at single mothers and the social construction of work in state socialist Hungary.

The period between the rise into power of the Hungarian Workers’ Party in 1948 and the Revolution of 1956 is generally discussed as an era of Stalinist dictatorship with radical state intervention in all areas of everyday life. Children’s lives as so many times in history before became the targets of theories and practices aimed at the regulation of wider society and family life. Children’s well-being, in turn, was also used by the regime to justify its existence and actions. So far, mostly only one aspect of the role of social services in state socialist Hungary has been examined: their attachment to the exercise of power in this time period. I conceptualize the character of dictatorship in early state socialist Hungary via the lens of child protection by building on social control theories and the theory of the politics of need interpretation. Rather than accepting the overall and direct presence of state control in child protection or focusing only on how the state exercised power or governed its citizens I take a more inclusive look at this process by relying on the theory of need construction. Building on

critical theorist, Nancy Fraser's development and Lynne Haney's application of this theory to the case of state socialist Hungary, I approach the pre-1956 Stalinist state as a multi-layered entity that defines and interprets people's needs at the levels of national policy-making and institutional practice. Hereby, I not only take into consideration the national, policy-level construction of need via laws and regulations but also the possibility of negotiating need at institutional-level of practice by educators and institution personnel as well as at individual-level by parents and children. Conceptualizing the state as composed of multiple levels at which need is defined and interpreted allows me to both distance myself from theories of totalitarian state control and resist calling this period a welfare society.

## **2.1. The Gender, "Race"/Ethnicity and Class Construction of Welfare Provisions**

Concerning the character of welfare provisions in former Eastern European state socialist countries the most often posed question is to what extent they fit into theories of welfare state development and typologies of welfare and gender regimes worked out on basis of Western democracies. One of the earliest answers given to this question was that state socialist states could not be called welfare states at all because Soviet-type societies did not grant the civil and political rights that were fundamental to Marshall's definition of social rights.<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the basic logic of eligibility criteria differed in democratic and non-democratic states since in the latter, social provisions were not provided as rights but as "gifts" from a paternal state. Others worked around this dilemma by stating that in state socialist societies employment

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<sup>77</sup> Iván Szelényi and György Konrád. *The Intellectuals' Road to Class Power*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979, xv; Ferenc Fehér, Ágnes Heller, and György Márkus. *Dictatorship over Needs*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983, 24. They distanced themselves from calling Eastern European societies state capitalism. They underlined that the term was misleading because in state socialist countries private property was eliminated from the means of production, market mechanisms were reduced and the separation of economy and state was dissolved.

became the basis for citizenship.<sup>8</sup> Yet others pointed to feminist criticism of Marshall's concept, stressing the fact that historically women were mostly denied the status and rights of citizens.<sup>9</sup> In most cases, using the characteristics of Western and North American welfare state typologies scholars argued that former state socialist countries constituted special cases, such as "bureaucratic state collectivist systems of welfare."<sup>10</sup> Concerning Hungary and Poland, they claimed that "Marshall's theory on citizenship [was] turned upside-down" with a "trade-off between social and political rights" after 1956.<sup>11</sup> The former were given in return for the suppression of the latter. Efforts to characterize post-state socialist Hungary using Esping-Andersen's typology from a long-term historical perspective covering the state socialist period, resulted in claims about a "mixed welfare regime," and a "corporatist-liberal welfare regime."<sup>12</sup> Gender-focused analysis posited Central East European regimes closest to the dual-earner model or pointed to the relevance of maternalism and familialism in characterizing them, emphasizing the need to "utilize mainstream theories" for the construction of state socialist welfare histories.<sup>13</sup>

As opposed to this trend, my interest is not in trying to categorize early state socialist child protection in Hungary according to available welfare state typologies, be that with an

<sup>8</sup> Jacqueline Heinen. "Public/Private: Gender, Social and Political Citizenship in Eastern Europe," *Theory and Society* 26, 4 (1997): 577-597.

<sup>9</sup> Zsuzsa Ferge. "Freedom and Security," *International Review of Comparative Public Policy* 7 (1996): 19-41, 19; Dorottya Szikra. "Tradition Matters: Child Care and Primary School Education in Modern Hungary," in: Karen Hagemann, Conrad Jarusch, and Cristina Allemann-Ghionda (eds). *Child Care and Primary Education in Post-War Europe*. New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, Forthcoming, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Deacon, Mita Castle-Kaneroova, Nick Manning, et.al. (eds). *The New Eastern Europe: Social Policy Past, Present and Future*. London: Sage, 1992, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Szikra. "Tradition Matters," 3.

<sup>12</sup> Dorottya Szikra. "Family and Child Support in a Post-Communist Society: Origins of the Mixed Hungarian Welfare Capitalism," in: Michael Cain, Nida Gelazis and Tomasz Inglot (eds). *Fighting Poverty and Reforming Social Security: What Can Post-Soviet States Learn from the New Democracies of Central Europe?* Washington: Woodrow Wilson International Center, 2005, 29-43; Béla Tomka. "The Politics of Institutionalized Volatility: Lessons from East Central European Welfare Reforms," in: Cain, et al., 67-85; Júlia Szalai. "Poverty and the Traps of Post-Communist Welfare Reforms in Hungary: The New Challenges of EU-Accession," *Revija za Socijalnu Politiku [Croatian Journal of Social Policy]* 3 (2006): 309-333.

<sup>13</sup> Gillian Pascall and Anna Kwak. *Gender Regimes in Transition in Central and Eastern Europe*. Bristol: Policy Press, 2005; Dorottya Szikra and Dorota Szelewa. "Do Central and Eastern European Countries Fit the "Western" Picture? The Example of Family Policies in Hungary and Poland," Manuscript, 4.

attention to gender, and typologies of gender regimes. Instead, I am concerned with what gender-, “race”/ethnicity- and class-based notions are traceable in child protection degrees and practices and how in turn, these degrees and practices reacted to perceived social divisions in early state socialist Hungarian society. In other words, relying on feminist welfare state analysis I am adapting their method of intersectional analysis (see more on this in the methodology section of this chapter), and I am interested in what answers my specific location and time period will provide to the same questions as asked by feminist welfare state scholars.

### **Welfare Services Construct and are Constructed by the Categories of Gender, “Race”/Ethnicity and Class**

One of the most important contributions of feminist analysis to welfare state analysis is its emphasis on how apparently neutral social welfare programs have a gender, class or “racial”/ethnic subtext. Scholars have not only underlined that these notions are socially constructed but also that they both shape and are shaped by historical processes, among them different historical constructs of welfare.

Feminist welfare state analysis, building on sociologist Gosta Esping-Andersen’s welfare state typology, amended his mainly class-focused traditional welfare regime framework by drawing attention to the gender implications of social inequalities.<sup>14</sup> Scholars identified ways in which

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<sup>14</sup> Theories of welfare regimes or social policy regimes provide a different approach to the issue of how state-provided welfare services influence the relationship between the state and individuals. This approach looks at “institutional arrangements, rules and understandings that guide and shape concurrent social policy decisions, expenditure developments, problem definitions, and even the respond-and-demand structure of citizens and welfare customers,” and defines them as welfare regimes. Gosta Esping-Andersen. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990, 80. Emphasis is laid on “institutionalized patterns in welfare state provisions forming systematic relations between the state, social structures of conflict, domination and accommodation.” Ann Orloff. “Gender in the Welfare State,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 22 (1996): 51-78, 51. These policy regimes are seen to differ between countries. Esping-Andersen, concentrating on the relationship

different welfare schemes defined and favored different gender interests. Analysts drew up various gendered welfare regime types, such as male breadwinner-female housewife, or family-individual-oriented regimes. They argued that certain social policy regimes, such as those of Britain and Ireland following World War II, were committed to a gender model that posited men as breadwinners and women as housewives.<sup>15</sup> These male breadwinner and female housewife welfare regimes encouraged women's exclusion from the labor market and dependency on their husbands for the purposes of social security entitlements. They also reinforced women's roles as unpaid care givers at home. As opposed to this, dual-earner regimes, or individualist-type welfare states, such as those of France and Sweden, served women's interests better in terms of supporting their inclusion in the labor market and independence from a male-headed family.<sup>16</sup> These types of states were based on an assumption of both men and women as earners and care givers, and targeted services to individuals rather than members of couples. Studies also drew attention to the fact that state policies differed in the extent to which they promoted women's employment "through varying combinations of child care services, wage subsidies, or improved-access policies, or by reducing levels of and eligibility for public support."<sup>17</sup> As opposed to this, other regimes that

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between the state, the market, and the family, set up three regimes according to the degree of "decommodification" and the kind of stratification they produced in society. Decommodification, according to him, "occur[ed] when a service [was] rendered as a matter of right, and when a person [could] maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market," 21-22. By stratification, he referred to the intensity of redistribution and the level of universality and solidarity that was achieved by the welfare state. Based on these two dimensions he identified liberal, conservative-corporatist, and social-democratic types of welfare states. Liberal welfare states typically provided means-tested assistance with strict eligibility criteria and an attached stigma. They offered modest universal transfers, or social insurance plans, little redistribution of incomes, and only a minimal level of decommodification. Benefits were targeted mainly towards low-income, usually working-class, state dependants. Conservative-corporatist welfare states had a moderate level of decommodification. These types of regimes were built on the preservation of status differences, and the direct influence of the state was restricted to the provision of income maintenance benefits related to occupational status. They were usually committed to the preservation of the traditional family, and labor market participation by married women was thus discouraged and child care underdeveloped. Instead, family benefits encouraged motherhood. Social-democratic welfare states had a high level of decommodification through generous, universal and highly redistributive benefits which did not depend on individual contribution.

<sup>15</sup> Jane Lewis. "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes," *Journal of European Social Policy* 3 (1992): 159-173.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis. "Gender and the Development of Welfare Regimes," Diane Sainsbury. *Gendering Welfare States*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1994.

<sup>17</sup> Orloff. "Gender in the Welfare State," 73.

“offered support for solo mothers” to stay at home to care for their children encouraged the maintenance of the gender division of labor but nevertheless contributed to women’s economic independence from men.<sup>18</sup>

Beginning in the early 1990s, feminist welfare state analysis was increasingly criticized for ignoring the dimension of “race”/ethnicity. Historical analysis focused on welfare provisions in the United States underlined the fact that racism shaped and thereby strongly limited the development of the American welfare state.<sup>19</sup> It presented the idea that the American social security system had a differential impact on black and white men and women. The racial imperfections of the notions of maternity and the family embedded in the U.S. welfare system were also emphasized.<sup>20</sup> In the European context authors claimed that that these notions had particular gendered as well as eugenic connotations.<sup>21</sup> Others drew attention to the racial undertones of citizenship and the welfare state as reproducer of the sexual and racial division of labor.<sup>22</sup>

Another group of scholars approached the gender construction of welfare regimes from the perspective of how different welfare systems related productive and reproductive labor. Accordingly, they defined two-channel or two-tiered welfare systems. These studies focused on continuities in the development of welfare services in the United States and noted that they differed historically in the degree of autonomy and rights offered to recipients. Welfare services thus provided not only material aid to clients but also “a powerful interpretive map of

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<sup>18</sup> Orloff. “Gender in the Welfare State,” 73.

<sup>19</sup> Jill Quadagno. *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>20</sup> Carol B. Stack. *All Our Kin: Strategies of Survival in a Black Community* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Basic Books, 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Gisela Bock and Pat Thane. *Maternity and Gender Policies*. London: Routledge, 1991. Looking at European welfare states between 1880s and 1950s the authors drew attention to the fact, however, that “race” did not always imply racism. It could also “assume narrowly nationalistic” or eurocentric overtones, 11-12.

<sup>22</sup> Fiona Williams. *Social Policy: A Critical Introduction. Issues of Race, Gender and Class*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.

normative, differently valued gender roles and gendered needs.”<sup>23</sup> For example, Workmen’s Compensation was originally designed for white men, employed in the heavy industry and Mothers’ Aid for impoverished white, working-class widows with young children, for the “widows of those eligible for Workmen’s Compensation.”<sup>24</sup> These two programs set the tone for two different channels or tiers of welfare services, one of which was “male, judicial, public and routinized in origin, and a second, which was female, administrative, private and nonroutinized in origin.”<sup>25</sup> The masculinist social insurance subsystem was oriented toward individual, white, male breadwinners, and tied to primary labor force participation. The feminized relief subsystem, tied to means-tested household income, was oriented toward households. It disadvantaged female-headed families by constructing women exclusively as mothers and stigmatizing them.<sup>26</sup>

In the field of child care history it was furthermore identified that in industrializing countries, middle-class women were usually the first who identified and “exerted a powerful influence in defining the needs of mothers and children, and designed institutions and programs to address them.”<sup>27</sup> Historian Sonya Michel argues, for example, that middle-class, maternalist reformers lobbied for mothers’ pensions that enabled lone mothers to remain home and care for their children instead of being engaged in wage earning in early twentieth century U.S. because this form of child care did not undermine middle-class notions of motherhood.<sup>28</sup> She also pointed out that a similarly middle-class antagonism towards women’s wage earning

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<sup>23</sup> Nancy Fraser. “Struggle over Needs: Outline of a Socialist-Feminist Critical Theory of Late-Capitalist Political Culture,” in: Linda Gordon (ed.). *Women, the State and Welfare*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, 199-225, 208.

<sup>24</sup> Barbara J. Nelson. “The Origins of the Two-Channel Welfare State: Workmen’s Compensation and Mothers’ Aid,” in: Gordon (ed.). *Women, the State and Welfare*, 123-151, 124.

<sup>25</sup> Nelson, 133.

<sup>26</sup> Nancy Fraser. *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, 149.

<sup>27</sup> Sonya Michel and Seth Koven (eds). *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*. New York, London: Routledge, 1993, 2, 6. For a definition of maternalism, see note 83, on p. 29.

<sup>28</sup> Sonya Michel. “The Limits of Maternalism: Policies Toward American Wage-Earning Mothers during the Progressive Era,” in: Michel and Koven, 277-320.



activities outside the home motivated middle-class, white women-run day nurseries to target only children of women “in crisis, on the brink of poverty or already poor” and not consider domestic entrepreneur and home worker women.<sup>29</sup> As opposed to this, African-American middle-class women’s day nurseries took women’s wage earning activities for granted; these nurseries’ goal was “the overall project of racial uplift.”<sup>30</sup> Historian Margaret D. Jacobs observed the intersections of gender, racial and class differentiation concerning white, middle-class American and Australian women settlers’ involvement in the removal of native American Indian and Aboriginal children to boarding schools in the United States and Australia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. She argued that these women also participated in the gendered training of children, by for example, preparing Indian and Aboriginal girls to be domestic servants. In Jacob’s view, this was a “necessary part of children’s curriculum aimed at their ‘uplift’ from savagery to civilization.”<sup>31</sup>

In her study of reformatory schools in Scotland at turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, historian Linda Mahood inserted the gendered consequences of class difference between middle-class child-savers and their working-class clientele at the center of her analysis.<sup>32</sup> Focusing on the disciplining of gender and sexuality, she discusses, for example, a double standard in the treatment of juvenile offenders that considered the sexual nature rather than the crime of female delinquents and the crime of males. In her examination of the moral regulation of young working-class women in shelters for prostitutes, Mahood pointed out that not only proletarian subjects but *female* proletarian subjects were being constructed. Her point was that disciplining functioned to place subjects in distinct gender as well as class positions.

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<sup>29</sup> Michel. “The Limits,” 31.

<sup>30</sup> Michel. “The Limits,” 36.

<sup>31</sup> Margaret D. Jacobs. “Gender and Colonialism in the American West,” Presentation for the International Federation for Research in Women’s History Conference, *Women’s History Revisited: Historiographical Reflections on Women and Gender in a Global Context*, University of New South Wales, 8 July, 2005, 8.

<sup>32</sup> Linda Mahood. *Policing Gender, Class and Family: Britain, 1850-1940*. London: UCL Press, 1995.

The history of child protection can be very well characterized by what Sonya Michel noted about the history of child care in the United States that while “it partakes of several historiographies,” among these fields there are “curious disjunctures.”<sup>33</sup> Child protection crosscuts several histories, usually studied separately: the history of welfare states, social work, child care, education, labor, women and children. Child care history, as Michel points out cannot be studied, for example, without attention to maternal employment. Feminist literature often places children’s interests in opposition to mothers’ rights and looks at female labor force participation without looking at how they dealt with children while at work and childcare and family historians detach child care issues from maternal employment. The onset of state socialism in Hungary was a time period when women’s large scale entrance to the labor force happened but without adequate child care provisions. Research into child protection institutions allows us to see women’s struggles to balance these two responsibilities at a time when expectations towards women changed from being primarily care givers to being both care givers and employees.

## 2.2 Social Control Theories and the Theory of Need Interpretation

My research on the institution of residential care between 1949 and 1956 in Hungary builds on the understanding that the sphere of the social is a terrain of altering constructions of needs. I argue that the pre-1956 Stalinist state was a multi-layered entity that defined and interpreted people’s needs at the levels of national policy-making and institutional practice. At the same time, I also take into consideration the possibility of negotiating need at institutional-level by educators and institution personnel while putting laws and regulations into practice as

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<sup>33</sup> Sonya Michel. *Children’s Interests/Mothers’ Rights: The Shaping of America’s Child Care Policy*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999, 7.

well as at the level of individual parents and children in trying to make use of existing opportunities. This theoretical approach allows me to move beyond a variety of theories of social control that view the role of welfare services primarily as a terrain of exercising state power, social regulation, discipline or the policing of citizens without allowing for agency. This approach also enables me to complicate both an overtly positive picture of the building of a welfare society in Stalinist Hungary and overtly negative interpretations of welfare provisions that view them solely in service of direct state control.

### 2.2.1. Variations on the Theory of Social Control East and West

Social control theory originates from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when aside the regulatory function of laws, belief systems were also identified as a way societies exercised influence on individuals.<sup>34</sup> From the 1940s and 1950s onwards, leftist criticism of the nature of welfare states viewed welfare provisions as a way to buy workers into accepting capitalism and trade in political power for higher standards of living.<sup>35</sup> This initially class-focused study of the relationship between social services and state power, also underlined how social welfare, under the guise of helping the needy, was in fact a tool to regulate certain groups of the population and the reproduction of power elites.<sup>36</sup> Authors argued that giving relief had to be understood as a mechanism not only reinforcing work norms but also maintaining social and economic inequalities.<sup>37</sup> Looking at “the functions of relief as an institution” some claimed that relief agencies had a “central role” in “the regulation of marginal labor and in the

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<sup>34</sup> The origin of the notion of social control from 1901 is attributed to sociologist, Edward A. Ross.

<sup>35</sup> For a summary of the development of social control theory, with attention to its gender-sensitive proponents, I discuss below, see: Linda Gordon. “The New Feminist Scholarship on the Welfare State,” and “Family, Violence, Feminism and Social Control,” in: Gordon (ed.). *Women, the State, and Welfare*, 16, 179-182. Gordon also points to the influence of the Frankfurt school of German Marxists.

<sup>36</sup> Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward. *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Vintage Books, 1993.

<sup>37</sup> For an overview of theories on classifying the poor into groups of deserving and undeserving in the United States, see: Michael B. Katz. *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1989.

maintenance of civil order.”<sup>38</sup> They stated that the cyclical expansion and contraction of the welfare state was a way to regulate the in- and outflow of the population to and from the labor force. Focusing on poor relief in the United States, historian Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, for example, claimed that the two relief explosions, one in the Great Depression of the 1930s and a second in the 1960s, were both initiated “to absorb and control the unemployed and restore order.”<sup>39</sup> Once these goals were achieved, relief programs were contracted to expel those needed to the labor market. People who were left on relief were treated punitively to create fear in the laboring masses and thereby enforce work.

### **Governmentality, Discipline and Policing**

In the 1970s and 1980s, the class-focused analysis of the control functions of state-provided welfare provisions took specific form in Michel Foucault’s thesis concerning governmentality and discipline and Jacques Donzelot’s argument about policing.<sup>40</sup> Both Foucault and Donzelot advocated that in the sphere of the social complex and implicit modes of state control were manifested. Governmentality, discipline and policing refer to a new way state power was exercised via social institutions emerging in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe. Foucault and Donzelot deal with a time period in European history marked by the appearance of poorhouses, asylums and prisons and later, the professionalization of social work. They present the role of this new social sphere in altering the exercise of state power towards more sophisticated and diffused forms. They see governmentality, discipline and policing as fields of practices directly responsible for the transformation in the exercise of power.

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<sup>38</sup> Piven and Cloward, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Piven and Cloward, 3.

<sup>40</sup> Michel Foucault. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. London: Penguin, 1977; Jacques Donzelot. *The Policing of Families*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Governmentality, in the Foucauldian model of control means “a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons.”<sup>41</sup> This could involve “the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power” targeted at the population.<sup>42</sup> Foucault argued that operations of the body became the object of constant surveillance, control and policing down to the smallest detail and aspects of bodily movement.<sup>43</sup> It was a type of control that coerced the body by regulating and dividing up the time and space of its movement, or, in other words, discipline. Citing an 18<sup>th</sup>-century source, Donzelot clarified the notion of policing as “consist[ing] in regulating everything that relates to the present condition of society, in strengthening and improving it, in seeing that all things contribute to the welfare of the members that compose it. The aim of policing is to make everything that composes the state serve to strengthen and increase its power, and likewise serve the public welfare.”<sup>44</sup> Discipline and policing also ensured that activities required of bodies were internalized and thereby became natural to them, and that a combination of many bodies could be combined into a single massive force.

Such “docile bodies” were needed for the economics and politics of the age of industrialization. Foucault and Donzelot identified the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a time when states turned their attention to the use of youth for the nation and efforts were put into the preservation of children.<sup>45</sup> This is the area that Donzelot’s work concentrated mainly

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<sup>41</sup> Colin Gordon. “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” in: Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (eds). *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991, 2.

<sup>42</sup> Foucault. “Governmentality,” in: Burchell, Gordon and Miller, 102.

<sup>43</sup> Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction. Vol. I*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Foucault shows that the scrutiny of people’s lives extended to sexual behavior that became a “police matter,” and was controlled by new disciplines, such as pedagogy, medical psychology, criminology, and social work, 24.

<sup>44</sup> Donzelot, 7.

<sup>45</sup> For a child-protection-focused elaboration of this subject, see next section and note 51 on p. 23.

on. He tied the birth of the social to a class-differentiated effort to reorganize society in terms of the state's economic and political needs. He argued that the policing of family life entailed a class divide between bourgeois and working-class families. The education of the children of the rich was to involve an alliance of the medical profession and bourgeois mothers concentrated on the liberation of children from the house servants "who treated them to a mixture of constraints and liberties unsuited to their development."<sup>46</sup> At stake in case of working-class children was an economy of the body directed at diminishing "the social costs of their reproduction" and obtaining "an optimum number of workers at minimum public expense."<sup>47</sup> This latter was the task of social work.

### Versions of Social Control Theory in the History of Child Care

Numerous analysts of child welfare history have drawn attention to the politicized nature of child care institutions. Historian, Roberta Wollons, for example, claimed that kindergartens were "directly linked to the goals of the state" by taking part in the formation of national identity and moral values.<sup>48</sup> In a similar vein, concerning child welfare history in the Soviet Union, Lisa A. Kirschenbaum pointed to a shift in pedagogical notions and practice directed at pre-school children with the onset of Stalinism.<sup>49</sup> Explaining this turn with the labor power needs of the industrialization project of the New Economic Mechanism she underlined that pedagogy became more interventionist stressing labor and usefulness for the industrial state. Anthropologist, Ildikó Erdei, focusing on the pioneer organization in Yugoslavia portrayed it as part of the state's effort "to control the whole upbringing and education of children" and as

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<sup>46</sup> Donzelot, 16

<sup>47</sup> Donzelot, 16.

<sup>48</sup> Roberta Wollons (ed.). *Kindergartens and Cultures: The Global Diffusion of an Idea*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000, 10; Viviana Zelizer. *Pricing the Priceless Child: The Changing Social Value of Children*. New York: Basic Books, 1985.

<sup>49</sup> Lisa A. Kirschenbaum. *Small Comrades: Revolutionizing Childhood in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932*. New York, London: Routledge, Falmer, 2001.

a tool in “monitoring and controlling the correct way of growing up”.<sup>50</sup> Others, such as historian Deborah Dwork, have taken into consideration nationalist motivations and efforts in “strengthening the nation” behind interest in children as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>51</sup>

## Dictatorship Literature in the East

In the Eastern European and Hungarian context at the same time, theories of state control focused on the character of dictatorship.<sup>52</sup> Marxist intellectuals formulated leftist criticisms about political, economic and ideological aspects of Soviet-type societies calling for a critical reconsideration of their socialist nature from the point of view of an authentic democratic socialism or alternative socialism.<sup>53</sup> Authors drew attention to the fact that despite the egalitarian ideal of communism and official declarations about the absence of a ruling class in the People’s Republics of the region, new processes of social differentiation started to appear.<sup>54</sup> They came to realize, as Iván Szelényi and György Konrád put it, “that the proletariat [was] a myth, an ideology which legitimize[d] the power of an oppressive new social force.”<sup>55</sup> New elite classes were being formed while a new system of oppression and exploitation of the working classes was being produced.<sup>56</sup> Milovan Djilas unveiled the nature

<sup>50</sup> Ildikó Erdei. “‘The Happy Child’ as an Icon of Socialist Transformation: Yugoslavia’s Pioneer Organization,” in: John R. Lampe and Mark Mazower (eds). *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth Century Southeastern Europe*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2004, 155, 154-179.

<sup>51</sup> Deborah Dwork. *War is Good for Babies and Other Young Children: A History of the Infant and Child Welfare Movement in England, 1898-1918*. London and New York: Tavistock Publications, 1987. For further elaboration of this subject, see: Sonya Michel and Eszter Varsa. “Children and the National Interest,” in: Dirk Schumann (ed.). *Raising Citizens in the “Century of the Child”: Child Rearing in the United States and German Central Europe in the Twentieth Century*. Berghahn Books, Forthcoming, 2011.

<sup>52</sup> Szelényi and Konrád; Milovan Djilas. *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1985; Fehér, et al.

<sup>53</sup> Szelényi and Konrád, xvi.

<sup>54</sup> Milovan Djilas, former Vice-President of Yugoslavia under Tito, initiated the tradition of criticism with his theory of new class in 1957.

<sup>55</sup> Szelényi and Konrád, xiii.

<sup>56</sup> While pointing towards similar processes of class differentiation, authors had slightly different theoretical explanation of this phenomenon. Fehér et al. described those at the top of the social hierarchy as a “corporate ruling group” separated from the rest of society because of their political commitment and the resulting ties to the Party apparatus. Fehér et al., 126. Szelényi and Konrád, building on Djilas’ analysis, claimed that the

of political control exercised by a new privileged ruling class formulated out of members of the communist government and the Party in Tito's Yugoslavia that stabilized its power as a new bureaucratic class in early state socialism. Fehér et al. pointed out that as opposed to capitalism, which manipulated or limited needs and maintained at least a formal freedom of choice, Soviet-type societies in their view represented a "dictatorship over needs."<sup>57</sup> Criticism concerning the nature of political control in Eastern Europe also involved an examination of the role of social services in the "dictatorship over needs."

### **Welfare under Dictatorship: The Case of Social Control in Former State Socialist Countries**

The question of social control has special salience in cases of totalitarian regimes and dictatorships. The role of social services in supporting the racist sterilization and genocide by the National Socialists and the involvement of social workers as extensions of the repressive state of Nazi Germany has received serious scholarly attention.<sup>58</sup> Authors have not only pointed out the racial differentiation behind national policy-making but also showed that these could be severely compromised in institutional-level practice.<sup>59</sup> Much less attention has so far been devoted to the uses of welfare provisions and the role of social agents in serving the political goals of Soviet-type dictatorships. Among the few works that draw up a connection

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distinction between a ruling bureaucratic elite, also termed bureaucratic class or new bourgeoisie, and intellectuals was disappearing. Focusing on the post-Stalinist era, what they observed was the formation of a new class of which both the new bureaucracy and the intelligentsia formed a part. They pointed towards the widening of the ruling elite and its intellectualization by the appearance of professionals at bureaucratic posts and at the same time the bureaucratization of the intelligentsia. Szelényi later noted that they also tried to use more "exact sociological terms" than Djilas and, following Weber and Lukács reserved the use of "class" for the analysis of Western societies, see: Iván Szelényi. *Új osztály, állam, politika [New Class, the State and Politics]*. Budapest: Európa Könyvkiadó, 1990, 53.

<sup>57</sup> Fehér et al., 126.

<sup>58</sup> Among others, see: Gisela Bock. "Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism," in: Gisela Bock and Susan James (eds). *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*. London: Routledge, 1992, 89-109; Michelle Mouton. *From Nurturing the Nation to Purifying the Volk: Weimar and Nazi Family Policy, 1918-1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007; Detlev J.K. Peukert. *Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition, and Racism in Everyday Life*. London: Penguin, 1993.

<sup>59</sup> Mouton draws this conclusion by comparing foster care in Weimar and Nazi Germany, 236-271.



between political processes and the alteration of social welfare schemes in state socialist Hungary, most analyses, like literature on Western democracies in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly address the issue of class inequalities. At the time, however, Hungarian publications addressing the system of social services of the country were politically motivated. Authors tried to undermine the political system by pointing to social phenomena whose existence the ruling elite officially denied. Poverty was one such issue, addressed by sociologist Zsuzsa Ferge in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>60</sup> Her emphasis on the existence of poverty in state socialist Hungary constituted a critique of the absence of a wider social-political framework to address social inequalities as well as the silencing of social workers.<sup>61</sup> She argued that during the years from 1949 to 1956 social policies were in service of a number of political-economic goals: “Reduced to social insurance and workers’ protection, social politics was subsumed under dictatorial political goals to the extent that they lost their original purpose.”<sup>62</sup> Elsewhere, she claimed that in Hungary “existential security [...] did not serve the emancipation but rather the totalitarian control of the citizens.”<sup>63</sup> She underlined that although “social control is almost always a hidden dimension” of welfare provisions Eastern European states differed from Western democracies by “the extent of control.”<sup>64</sup> One of the political goals social policies served in state socialist Hungary according to Ferge was “the division of social forces,” in other words, “class politics that was discriminatory and oppressive toward all social groups except the working class.”<sup>65</sup> Ferge showed that in consequence of the

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<sup>60</sup> Zsuzsa Ferge. *Fejezetek a magyar szegénypolitika történetéből [Chapters from the History of the Politics of Poverty in Hungary]* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Budapest: Kávé Kiadó, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Sociologist, István Kemény’s speech in the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1970 on poverty contained a similar political message. See: István Kemény. “A szegénységről: Főszólam a Magyar Tudományos Akadémián – 1970 [On Poverty: Speech at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1970],” *Szociológiai Írások [Sociological Studies]*. Szeged: Replika Könyvek, 1992, 79-83.

<sup>62</sup> Ferge. *Fejezetek*, 100. Confirmed by Katalin Gönczöl. *Bűnös szegények [The Sinful Poor]*. Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1991, 132.

<sup>63</sup> Zsuzsa Ferge. “Social Policy Regimes and Social Structure: Hypotheses about the Prospects of Social Policy in Central and Eastern Europe,” in: Zsuzsa Ferge and Jon Eivind Kolberg (eds). *Social Policy in a Changing Europe*. Frankfurt and Boulder, Co: Campus Verlag and Westview Press, 1992, 201-222, 206.

<sup>64</sup> Ferge. “Social Policy Regimes,” 221.

<sup>65</sup> Ferge. *Fejezetek*, 100.

centrality of industrialization, non-industrial workers, such as peasants, were treated as “second-class citizens” by social politics, resulting in their exclusion from family benefits and free health services tied to state sector employment. Based on the discourse around social services as gifts from the Party and on practices such as strict sanctions against so-called “cheaters of the health insurance scheme,” she furthermore claimed that even in case of the working class, social policies were used as measures of “political terrorization” and the elimination of democratic life.<sup>66</sup>

### **Welfare States Regulating the Lives of Women**

Feminist scholarship in Western Europe and North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s joined in the leftist, class-focused criticism of the welfare state by concentrating on its oppressiveness towards women.<sup>67</sup> Histories of maternal and child welfare services pointed out that the specific form these services took were related to predominantly male, middle-class policy makers’ beliefs and assumptions about the proper role of female clients.<sup>68</sup> Treating women usually as a homogenous group they advocated that welfare systems were frameworks that manifested patriarchal relations and elicited women’s dependence.<sup>69</sup> Based on the theory of patriarchy, these studies claimed that not only private relations in the family but also state structures and mechanisms entailed patriarchal relations. Similarly to an individual husband’s control over his wife, “her daily reproductive labor and the product of her labor, the children,”

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<sup>66</sup> Ferge. *Fejezetek*, 101-102.

<sup>67</sup> Carol Brown. “Mothers, Fathers, and Children: From Private to Public Patriarchy,” in: Lydia Sargent (ed.). *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*. Boston: South End Press, 1981, 239-267; Diane Polan. “Toward a Theory of Law and Patriarchy,” in: David Kairys (ed.). *The Politics of Law*. New York: Pantheon, 1982, 294-303; Elisabeth Wilson. *Women and the Welfare State*. London: Tavistock, 1977; Jane Lewis. *The Politics of Motherhood: Child and Maternal Welfare in England, 1900-1939*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.

<sup>68</sup> Lewis. *The Politics*, 15.

<sup>69</sup> For a critique of such early approaches by feminists to the welfare state, see: Frances Fox Piven. “Ideology and the State: Women, Power, and the Welfare State,” in: Gordon (ed.). *Women, the State, and Welfare*, 250-265.

social systems were also patriarchal in their nature.<sup>70</sup> Social systems manifested “public aspects of patriarchy: the control of society.”<sup>71</sup> The control of economy, polity, religion, etc was used by men collectively to “uphold the rights and privileges of the collective male sex as well as individual men.”<sup>72</sup> The welfare state and welfare services in support of the family were viewed by these feminists as reflecting and reinforcing patriarchal social relations. They were asking for types of welfare that “instead of trying desperately to shore up the family in its present inadequacies” would produce possibilities for “social relationships that were more successfully supportive and nurturant” for women.<sup>73</sup> Foucault and Donzelot’s theory about discipline and policing were basically class-focused. Compared to the large body of feminist philosophy built on Foucault’s theories of power and the body, there are relatively few feminist works that apply the notions of discipline and policing to social history and child welfare history. In the context of law on illegitimacy and unmarried motherhood in Britain in the 1950s, Martine Spensky pointed to the adoption system as a way of pathologizing unmarried mothers.<sup>74</sup> Mother-and-baby homes in turn, served as a disciplinary regime aiming to “normalize” this form of deviance.

In the early 1990s, some of the first gender-sensitive studies about Eastern European women’s position and the gender regimes in former state socialist societies also had a tendency to emphasize the control function of state-provided social services without much attention to agency.<sup>75</sup> Authors conceptualized welfare entitlements as means to regulate women’s lives in

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<sup>70</sup> Brown, 240.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, 240.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, 240.

<sup>73</sup> Wilson, 187.

<sup>74</sup> Martine Spensky. “Producers of Legitimacy: Homes for Unmarried Mothers in the 1950s,” in: Carol Smart (ed.). *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*. London, New York: Routledge, 1992, 100-118.

<sup>75</sup> Martha Lampland. “Biographies of Liberation: Testimonials to Labor in Socialist Hungary”, in: Ryana Rapp, Sonia Kruks, and Marilyn B. Young. *Promissory Notes: Women in the Transition to Socialism*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1989, 306-322; Jacqueline Heinen. “Ideology, Economics, and the Politics of Child Care in Poland before and after the Transition,” in: Sonya Michel and Rianne Mahon (eds). *Child Care Policy at the*

the home as care providers or as workers in the employment sector.<sup>76</sup> Welfare services were, for example, seen as facilitating women's treatment as "a flexible and cheap reserve army of labor," that is, to make them enter or exit the labor force according to the politically-economically motivated needs of the country.<sup>77</sup>

### **Feminist Criticism of Social Control Theory**

As Linda Gordon underlines it, "feminist theory in general and women's history in particular have moved only slowly beyond the 'victimization' paradigm."<sup>78</sup> In 1990, in her article on middle-class child-savers and their working-class clients Gordon claimed that the "us (oppressed)" and "them (oppressors)" paradigm and theories of social control "cannot adequately describe and conceptualize the complexity" of such hierarchical relationships.<sup>79</sup> On a similar note, in the same collection of studies on American welfare state history, Frances Fox Piven stated that "the American welfare state cannot be viewed only to be the result of a politics of domination."<sup>80</sup> As opposed to "a simplistic social control idea" that attacked the welfare state as a form of social patriarchy "robbing women of their capacities for political action" she pointed instead to the positive outcomes for women of the welfare state, such as the establishment of new career pathways for and "new alliances" among women.<sup>81</sup>

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*Crossroads: Gender and Welfare State Restructuring*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002, 71-92; Júlia Szalai. "A társadalombiztosítás érdekviszonyairól. Történeti vázlat a hazai társadalombiztosítás funkcióinak változásairól [On the Interst Relations of Social Insurance: A Historical Scetch about Changes in the Function of Hungarian Social Insurance]," *Szociológiai Szemle* 2 (1992): 27-43; Susan Zimmermann. "A szabad munkaerő nyomában. 'Utolérő' fejlődés és női munka Magyarországon [In the Wake of the Free Labor Force: Catch-Up Development and Women's Work in Hungary]," *Eszmélet* 25 (1995): 166-183.

<sup>76</sup> Lampland; Éva Fodor. "Smiling Women and Fighting Men: The Gender of the Communist Subject in State Socialist Hungary," *Gender and Society* 2 (2002): 240-263; Zimmermann. "A szabad munkaerő;" Szalai. "A társadalombiztosítás."

<sup>77</sup> Lampland, 315; Heinen. "Ideology," 72-74.

<sup>78</sup> Gordon. "Family Violence," 182.

<sup>79</sup> Gordon. "Family Violence," 182.

<sup>80</sup> Piven. "Ideology and the State," 258.

<sup>81</sup> Piven. "Ideology and the State," 259-260.

Studies of maternalism is another area where feminist welfare state historians moved away from viewing women as only passive agents of welfare policies.<sup>82</sup> “Ideologies and discourses that exalted women’s capacity to mother and applied to society as a whole the values they attached to that role: care, nurturance and morality” were defined by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel as maternalism.<sup>83</sup> Scholars of welfare state history who focused on women’s participation in the process of the building of welfare states highlighted how women were not only at the center of the state’s regulating control but, via the interlocking histories of the emergence of women’s social movements and welfare states, they became actively involved in this process.<sup>84</sup>

Some of these authors, such as Margaret D. Jacobs nevertheless emphasized women’s role as “agents of control.”<sup>85</sup> Jacobs posited that white women, who were involved in American Indian and Australian Aboriginal children’s removal from their communities to be taken to institutions, generated a discourse around Indian and Aboriginal mothers that presented them “promiscuous and as incompetent housekeepers and unfit mothers.”<sup>86</sup>

Others, like Michel and Gordon, drew attention to those working-class and immigrant women’s agency who were at the receiving end of middle-class child-savers’ efforts to impose norms of mothering on them. Michel called “maternal invention” the various techniques applied by working mothers, whose rights to child care were withheld in late 19<sup>th</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Michel and Koven; Margaret D. Jacobs. “Maternal Colonialism: White Women and Indigenous Child Removal in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* 4 (2005): 453-476; Jacobs. “Gender and Colonialism.”

<sup>83</sup> Michel and Koven, 4.

<sup>84</sup> Michel and Koven, 2; Jane Lewis. “Gender, the Family, and Women’s Agency in the Building of ‘Welfare States:’ The British Case,” *Social History* 19, 1 (1994): 37-55.

<sup>85</sup> Jacobs. “Maternal Colonialism,” 455; Jacobs. “Gender and Colonialism,” 4. Jacobs conceived of the term “maternal colonialism” to explain how women were able to participate in the separation of indigenous children and their families. Hereby, she amended scholarship on maternalism by bringing together a gendered analysis of women’s history in the North-American West and Australia with colonial theory.

<sup>86</sup> Jacobs. “Maternal Colonialism,” 463-464; Jacobs. “Gender and Colonialism,” 4.

and early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States, to secure care for their children.<sup>87</sup> Gordon showed that in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the United States, clients of child-saving agencies “also took part in shaping the nature of social control.”<sup>88</sup> Among others, she complicated the notion of “client” and “family” by stating that “clients did not collectively win or lose cases.”<sup>89</sup> Some family members could make use of agency support to work out intra-familial conflict. She also pointed out that “the initiative did not only go from top to bottom,” but families also asked for help and used agencies in times of real difficulty.<sup>90</sup> Similar claims were made with reference to European welfare history between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, drawing attention to the fact that leaving children in the hospital ruota was “a survival strategy” of poor parents who hoped to “reclaim them” once their circumstances improved.<sup>91</sup> Yet others, such as Deborah Dwork and Linda Mahood studying child welfare history argued against the functionalism embedded in social control theory by highlighting that certain solutions to social problems were not necessarily chosen in order to exercise control.<sup>92</sup> Dwork, for example, advocated instead an approach that took into consideration the sociology of ideas.<sup>93</sup> In the following I turn to outlining this more comprehensive approach to welfare history that forms the basis of my analysis.

### 2.2.2. The Politics of Need Interpretation

Another vein of criticism in response to the theory of social control including its Foucauldian model claimed that this approach treated the state as a homogenous, single unit of power.

Lynne Haney underlined that feminist scholars who treated the welfare state as a

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<sup>87</sup> Michel. *Children's Interests*, 3.

<sup>88</sup> Gordon. “Family, Violence,” 191.

<sup>89</sup> Gordon. “Family, Violence,” 191.

<sup>90</sup> Gordon. “Family, Violence,” 193.

<sup>91</sup> John Henderson and Richard Wall (eds). *Poor Women and Children in the European Past*. London and New York: Routledge, 1994, 10.

<sup>92</sup> Dwork, 207; Mahood, 8.

<sup>93</sup> Dwork, 207.

“constellation of policies” only examined the “re/distributive differences” caused by these policies between men and women.<sup>94</sup> On the other hand, local-level studies only looked at “how gender relations inform[ed] policy development.”<sup>95</sup> The politics of need interpretation advanced by Nancy Fraser and Haney instead defined the state as a layered entity. According to this approach, welfare regimes were “historically specific combinations of state policies and institutional practices that together set the terms of state redistribution and interpretation.”<sup>96</sup> Social policies and their practice were understood as ways of “defining and interpreting” people’s needs.<sup>97</sup> The sphere of the social was defined as a site of discourse about these needs. Fraser and Haney called for the consideration of “the active side of social processes,” such as the social-welfare apparatus, social movements and feminism, and concluded that states “shap[ed], and [were] shaped by a multiplicity of gender relations.”<sup>98</sup>

In *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*, that provides an important background to my present analysis, Lynne Haney draws attention to the altering construction of the female subject in different sub-periods of Hungarian state socialist history. She claims that via the “redrawing of the boundaries of welfare” the state regulated gender relations. “Through their regulatory work, these regimes, ascribed meaning to the social categories of gender: they defined the ‘appropriate’ attributes and responsibilities of women and men.”<sup>99</sup> At the same time, Haney also argues for the possibility of “client maneuverability” whereby she advocates a complex approach to the role of the state in people’s life in state socialist regimes. By allowing for maneuverability she distances from the notion of agency claiming that states do not provide either an increase or a decrease in

<sup>94</sup> Lynne Haney. “Engendering the Welfare State: A Review Article,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 4 (1998): 748-767, 766.

<sup>95</sup> Haney. “Engendering,” 766.

<sup>96</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 8.

<sup>97</sup> Fraser. *Unruly Practices*, 156; Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 7- 8.

<sup>98</sup> Fraser. *Unruly Practices*, 156; Mahood, 13; Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 8.

<sup>99</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 13.

autonomy and agency. Maneuverability accounts for “the possibility that states can constrain and enable those targeted,” and thus also moves beyond the ideology of a “dominant and intruding state” versus the suppressed people who either just “passively acquiesce to state domination” or “engage in continual acts of resistance.”<sup>100</sup> Haney views clients of welfare provisions as “actively participat[ing] in the state’s interpretive work– sometimes accepting, and other times rejecting, state understandings of their needs,” and as “always strategizing to gain discursive and practical resources.”<sup>101</sup>

According to the shifting conceptions of women’s social needs that were embodied in policies and welfare agencies’ institutional practices, Haney identifies three different phases in the regulative power of the state between 1948 and 1996. She argues that “through their regulatory work” all three regimes “ascribed meaning to the social categories of gender: they defined the ‘appropriate’ attributes and responsibilities of women and men.”<sup>102</sup> At the same time, there is a perceptible change in the type of control Haney points to in these sub-periods. Related to the 1948-1968 phase, which she calls the period of “welfare society building,” Haney stresses that societal policies were designed to “reshape economic and social life,” and welfare institutions aimed to integrate women into the spheres of work and family.<sup>103</sup> In describing this period she emphasizes that case workers were helping female clients to “negotiate their different social roles and demands” and “enhance their institutional integration and support networks.”<sup>104</sup> Concerning the second period, which she places between 1968 and 1985 and defines as the “maternalist period” of welfare politics, she points out, that women’s needs as mothers took center stage. Contrary to the first period here Haney’s emphasis falls more on case workers’ regulative power towards motherhood and

<sup>100</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 17-18.

<sup>101</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 18.

<sup>102</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 13.

<sup>103</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 9.

<sup>104</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 9.



claims that “case workers no longer attempted to integrate clients into existing institutions” but “instead, used the new policies under their control to shape how women mothered.”<sup>105</sup> A reprioritization of women’s roles as mothers took place. Motherhood not only became a key basis for welfare entitlement in this period but was constructed as a “source of and solution to a wide range of familial problems.”<sup>106</sup> Women were targeted by a new network of Child Guidance Centers and family experts, and their child-rearing practices fell under scrutiny.<sup>107</sup> Finally, the period following the mid-1980s, Haney identifies as a “liberal or materialist welfare regime,” characterized by means-tested social provisions targeting the poor. This sub-period she describes as manifesting a turn towards a narrow understanding and “the bureaucratic regulation of poverty.”<sup>108</sup>

While fundamentally relying on Haney’s conceptualization of welfare provisions in this dissertation, I also amend her description of early state socialist Hungarian welfare politics. Based on child protection regulations and cases of both non-Romani and Romani families in the early 1950s, I argue for the construction of motherhood already in this period as central to the family-centered regulative welfare politics of the state. As I point out in Chapter 5, children provided an access for case workers to families, and targeted primarily mothers whom they considered responsible for reproducing the family. This regulative approach aiming to shape women into “proper” mothers at the same time intersected with efforts towards the “racial”/ethnic assimilation of Roma. Romani mothers had a special role in adhering to and transmitting a communist morality of work and family life.

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<sup>105</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 11.

<sup>106</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 11.

<sup>107</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 99.

<sup>108</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 12.

In *Policing Gender, Class and Family: Britain 1850-1940*, also central to the construction of my analysis, historian, Linda Mahood, like Haney, uses Fraser's approach to define the social as a site of contestation and a terrain of rival interpretations of need. She also argues that social welfare ideologies and practices could not be solely understood as covert mechanisms of control. In her case study of the child-saving movement and reformatory schools in Scotland in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, Mahood presents the conflicting needs of working-class families, schools, and social workers, and argues that "need" was socially and historically constructed. Importantly, she also adds into the picture the material side of the social and looks at children not only as "subjects of culturally constructed definitions" but also as clients of institutional practices.<sup>109</sup> Using the notion of the subject as denoting someone "who is subject to something, under surveillance, control or government" or to "law or rule" as well as meaning "initiator or agent, rather than a passive object," she conceptualizes the social "as a terrain where opposition, rebellion and resistance" can also take place.<sup>110</sup>

Relying on Fraser's, Haney's and Mahood's interpretation of the social as a site of need construction and need interpretation my research on the institution of residential care between 1949 and 1956 in Hungary builds on the understanding that the sphere of the social is the terrain of altering constructions of needs. This interpretation allows simultaneously for an analysis of laws and regulations as modes of social regulation, discipline and policing embedding the possibility of maneuvering and the adjustment of national policies at the level of the institutional. In addressing the levels of both national policy-making and institutional practice in child protection in early state socialist Hungary I not only show how need was defined in laws and regulations but also how local level actors interpreted these frameworks

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<sup>109</sup> Mahood, 13.

<sup>110</sup> Mahood, 13.

of child protection and how parents and sometimes even children strategized with them to their own ends. In Chapters 4 and 5 where I reflect on welfare provisions as constructions of material need and morality I show that in the early 1950s there was a shift in the construction of need that tied welfare entitlements to work ability, leading to restrictions in the preconditions of the material support of clients and a simultaneous moralization of work. Children's case files at the same time show that there was room for local actors' interpretation at institutional level about who to accord support while parents also used and negotiated existing forms of provisions to advance their own needs. I argue, that the pre-1956 Stalinist state was a multi-layered entity that defined and interpreted people's needs at the levels of national policy-making and institutional practice. This theoretical approach allows me to sophisticate both an overtly positive picture on the building of a welfare society in Stalinist Hungary as well as overtly negative interpretations of welfare provisions that view them solely in service of direct state control. As opposed to scholars who argue for the necessity of modifying already existing typologies of welfare state analysis according to the local historical and geographical givens of state socialist societies, relying on intersectional feminist welfare state analysis, I outline below, I am concerned with how at the national and institutional levels, the categories of gender, "race"/ethnicity and class were constructed and how in turn, these were also constructive of child protection measures and practices in early state socialist Hungary.

### **2.3. Methodological Reflections**

In order to uncover processes of class-, "race"/ethnicity-, and gender-based social differentiation in child protection in Hungary between 1949 and 1956 as a feminist researcher,

I approached my field work with three main concepts in mind: intersectionality, multilocality and reflexivity.

Intersectionality is a major paradigm of research in gender studies based on the understanding that categories of difference are intertwined and mutually constitutive. It was developed to highlight the idea that categories of difference, such as class, “race”/ethnicity and gender, do not act independently of one another but interact on multiple levels to construct social inequalities.<sup>111</sup> My aim as a feminist researcher in using intersectionality was not so much to focus on one particular social group and unveil the multiplicity of subordinations affecting it, as was the case in the study by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw that gave birth to the terminology.<sup>112</sup> My research points to the differential impact of policy programs on men and women, taking into consideration both the possible positive and negative outcomes of regulations for certain social groups, or in other words, what privileged and unprivileged intersections of gender, “race”/ethnicity, and class these policies constructed.<sup>113</sup> Building on the time and context dependence of categories of difference, I assess the implications of specific policies brought in the field of child protection on women, Roma and the poor as they played out in the particular political, economic and social context of the first half of the 1950s in Hungary.

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<sup>111</sup> The term was first used by Kimberlé W. Crenshaw to pinpoint the interaction of pre-existing subordinations along different inequality axes and underline the existence of “another exacerbated dimension of disempowerment.” Crenshaw’s purpose was to address African-American women’s employment experiences and draw attention to intersecting dimensions of subordination that traditionally fell outside the scope of both feminist and anti-racist identity politics; see: Kimberlé W. Crenshaw. “Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color,” *Stanford Law Review* 43, 6 (1991): 1241-1299.

<sup>112</sup> Leslie McCall, who differentiates among anticategorical, intercategory and intracategorical intersectionality placed Crenshaw’s methodology into the latter group of intracategorical analysis. McCall pointed out that Crenshaw was analyzing the intersection of single dimensions of multiple categories. In this aspect my research resembles Crenshaw’s complexity because I also paid more attention to women than men, Romani women than Romani men, and low economic status than higher status, rather than looking at the full dimension of categories of gender, “race”/ethnicity and class. See: Leslie McCall. “The Complexity of Intersectionality,” *Signs* 30, 3 (2005): 1771-1800, 1781.

<sup>113</sup> On privileged intersections of gender, race, and nation in United States history, see: Patricia Hill Collins. “It’s All in the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation,” *Hypatia* 13, 3 (1998): 62-82.

Following Lynne Haney's observation, based on her research about the welfare system in state socialist Hungary, I addressed the state as a "multi-layered entity."<sup>114</sup> Haney emphasized the heterogeneity of the state, which was composed not only of policies but also of a variety of ways in which policies were executed or resisted. Conducting research at multiple locations of the welfare state allowed her to uncover gaps between state ideology and practice.<sup>115</sup> Building on Haney's insight I collected data about the structure and workings of child protection on the interconnected levels of the national, the institutional and the individual. By also including individuals' personal experience about child protection I was able to look at their role as agents in constructing this system as opposed to seeing them as just passive subjects.

As a feminist reflexive researcher I tried to approach all my empirical data as results of interpretation.<sup>116</sup> Being aware of the fact that knowledge and knower cannot be separated, and that data and facts are the result of construction or of interpretation, I tried to assess what theoretical assumptions and pre-understanding my sources both written and oral, might have had.

I collected a variety of written as well as oral sources from multiple locales. At the level of the national, I analyzed state policies issued by the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Education, the agencies to which child protection and residential care belonged over this time period. I started by browsing through the pages of the yearly collections of acts and decrees and looking up references made to regulations in

<sup>114</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 7. Also see, earlier discussion in this chapter.

<sup>115</sup> Lynne Haney. "Global Discourses of Need: Mythologizing and Pathologizing Welfare in Hungary," in: Michael Burroway, et al. (eds). *Global Ethnography: Forces, Connections and Imaginations in a Postmodern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 48-73.

<sup>116</sup> For more on reflexivity, see: Mats Alvesson and Kaj Sköldbberg. *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 2000.

any of my documents. Once I located relevant regulations, I also tried to track down references given in these acts and decrees to previous ones. Legal regulations in fact provided the backbone of my story, which enabled me to interpret institutional-level events and processes. Aside from collections of acts and decrees, I also looked at the documentation of ministerial work in the Hungarian National Archives as well as ministerial publications concerning the practices and the rules and regulations of institutions. In the Hungarian National Archives I examined documents related to the child protection work of the three main ministries, specifically, materials from the Mother- and Child Protection Department of the Ministry of Welfare, 1946-1951; the Hungarian Workers' Party's Secretariat, Administrative Department and Health Department 1948-1956; the secret documents of the Ministry of Health, 1950-1956; the Mother- and Child Protection Department of the Ministry of Health, 1952; the Department of Local Councils of the Ministry of Interior, 1950-1951; the Social Policy Department of the Ministry of Interior, 1951; and the Ministry of Education's general and secret documents, 1954-1956. In order to grasp the full scope of the construction of morality, I also made use of other sources that were not directly attached to child protection, such as publications about communist morality.

The most significant part of my institutional-level analysis is based on a total of 630 children's case files I gathered from the archives of the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest, the Child Protection Institution and Children's Home of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, located in the city of Szolnok, and finally, the Regional Child Protection Center of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, located in the city of Nyíregyháza.<sup>117</sup> I chose three different types of locations from which to collect institutional-level material. I included Budapest in my sample because it had the largest inflow of children in my chosen period (see,

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<sup>117</sup> Budapest Főváros Önkormányzatának Módszertani Gyermekvédelmi Szakszolgálat, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok Megyei Gyermekvédő Intézet és Gyermekotthon, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Önkormányzat Területi Gyermekvédelmi Központja.

Table 3. in the Appendix). However, I wanted to cover other locations in the countryside. I chose Szolnok because I knew that, like Budapest, it also had a well-preserved set of case files from the period, and also because it had a larger proportion of Romani population at the time than Budapest. Last, I chose Nyíregyháza, because not only was Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County one of the most densely populated by Roma but also, as I refer to this later in this chapter, by the late 1940s, it had already a documented history of trying to address the so-called “Gypsy-question.”<sup>118</sup> I was curious to see if this had reverberations affecting the area of child protection. I randomly chose case files of children placed in state care for material and moral reasons who were received by these three institutions between 1949 and 1956.

Concerning children placed in state care for moral reasons, I collected approximately thirty case files in Budapest for each year in my period of study, half of whom were girls and the other half boys. Because the institution of Szolnok opened only in 1952, I doubled the number of files for that first year but for the rest of the period I collected thirty files a year from Szolnok as well. Concerning state care for material reasons, my Budapest sample consisted of eighty randomly chosen cases, again half boys and half girls. As opposed to the previous two locations where I was unable to locate Romani cases, in Nyíregyháza I could take a sample of seventy-nine Romani and eighty non-Romani cases, again half boys and half girls institutionalized for material and moral reasons between 1949 and 1956 and received by this institution from 1951 onwards when it was opened.

I also browsed archival material related to the work of these three institutions at the Municipal Archives of Budapest, the Archives of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, and the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County. In the Municipal Archives of Budapest I read through the minutes of the Municipal Council’s Executive Committee, 1950-1956; the secret documents

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<sup>118</sup> This holds true of this North-Eastern region of Hungary historically although the size and the name of this county differed over time. Up to 1950 it was called Szatmár-Bereg County while from then on until the end of the state socialist period it was called Szabolcs-Szatmár County.

of the Municipal Council's Executive Committee, 1950-1956; and the documents of the Educational Department, 1954-1956. In the Archives of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, I read through the minutes of the County Council's Executive Committee, 1950-1956; the secret documents of the County Council's Executive Committee, 1950-1956; the documents of the County Council's Social Policy Committee, 1952; Administrative Department, 1951-1953, and Educational Department, 1954-1956. In the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County I read the documents on child protection and the "Gypsy-question" in the minutes of the Municipal Council's Executive Committee, 1950-1956, and related local-regional reports prepared for the council meeting as well as documents on the "Gypsy-question" from the minutes of the General Assembly of Szatmár-Bereg County from 1947-1949.<sup>119</sup> Additionally, I had access to the posthumous documents of Mrs. István Dési-Huber, director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County in the first half of the 1950s.<sup>120</sup> I could also use the unpublished Ph.D. dissertation of Lajos Barna, the former director of different residential homes in the country, in which he reflected on his method of work as an educator.<sup>121</sup>

To process my data I developed relevant categories of analysis after having thoroughly read through my case files. In line with the process of coding used by qualitative researchers Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, I identified key words and processes that captured the essence of each case.<sup>122</sup> I separated the children's files according to gender and looked at both

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<sup>119</sup> The latter was relevant to the understanding of a national social-medical discussion on the "Gypsy-question" that was initiated by health care professionals of the county in 1947. The national discussion took place in the Hungarian medical journal, *Népegészségügy* [Public Health] in 1947 and 1948. József Galambos. "A cigánykérdés megoldása [The Solution of the Gypsy-question]," *Népegészségügy* [Public Health] 36 (1947): 1446-1453; "A cigánykérdés megoldása [The Solution of the Gypsy-question]," *Népegészségügy* [Public Health] 1-2 (1948): 13-16; "Még egyszer a cigánykérdés [Once again the Gypsy-question]," and "Megjegyzések 'A cigánykérdés megoldása' c. cikk hozzászólásaihoz [Comments on Contributions to the Article on the 'Solution of the Gypsy-question]," *Népegészségügy* [Public Health] 5-6 (1948): 81-82. For more on this debate, see chapter 4.

<sup>120</sup> I would like to thank the generosity of György J. Kollmann for allowing me to copy and work with these documents. For a brief biography of Mrs. István Dési-Huber, see note 270 on p. 87.

<sup>121</sup> For a brief biography of Lajos Barna, see note 605 on p.191.

<sup>122</sup> For details on the process of coding, see: Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson. "Concepts and Coding," in: *Making Sense of Qualitative Data*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1996, 26-54.



children's stories and their parents' descriptions with an eye to the gendered, "racial"/ethnic or possible class differences implied. I then checked to see if children were placed in state care as a result of their own behavior or their parental circumstances. Concerning children's parents I noted down all the reasons playing into the Guardianship Authorities' decision concerning state care. I found some typical phrases that were used time and again, such as "the immoral lifestyle" of the mother, or "the inability of parents to look after their child." I then tried to identify from the data in the files what combination of parental circumstances lay behind these notions. For example, single motherhood or fatherhood, the absence of the second parent's financial support, poverty, or parents' unemployment. If the reason for children's placement in state care was related to their own behavior, I also sorted out the main phrases used by authorities and what acts by children could be retrieved and related to these phrases. I rendered factual data under phrases used by authorities and used these categories to develop my arguments.

Last but not least, I made use of thirty semi-structured interviews, seventeen of which were conducted with men and women formerly in state care, while thirteen were conducted with retired educators and employees of various child protection authorities. Nine among the latter thirteen interviews were conducted by professionals in the field of child protection, which I address below. I conducted interviews with eight retired professionals and thirteen persons who spent part of their lives in state care. One of these persons identified herself as being of Romani origin.<sup>123</sup> Another four interviews, three of which were with persons who used to be in state care and one professional, I located in the oral history collection of the Institute for the History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. Altogether I had twelve interviews with men and six interviews with women who used to be in state care. This gender imbalance among former

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<sup>123</sup> Special thanks to Péter Szuhay for helping me get in touch with her.

residents can be explained by the greater number of boys among children in state care (see, Table 3. in the Appendix on the inflow of children in Budapest). Among retired professionals the male-female ratio was even more unbalanced with eight men and three women interviewees. Among professionals as much as I could identify, there were more men in leadership positions, for example, as heads of child protection institutions and residential homes.

When I set out to do my field work I was confident that tackling the sources related to the three levels of my analysis would provide enough of material to reveal intersectional inequalities in the working of child protection. However, a number of obstacles emerged. The most important of these was that in the 1950s data about children in state care was neither gender nor ethnically desegregated. The first obstacle could be easily overcome by looking at children's given names. The fact that children's case files made no systematic mention of who was of Romani origin was a much bigger problem. One way to come around it was to try and locate Roma from the information available about children's family background in their case files. Because of the segregated living conditions of Roma in Hungary, the names of streets and settlement areas as well as certain family names particular to Roma could have guided me to a close enough estimate. In a desperate attempt, I looked through my sample of case studies with an ethnographer specialized in researching Roma.<sup>124</sup> Unfortunately, however, this had few results for my Budapest and Szolnok cases. In my sample of cases from Budapest there were only one or two children who could be identified without doubt as Roma. This number was a little bit higher for Szolnok, because of the difference in the proportion of Romani population among the two locations, but still many were left with a question mark about the certainty of the identification. At the same time, I knew from educators' accounts and former

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<sup>124</sup> Special thanks to Péter Szuhay for his time and insights concerning my research.

residents of children's homes that, while not as many as in later decades, there were Romani children in state care during my period. Also while browsing through my archival material as well as the details of children's cases, I found a few occasions where authorities at times made mention of the fact that they were dealing with Romani clients.

I therefore decided to pick a new location to gather more data on Roma and Romani children in state care. I first looked for sources at the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County and then at the archives of the county's Regional Child Protection Center at Nyíregyháza. This search has finally brought up the desired results. I found that, probably due to the higher representation of Roma in this county, there was a county-wide discussion about the so-called "Gypsy-question" in the 1940s that stretched over into the early 1950s.<sup>125</sup> In the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County I could locate the above described sources from the first half of the 1950s and at Regional Child Protection Center at Nyíregyháza I had no problem identifying 79 cases that involved children of Romani origin. In my sample of 159 children from this county I could do a systematic comparison between Roma and non-Roma children in state care.

There is extensive literature in Hungary and there has been much debate about who could be called Roma and how to identify Romani interviewees for the purposes of sociological research.<sup>126</sup> In the present research I called Roma the children in those case files in which at

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<sup>125</sup> First, in fact, my attention was grabbed by an article analyzing the discussion of various professionals and county-level officials in Szatmár-Bereg County in the late 1940s. I noticed the name of one of the prominent child protection practitioner, the director of the Royal Children's Orphanage of Budapest (of which the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County was a successor institution). I realized that discussion about the "Gypsy-question" was related to child protection.

<sup>126</sup> This debate in the 1990s was largely due to the fact that since 1992 no official statistical data can be collected on ethnicity in Hungary. Act 63 of 1992 about the Protection of Personal Data and the Disclosure of Data of Public Interest [1992. évi LXIII törvény a személyes adatok védelméről és a közérdekű adatok nyilvánosságáról], [http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy\\_doc.cgi?docid=99200063.TV](http://net.jogtar.hu/jr/gen/hjegy_doc.cgi?docid=99200063.TV) (last accessed: April 18, 2011). There have been two opposing opinions on this question: According to sociologists István Szelényi and János Ladányi no "objective" criteria can be established to identify Roma. In their view, the main issue was rather,

least one, or preferably more than one of the following pieces of information were available: direct reference to the fact that the child involved, or his/her parents were of Romani origin; family name typical among Romani communities of the region; occupations typical among, and held almost exclusively by Roma, such as folk musician [népzenész], wooden wash tub maker [teknővályó], or mud brick maker [sármunkás]; or housing in a segregated Romani settlement.<sup>127</sup>

The other important obstacle I met was when I embarked on conducting interviews. I had a rather easy start because the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest had an ongoing interview project in 2006 through which they, as professionals in the field, contacted retired colleagues to record their life histories and work experience in child protection in the past decades. This project mostly covered former directors of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County and directors and educators who worked in residential homes under the Municipal Council of Budapest. I not only had access to these interviews but could get in touch with some of these retired professionals and approach them with my own questions as well.<sup>128</sup> This was of significant support considering that many of these aged professionals who

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why in different time periods and locations “certain members of society were ‘excluded’ by identifying them as ethnically Other, and what sociological characteristics these ethnic Others had.” Sociologists Gábor Kertesi, István Kemény and Gábor Havas, on the other hand, insisted on the possibility of finding a correct methodological tool (in accordance with research goals) to identify Roma and that such identification by non-Roma does not alter significantly over time and location. For details of this debate, see: János Ladányi. “Ki a cigány? [Who are Roma?]” *Szociális és etnikai konfliktusok. Tanulmányok a piacgazdasági átmenet időszakából (1987-2005)* [Social and Ethnic Conflicts: Studies from the Period of the Transition to Market Economy, 1987-2005]. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 2005, 408-448.

<sup>127</sup> For typical Romani family names I relied on a list prepared about the inhabitants of various Romani settlements in the county prepared by social workers in the region of Mátészalka in 1949 in an effort to initiate a clothes donation for “needy” Roma. See: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár (SZSZBML), XXIV.562. 593/1949, for further discussion of this case, see Chapter 4. Similar elements are included among the proposed criteria for an “objective guarantee system” to identify ethnic origin recommended in 2009 by Ernő Kállai, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary and András Jóri, Data Protection and Freedom of Information Commissioner of Hungary, for use by authorities dealing with cases of discrimination and racial hate crime. Name and place of residence (in a segregated neighborhood well-known to be inhabited by minorities), among others, are part of the so-called primary criteria and occupation are among the secondary criteria recommended by Kállai and Jóri. For further details, see: <http://www.kisebbségiombudsman.hu/data/files/158627216.pdf> (last accessed: 10 April, 2011).

<sup>128</sup> Special thanks to Mrs. Mária Szendrey, who was among the initiators of and is an active contributor to the interview project at the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest, for showing me all these

are now in their eighties I was not even expecting to be able to locate. Much to my surprise, however, most of these former educators had very little contact with children formerly under their care in residential homes. If this was not the case, they were very protective of their contacts. Simultaneously, I also found that the easiest snow-ball technique to collect interviewees did not work in case of people formerly in state care. While I was very aware of the fact that there was a stigma attached to growing up in state care I did not expect that in many cases people who spent years of their lives together did not keep in touch at all once they left residential care.

While forming obstacles to my research these findings were also informative about the nature of my data. The youngest of those people I was trying to get in touch with were in their late fifties, meaning that this decreased my chance of locating interviewees. Roma have a shorter average life expectancy in Hungary than non-Roma, a fact that made it even more unlikely to find Romani interviewees. Shame and stigma as well as the negative experiences some of these children went through made memories harder to deal with and talk about. Being a reflexive researcher, I tried to establish relations with people I approached for an interview, sensitive to issues they might not want to talk about. In many cases people who spent part of their lives in state care told me they had never talked about their experiences outside their narrowest family circle. In certain ways I felt that being able to relate some of these experiences to me, as a non-family member, contributed to processing and dealing with painful memories even though such a long time had passed since they took place. I have altered the names of all my interviewees throughout my text.

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interviews and enabling me to contact her retired colleagues. For further details on the interview project in Hungarian, see: [http://www.tegyesz.hu/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=64](http://www.tegyesz.hu/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=56&Itemid=64) (last accessed: April 18, 2011).

## Chapter 3. Historical and Legal Background

In the three main sections of this chapter I give a brief introduction first to the historical background, then the situation of Roma, and finally, the historical and legal background of child protection in Hungary between 1949 and 1956. I limited my focus to areas that are relevant for the understanding of issues I discuss in my dissertation.

### 3.1. Historical Background: Hungary, 1949-1956

A short introduction to the historical background of Hungary between 1949 and 1956 is relevant because it facilitates understanding the major turning points in the history of child protection in the early 1950s and the structure of the child protection system. Hungary suffered great losses during World War II. With its basic industries and infrastructure demolished and the loss of 40 per cent of the country's national wealth, the population faced extreme hardships following the end of the war.<sup>129</sup> Internal migration between 1945 and 1948 also affected about half a million of people.<sup>130</sup> This was topped with high rates of inflation and unemployment, not to mention families' personal losses. Since 6.2 per cent of the country's population had died in the war, there were many widows and orphaned children.<sup>131</sup> Between 1949 and 1956, the real income of the population declined significantly and the

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<sup>129</sup> Tibor Valuch. *Magyarország társadalomtörténete a XX. Század második felében [The History of Hungary in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century]*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001, 30.

<sup>130</sup> Between 1946 and 1948 about 170,000 people of German origin were forced to leave their homes and the country. As a consequence of the land reform and the abandoned homes and lands of the German minority about 136,000 thousand people were moved to occupy these assets. The exchange of Hungarian and Slovak populations following the redrawing of Hungarian national borders also brought about the leave of about 60, 000 Slovaks and the emigration of around 90,000 Hungarians into Hungary, see: Ágnes Tóth. *Telepítések Magyarországon 1945-1948 között. A németek, kitelepítése, a belső népmozgások és a szlovák-magyar lakosságcsere összefüggései [Forced Migration in Hungary between 1945 and 1948: The Forced Removal of Ethnic Germans, Internal Migration and the Sloval-Hungarian Population Exchange]*. Kecskemét: BKMÖL, 1993.

<sup>131</sup> Valuch, 30.

percentage of poor people in the state socialist period reached its acme.<sup>132</sup> Between 65 and 75 per cent of the 9.5 million Hungarians -that is, around 5.7-6.7 million people- could be considered poor in the first half of the 1950s. This especially affected the Romani population, as I address later on.

By 1949, the Hungarian Workers' Party (Magyar Dolgozók Pártja, MDP) had gained hold of full political power in Hungary and a single-party communist regime was established.<sup>133</sup>

During the rule of the MDP between 1949 and 1956, political pluralism ceased to exist and with the closing down of the institutions of democracy and the annihilation of political and personal freedom, the country was transformed into a dictatorship. From the summer of 1948 onwards, both political and administrative power was concentrated in the hands of the MDP, with Mátyás Rákosi as its secretary general.<sup>134</sup> Stalin's death in 1953 marked a historically important turning point in the 1949-1956 period.<sup>135</sup> During a period of about two years, between 1953 and 1955, several alterations were made in political and economic policy. Most significant was the redirection of investments from the industrial to the agricultural sector, the

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<sup>132</sup> Ferge. *Fejezetek*, 39, 46.

<sup>133</sup> The MDP was born in 1948 out of the forced merge of the Social Democratic Party (Szociáldemokrata Párt, SZDP), a historic and well-established representative of working-class rights in Hungary since the end of the nineteenth century, with the Hungarian Communist Party (Magyar Kommunista Párt, MKP), a party without much social base up until the end of World War II. The communists, and later the MDP, supported by Stalin's Soviet Union, drove to take sole control of the country's political and economic life.

<sup>134</sup> Mátyás Rákosi (1892-1971), was born in Ada (in today's Serbia) as the sixth child of a large Jewish family. He studied foreign trade at the Eastern Academy, a school for diplomats specializing in foreign relations with Hungary's Eastern trade partners, and he earned scholarships to Berlin and London. He joined the Hungarian Social Democratic Party in 1910. During World War I, he fought on the Russian front where he was captured and imprisoned until 1918. He returned to Hungary in 1919, entered the Communist Party of Hungary [Kommunisták Magyarországi Pártja] and was an active participant in the Communist Revolution of 1919. Afterwards, he took part in underground communist activities in Austria and from 1924 in Hungary, where a year later he was imprisoned. As part of an interstate agreement between the Soviet Union and Hungary he was taken to the Soviet Union in 1940. There he became acquainted with Stalin and became a leader of the MKP. He married Feodora Korniylova in 1942. He returned to Hungary in 1945 and became secretary general of the party as well as deputy prime minister and from 1952, prime minister. He maintained a personal cult similar to that of Stalin in the Soviet Union, a culminating point of which was the official celebration of his sixtieth birthday in 1952. After Stalin's death his position weakened and he was replaced by Imre Nagy. By 1955, he managed to regain power briefly until the outbreak of the Revolution of 1956. He then left for the Soviet Union where he was kept under surveillance and could not return to Hungary before his death.

<sup>135</sup> Due to ensuing power struggles and changes in Soviet foreign policy objectives, Rákosi was ordered to hand over his position as prime minister to another member of the Central Committee, Imre Nagy.

lowering of consumer product prices and increase in salaries, and the easing up of political purges. The outbreak of the Revolution of 1956 can be partly ascribed to the political and economic backlash that followed the end of Soviet backing for reformism in early 1955.

## Political and Administrative Structure

In order to understand the structure of the child protection system I briefly present the administrative structure of the country between 1949 and 1956. The party functioned in a highly centralized and hierarchical manner. The Central Committee and its political committee, the Politburo, along with the Secretariat, formed the head of the party and dictated as well as oversaw the work of the Parliament, the government and local administration. In this so-called dual structure, the administrative and executive functions of the state were intertwined. The leading party organs exercised decision-making power that could override decisions taken by state administrative and government bodies. County [megye]-, regional district [járás]-, municipal [város]-, community [község]- and municipal district [kerület]-level party organizations had similar power over local councils. Party organizations operating in work places could intervene with the decisions of the leadership of enterprises and collectives. The concentration of power in the hands of the head of a unified party-state was further assisted by a large state security police.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Established in 1948, the State Security Authority [Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH] was from 1950 onwards under the direct heading of the Council of Ministers. By 1953 it was comprised of “sixteen central departments and had its own units in every county, larger town and even the bigger municipal districts.” Until it was dissolved following the Revolution of 1956, it not only controlled the issuance of passports but also operated four internment camps and organized the forced removals of “class enemies” from their homes to various locations in the country. Between May-July 1951 in the Hungarian Gulag for example, fifteen thousand people from the old ruling and upper middle classes were forced to leave their homes, move to the country and become agricultural laborers. The members of ÁVH had also an active role in the construction of political trials, among them the show trials of former Social Democratic Party members as well as communists. One of the largest show trials in Hungary took place in 1949 when then Minister of Foreign Affairs, László Rajk and several high ranking army officials were sentenced to death and executed. See: Ignác Romsics. *Hungary in the Twentieth Century*. Budapest: Corvina, 1999, 272-273.



The council system, based on the Soviet example, was established in 1950 to replace former local governments.<sup>137</sup> At the lowest level were community, municipal district and municipal councils. Community councils were subordinated to regional district councils and regional district and municipal councils were under the authority of county councils.<sup>138</sup> Each council was led by a president [tanácselnök] appointed from above and executive committees [végrehajtó bizottság, VB] headed by a secretary [VB titkár]. The government, termed Council of Ministers [minisztertanács], was at the top of the hierarchy together with its head, who was the council president [miniszternatács elnöke]. The unified power structure of the party-state was also reflected in the reduced role of the Parliament in passing laws. The country was to a large extent governed by officially binding decrees [törvényerejű rendelet] brought by the Presidium [Elnöki Tanács] which replaced the former institution of presidency.<sup>139</sup>

### Catch-up Industrialization

Taking a brief look at the economic situation of Hungary between 1949 and 1956 is important for placing the parental background of children who came within the scope of child protection in the larger picture of the situation of the Hungarian population. Economically, the early phase of state socialism was characterized by extensive industrialization with an emphasis on building up Hungary's heavy industry and expanding the labor force. These processes were induced by military preparations in consequence of the onset of the Cold War internationally and Hungary's position within the Soviet sphere of influence, which sought to impose its industrialization model on Hungary. Economic investments were overwhelmingly poured into

<sup>137</sup> Act 1 of 1950 about local councils. [1950. évi I. törvény a helyi tanácsokról]. *Törvények és rendeletek hivatalos gyűjteménye* [The Official Collection of Acts and Decrees] (TRHGY) 1950, 1-9.

<sup>138</sup> There were nineteen counties established in Hungary following the redrawing of county boundaries in 1950.

<sup>139</sup> Between 1950 and 1956 there were twenty-seven to forty-eight such rulings per year brought by the Presidium, five times more than the number of laws.

industry and the production of raw materials. The state sector was governed along centrally designed national plans that were elaborated by the Central Planning Board and approved by the highest political bodies.<sup>140</sup> Accordingly, quotas determined labor and wage funds, the output targets of firms, and the ratios of centrally allocated materials.<sup>141</sup> The large-scale labor force needs of the expanding industrial sector led to a significant lowering of the unemployment rate by the early 1950s. While the end of the 1940s was characterized by an unemployment rate of up to 10 per cent, in the first half of the 1950s there was a lack of labor force in certain economic sectors.<sup>142</sup>

The country's industrial labor-power-need also motivated women's large-scale entrance into the labor force in the early 1950s.<sup>143</sup> Women made up slightly over 30 per cent of the total work force in Hungary in 1950. In twenty years this rate would reach almost 50 per cent.<sup>144</sup> As I highlight later on, among Roma, women's employment rate remained much lower.

<sup>140</sup> The state sector is composed of all organizations working with capital owned by the state. For a more detailed description of the economic system of state socialist Hungary, see: János Kornai. *Evolution of the Hungarian Economy, 1948-1998. Vol. II. Paying the Bill for Goulash Communism*. High Lakes: Atlantic Research and Publications Inc., 2000.

<sup>141</sup> In 1948, the National Office of Labor Management [Országos Munkaerő-Gazdálkodási Hivatal, OMH] was set up to coordinate the flow of labor power to the state sectors of employment. From 1949 on, it also took up the organization of vocational training, especially in the fields of industry and trade. From early 1950, it was renamed Office of Reserve Labor Power [Munkaerőtartalékok Hivatala, MTH]. Decree 8/1950 of the Council of Ministers about the organization of the Office of Reserve Labor Power [8/1950 (I.8.) M.T. sz. rendelethez Munkaerőtartalékok Hivatala szervezéséről], *Magyar Közlöny (MK)* 4 (1950): 37. For a detailed account of the establishment of these offices through their history in Hajdú-Bihar County, see: Zoltánné Mevró. "Az Országos Munkaerő-Gazdálkodási Hivatal és a Munkaerő-Tartalékok Hivatala 51.sz. debreceni kirendeltségének iratai a Hajdú-Bihar megyei levéltárban (1947-1951) [Documents of Unit No. 51. of the National Office of Labor Management and the Office of Reserve Labor Power of Debrecen in the Archives of Hajdú-Bihar County, 1947-1951]," *A Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Levéltár Évkönyve* 11 (1984): 139-151.

<sup>142</sup> Zoltán Dövényi. "Munkanélküliség szocialista módra [Socialist Unemployment]," in: Mrs. Abonyi, Jolán Palotás, József Becsei, and Csaba Kovács (eds). *A magyar társadalomföldrajzi kutatás gondolatvilága [Research Areas in Hungarian Social Geography]*. Szeged: Szegedi Tudományegyetem Gazdaság- és Társadalomföldrajzi Tanszék, 2002, 63-75; Valuch, 219.

<sup>143</sup> As I pointed out in Chapter 2, the gendered analysis of state socialist regimes underlines the connection between the structure of welfare provisions and women's entrance to or withdrawal from the labor force. For a detailed analysis of the circumstances of women's large scale entrance to the labor force between 1948 and 1953, see: Mária Palasik. "A nők tömeges munkábaállítása az iparban az 1950-es évek elején [The Mass Incorporation of Women to the Industrial Labor Force in the early 1950s]," in: Mária Palasik and Balázs Sipos (eds). *Házastárs? Munkatárs? Vetélytárs? A női szerepek változása a 20. századi Magyarországon [Partner? Colleague? Rival? The Changing Role of Women in 20th Century Hungary]*. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó, 2005, 78-100.

<sup>144</sup> Éva Fodor. *Working Difference: Women's Working Lives in Hungary and Austria, 1945-1995*. Durham, London: Duke University Press, 2003.

Feminist analysis concerned with the gender character of state socialist regimes has underlined women's double burden as both home makers and wage earners and pointed out that the socialist emancipation project did not bring about a redrawing of traditional gender roles in the distribution of household work.<sup>145</sup> In the workplace, this analysis drew attention to the unequal terms of women's position compared to men's.<sup>146</sup> Women's wages were on average 60 per cent of men's, and wage work was gender-segregated.<sup>147</sup> Most skilled work positions were available only to men, with only 12 per cent of women in skilled and 25 per cent in semi-skilled positions.<sup>148</sup> The female labor force was concentrated in light industries, such as textiles, shoemaking, and food processing.<sup>149</sup> Analysis also underlines differences among women, especially concerning the agricultural population and Roma.<sup>150</sup>

Catch-up industrialization rendered agriculture "a resource" for the industrial sector and the agricultural population "second class citizens."<sup>151</sup> The period between the end of World War II and the early 1960s saw privatization as well as collectivization efforts of agricultural land and the beginnings of Hungary's transition toward being an industrial society. At the end of the war Hungary was primarily an agricultural country with little industrial development. In 1945 former large estates were redistributed among the landless agricultural proletariat and small land owners. Roma, with a long history of exclusion from modernization processes in Hungary were, as I address later on, largely left out. By 1948, however, collectivization was

<sup>145</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 65; Susan Zimmermann. "Gender Regime and Gender Struggle in Hungarian State Socialism," *Aspasia. International Yearbook for Women's and Gender History of Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe*, 2010, 1-24; Mária Adamik. *Az államszocializmus és a "nőkérdés": "A legnagyobb ígélet – a legnagyobb megaláztatás [State Socialism and the "Women-Question": "The Greatest Promise - The Greatest Humiliation]*. Ph.D. Thesis, Budapest: Budapesti Közgazdasági Egyetem, 2000.

<sup>146</sup> Éva Fodor argues for the "limited inclusion of women" to the labor force, in *Working Difference*, 61-75.

<sup>147</sup> *Statistikai évkönyv [Statistical Yearbook]*, 1949-1955. Budapest: KSH, 1957, 60; Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 33-34; Zimmermann. "Gender Regime," 3.

<sup>148</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 66. This tendency of women's presence in semi- and unskilled work was also characteristic of the agricultural sector, Asztalos-Morell, 31.

<sup>149</sup> Zimmermann. "Gender Regime," 3.

<sup>150</sup> Asztalos-Morell. *Emancipation's Dead-end Roads? Studies in the Formation and Development of the Hungarian Model for Agriculture and Gender (1956-1989)*. Uppsala: Uppsala University, 1999; Zimmermann. "Gender Regime."

<sup>151</sup> Valuch, 188.

already at the center of agricultural policy. Reluctant peasants were pressured to enter collectives by economic as well as physically forceful means.<sup>152</sup> The number of independent farmers, who had gained land following the land distribution of 1945, however, still remained relatively high.<sup>153</sup> Following the launch of forced collectivization the agricultural population was in a dearth situation, leading to a significant labor migration from the agricultural to the industrial sectors of employment.<sup>154</sup> These workers could mostly join the unskilled positions of the industrial sector.<sup>155</sup>

Concerning social services, the new regime declared in 1952 that social insurance covered 50 per cent of the population. There was, however, another 50 per cent of the population left uncovered.<sup>156</sup> This was largely due to the fact that there was a new welfare scheme introduced over this period that tied social insurance to employment and advantaged state sector employees.<sup>157</sup> In the early 1950s, however, there were numerous groups outside these areas of employment, among them, previously covered social groups. The most severely affected were members of the agricultural population, new land owners, Roma, and industrial workers running their own small businesses.

A general lack of child care facilities and the limited number of places available made employed mothers' situation especially difficult.<sup>158</sup> The statistical report of 1952 on health

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<sup>152</sup> These pressures included the compulsory delivery of agricultural products at a low return price, tax increase, a campaign against so-called large estate owners [kulák] whose land was confiscated and they were interned or relocated affecting about 60-70 thousand peasants, Valuch, 192.

<sup>153</sup> In 1953 over 50 per cent of agricultural land was still in private ownership. Both the 1953 and the 1956 political turns resulted in a drop in the number of collectives and the strengthening of independent farming, Asztalos-Morell, 64.

<sup>154</sup> Valuch, 188, 215, 219.

<sup>155</sup> Romsics, 278.

<sup>156</sup> Szalai. "A társadalombiztosítás," 3.

<sup>157</sup> For details of the state socialist welfare model of Hungary, see: Haney. *Inventing the Needy*. I will be referring to the consequences of this employment-based welfare model for the regulation and practice of child protection in the early 1950s in my ensuing chapters.

<sup>158</sup> Éva Bicskei. "Our Greatest Treasure, the Child: The Politics of Child Care in Hungary, 1945-1956," *Social Politics* 13, 2 (2006): 151-187.

and culture stated that there were 380,000 children between zero and fourteen “whose mother was employed full-time.”<sup>159</sup> According to this “confidential report” 60 per cent of these children could not be placed in child care institutions due to lack of space. In case of children under three, this figure was much higher -85 per cent- affecting about 77,000 children. Even with the planned increase of places in crèches to 20,000 by 1954, the report admitted that only one fifth of working mothers’ children between zero and three would be able to find a place in crèches. Child care facilities in Budapest were sufficient for the placement of 11 per cent of all primary-school children in the capital, but in the countryside few facilities were available as late as 1952. A year later, according to the Ministry of Education, 41,877 children were attending day-care in Hungary, constituting only 3.5% of all primary school children.<sup>160</sup> Child care services were especially scarce in the countryside. The temporary child care institutions open for the period of intensive agricultural work in the summer covered 8 per cent of the zero to six group and 1 per cent of children below three in the countryside.<sup>161</sup> There was no national data in 1952 on child care facilities for schoolchildren in the countryside as “organization was still in progress.”<sup>162</sup>

The statistical report of 1952 stated that due to the “insufficient number of places” in child care facilities “in case of temporary difficulties, such as lack of accommodation or unemployment,” parents were forced to place their children in the care of child protection institutions.<sup>163</sup> According to the Central Statistical Office there were 25,940 children in state

<sup>159</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952 [The Statistical Report of 1952 on Health and Culture]*. Budapest: KSH, 1952, 1.

<sup>160</sup> *III. számú statisztikai tájékoztató az általános iskolák, gyermekotthonok 1953-1954. tanévvégi helyzetéről [Statistical Information No. 3. on the 1953-1954 Academic Year at Primary Schools and Residential Homes]*. Budapest: Oktatásügyi Minisztérium Terv és Pénzügyi Főosztály Statisztikai Osztálya, 1954, 17.

<sup>161</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952, 2.*

<sup>162</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952, 2.*

<sup>163</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952, 2.*

care in 1949 and 24,356 children in state care in 1950 (see, Table 1. in the Appendix).<sup>164</sup> This was approximately 1.1 per cent of all children aged zero to fourteen in 1949. The number of placements in 1952 was predicted to surpass the prewar figures of 1938.<sup>165</sup> In 1952, the reason for placing “the bulk of children placed in state care” was “parents' temporary difficulties, such as a lack of appropriate accommodation or unemployment.”<sup>166</sup> In 1955, according to “strictly secret” data by the Central Statistical Office, “close to one third” of the 6,020 placements were based on material reasons.<sup>167</sup> The report also stated that “despite still existing need,” the number of children placed in state care was decreased each year due to “the tightened preconditions” of state care for material reasons.<sup>168</sup>

In such circumstances single-headed households, which were mostly women-headed, were in a marginal position. In 1949, close to 13 per cent of households were headed by women.<sup>169</sup>

Haney notes that while single motherhood tended to be a transitional stage in women's lives, they had difficulties with integrating into the labor force and familial networks.<sup>170</sup> As most single mothers were young with limited skills, they occupied peripheral, usually low-paid, positions in the labor force. Due to the fact that they rarely worked in enterprises that offered extensive benefits, they also often had problems securing housing and child care.

Additionally, they had also less established extended familial networks to rely on. Data by the Central Statistical Office reveals that in 1955, the parents of children placed in state care

<sup>164</sup> *Szociális intézmények, 1950. évi adatok: A KSH jelentése [Statistical Data on Social Institutions from 1950: Report by the Central Statistical Office]*. Budapest: KSH, 1951, 12.

<sup>165</sup> According to the report there was a 12,449 children inflow in state care in 1938 adding up to 41,294 children in state care that year.

<sup>166</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés*, 1952, 14.

<sup>167</sup> *Gyermekevédelem 1955: A Központi Statisztikai Hivatal (KSH) jelentése [Child Protection in 1955: Report by the Central Statistical Office (KSH)]*, Budapest: KSH, 1956, 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Gyermekevédelem 1955*, 2.

<sup>169</sup> Rudolf Andorka and István Harcsa. “Long-term Modernization of Hungarian Society,” in: Rudolf Andorka, Tamás Kolosi, Richard Rose, and György Vukovich (eds). *A Society Transformed: Hungary in Time-Space Perspective*. Budapest: CEU Press, 1999, 21-49, 45.

<sup>170</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 76-85.

for material reasons were “mostly single mothers, separated parents, single working women or they were orphaned or completely abandoned children.”<sup>171</sup>

### 3.2. Roma in Hungary, 1949-1956

Since I address the state care of Romani children in this dissertation, I introduce briefly the situation of the Romani population and the framework of the so-called “Gypsy-question” in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Because of a general lack of sources and representative surveys concerning the Romani population and different approaches to the question “who can be called a Gypsy,” a debate I referred to in the previous chapter, there can be no exact data given about how many Roma lived in Hungary between 1949 and 1956.<sup>172</sup> According to estimates based on a non-representative national survey carried out during World War II by local doctors, there were 107,279 Roma (1.15%) out of a 9,325,355 total population within the present borders of Hungary.<sup>173</sup> In 1949, according to Hungary’s first national population census following World War II, there were only 21,387 Roma identified (0.2%) out of a total population of 9,204,799 Hungarians.<sup>174</sup> This figure was, however, based on language

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<sup>171</sup> *Gyermekvédelem* 1955, 2.

<sup>172</sup> The first representative Romani census of 1971 found 320,000 Roma living in Hungary. The first national censuses that recorded the number of the Roma in Hungary date back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century Habsburg Empire and the efforts of Empress Maria Theresa and her son, Joseph II to settle and regulate the Romani population. So-called Romani censuses appeared at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The first significant Romani census upon the request of the Ministry of Interior was carried out in 1893 and recorded 272,776 Roma (1.8%) out of a total population of 15,133,494 in the territory of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. This was the first census that defined Roma based on the opinion of the data collector and “the non-Romani environment” as opposed to those speaking a “Romani language” used by previous national censuses. According to estimates based on this Romani census there were 59,982 Roma (1.1%) out of 5,668,737 people in 1893 within the territory that is present-day Hungary, see: Gábor Kertesi and Gábor Kézdi. *A cigány népesség Magyarországon. Dokumentáció és adattár [The Romani Population of Hungary: Documents and Data Source]*. Budapest: Socio-Typo, 1998, 267.

<sup>173</sup> By 1941, when the Medical Officers’ Service [Tisztiorvosi Szolgálat] requested local doctors to estimate the number of Roma in their area of practice, Hungarian territory extended over 171,753 square kilometers (as opposed to 93,073 square kilometers in 1938) due to war annexations, See: Romsics, 204. According to the survey, Hungary’s total population was 14,534,574 with 208,755 Roma (1.43%). This survey used the judgment of the non-Romani environment to define who were of Romani origin, see: Kertesi and Kézdi, 283, 295.

<sup>174</sup> David M. Crowe. *A History of the Gypsies of Eastern Europe and Russia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, 91. The estimated number of Romani victims of the Holocaust is between 5 and 10,000 people, see: János Bársony and Ágnes Daróczi (eds). *Pharrajimos. Romák sorsa a náciizmus idején I-II. [The Fate of Roma during the Nazi Regime in Hungary]*. Budapest: L’Harmattan, 2004, 30.

criteria.<sup>175</sup> In non-representative reports provided by local councils, the only group of sources about the size of the Romani population between 1949 and 1956, it was the opinion of the data collector and “the non-Romani environment” that counted toward identifying Roma. Health care representatives, police and local council officials’ estimated that there were between 100,000 and 150,000 Roma (1.08-1.6% of the population) in Hungary in this time period.<sup>176</sup>

Roma have never been a homogenous group in Hungary. The long-term interest in trying to solve the “Gypsy-question” in Szabolcs-Szatmár County, for example, relates to the fact that northeast Hungary has belonged to the areas with the highest concentration of Roma in the country, mostly populated by the Romani-speaking Vlach. According to the 1941 census, the concentration of the Romani population was much higher there than the country average, reaching 2.4-3.7 per cent, and in some regions an even higher concentration of 3.8-4.6 per cent.<sup>177</sup> On the other hand, few Roma traditionally lived in Budapest, one of my main sources of data.

After the end of World War II, more than one third of Roma were still day-laborers working in the agriculture and living in rural areas.<sup>178</sup> Hungarian-speaking musicians traditionally

<sup>175</sup> Historian, David M. Crowe claims that “there were at least 6,000 more Roma in Hungary at this time who chose not to identify themselves as Gypsies” due to “the strong anti-minority spirit in Hungary at the time,” Crowe. *A History*, 92. Pointing to other estimates he stated that “if nationality had been the criteria” there would have been 31-37,000 (0.3-0.4%) claiming Romani nationality, David M. Crowe. “The Gypsies in Hungary,” in David M. Crowe and John Koltsi (eds). *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe*. Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991, 119.

<sup>176</sup> István Feitl. “A cigányság ügye a napirendről lekerült: Előterjesztés az MDP Politikai Bizottsága számára 1956 áprilisából [The Case of the Roma was Taken off the Agenda: Proposal to the Political Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party in April 1956],” *Múltunk* 1 (2008): 257-272. The earliest data by the Central Statistical Office is from 1960 indicating 186,536 Roma (1,8%) out of a total Hungarian population of 9,976,530 people.

<sup>177</sup> Figures calculated by Kertesi and Kézdi for the present-day territory of Hungary, 292-293. Another area of the country with a higher concentration of Roma is the south where Beash live, speaking an archaic version of Romanian.

<sup>178</sup> István Kemény. “A teljes foglalkoztatottságtól a munkanélküliségig és a láthatatlan gazdaságig: A magyarországi cigányokról [From Full-Employment to Unemployment and the Invisible Economy: About the



lived in Budapest, but the 1941 survey did not extend to that city. In Szolnok County, my other main source of data, the concentration of Roma in 1941 (1.8%) was also above the country-average, but not as high as in Szabolcs-Szatmár.<sup>179</sup> Regions with a higher concentration of Roma in Szolnok County had up to 2.8-3.4 per cent Romani inhabitants.<sup>180</sup> The Roma of Szolnok County were Hungarian-speaking Romungros. Most Roma in Hungary lived in segregated Romani settlements, usually at the edge of non-Romani villages and towns or in completely detached settlements.

As with the non-Romani majority population, the early 1950s marked a transition period in the lives of Roma. They were, however, among the hardest hit by the economic changes of the period. The traditional occupations from which the majority of Roma made a living, such as wood carving, iron-making or trading as well as agricultural work, became highly marginalized and mostly disappeared in these years. In addition to the elimination of private industry and local trade, traditional Romani occupations were criminalized. Roma were, for example, forbidden to receive a trading license, and traveling was kept under strict police surveillance.<sup>181</sup> Due to the disappearance of the private service sector, musicians also lost their source of income. While over a third of Roma were agricultural day-laborers at the end of World War II, the reallocation of large estates meant a loss of their employment opportunities. Roma were also left out of the land reform of 1945 whereby 35 per cent of the

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Hungarian Gypsies],” [http://www.hhrf.org/kissebsegkutatas/kk\\_2000\\_04/cikk.php?id=346](http://www.hhrf.org/kissebsegkutatas/kk_2000_04/cikk.php?id=346) (last accessed: April 18, 2010).

<sup>179</sup> Kertesi and Kézdi, 289.

<sup>180</sup> Kertesi and Kézdi, 289.

<sup>181</sup> Private trade was eliminated in 1947 affecting Roma as well as non-Roma. Attila Márfi. “Állami segítség vagy erőszakos asszimiláció? Az 1945 utáni roma történelem forrásairól és értelmezéséről [State Support or Forced Assimilation? The Sources and Interpretation of Post-1945 Romani History],” in: Attila Márfi (ed.). *Cigánysors: A cigányság történeti múltja és jelene I. [The Fate of Gypsies: The Historical Past and Present of the Gypsies. I.]*. Pécs: Emberháza Alapítvány, Erdős Kamill Cigánymúzeum, Cigány Kulturális és Közművelődési Egyesület, 2005, 122-123; Kemény. “A teljes foglalkoztatottságtól,” [http://www.hhrf.org/kissebsegkutatas/kk\\_2000\\_04/cikk.php?id=346](http://www.hhrf.org/kissebsegkutatas/kk_2000_04/cikk.php?id=346) (last accessed: April 18, 2010); István Kemény. *Beszámoló a Magyarországi cigányok helyzetével foglalkozó, 1971-ben végzett kutatásról [Report of the Reserch on the Situation of the Hungarian Gypsy Community Conducted in 1971]*. Budapest: MTA Szociológiai Kutató Intézet, 1976, 33.

country's agricultural land was redistributed among the former landless or small landholder agricultural proletariat.<sup>182</sup> Pushed out of their former areas of occupation as well as denied new economic opportunities, Roma were thus in a precarious situation in the first half of the 1950s.<sup>183</sup> The onset of large-scale industrialization offered job opportunities for the Roma but mostly in the lower-paid, unskilled sectors of heavy industry, such as mining or iron-making.<sup>184</sup> In the early 1950s, Roma were "one of the most abandoned social groups, living in the poorest circumstances in Hungarian society."<sup>185</sup> They did not begin to enter the state sectors of employment before the early 1960s.

A survey from 1955 taken in the south of Hungary illustrates well the hard circumstances and the resulting poverty the Roma were facing.<sup>186</sup> A report about a Romani settlement of twenty-eight families, with thirty-six adult men and forty adult women, noted that a mere eight persons were employed in the local state farm of the wood industry and another three persons worked as musicians. This means that, out of seventy-six active adults only 14 per cent had a source of income. The report also described the poverty of the settlement. It consisted out of two two-room houses while the rest of Roma were living in one-room huts. Families had on average six children. People were often reported to be sick because they fed themselves from dead animals and their wells had unclean water.

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<sup>182</sup> Valuch, 190.

<sup>183</sup> Anthropologist, Michael Stewart mentions that Roma were supportive of the Communist Party in the elections after World War II, and due to the role of the Red Army in putting an end to Nazi deportations communists "could draw on considerable goodwill from the Gypsies." Nevertheless, "when facing peasant refusal to collectivize land, the Communists needed other rural people with nothing to lose to form co-operative farms, and they turned to the Gypsies. When later, the economic position of the co-operative improved and peasants joined [...] they drove the Gypsies out straight away." Michael Stewart. "Communist Roma Policy, 1945-1989 as Seen Through the Hungarian Case," in: Will Guy (ed.). *Between Past and Future: The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe*. Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, 2001, 71-92, 74-75.

<sup>184</sup> According to the 1971 representative Roma survey 11 per cent of Roma household heads were employed in skilled, 10 per cent in semi-skilled, and 44 per cent in unskilled jobs. Another 15 per cent still worked in the agricultural sector, and 3 per cent were day-laborers. While by that time over 60 per cent of active Hungarian women were employed, Roma women's employment rate was 30 per cent, Kemény. *Beszámoló*, 33, 57.

<sup>185</sup> Attila Márfi. "Pécsi cigánykolóniák a tanácskorszakban (1950-1990) [Gypsy Settlements in Pécs during the Period of Local Councils, 1950-1990]," in: Márfi. *Cigánysors*, 149.

<sup>186</sup> Baranya Megyei Levéltár (BML) Pécsváradi Járási Tanács VB Ig. oszt. 9-1/1955. II. 3, cited by Márfi. *Cigánysors*, 159.

The growing body of recent historical research on the situation of Roma in state socialist Hungary reveals that in spite of the fact that the first party decree concerning the “the Gypsy-question” appeared in 1961 only, there was considerable interest in the issue beforehand, including the early 1950s.<sup>187</sup> Public discussion and practice by authorities shows that the question was defined in terms of Romani assimilation mixed with racial discrimination.<sup>188</sup> Romani poverty was understood as backwardness and was attributed to a number of negative characteristics inherent to Romani lifestyle. They were featured in official reports and recommendations for a “solution of the Gypsy-question” as posing social and health-related dangers to the wider Hungarian society due to their cultural backwardness.<sup>189</sup> Romani unemployment was blamed on their unwillingness to work. Consequently, authorities saw their regular involvement, compulsory if necessary, in productive work as a way towards their “uplift.” The first party declaration concerning the situation of Roma from 1961 marks the beginning of an “explicitly assimilationist Gypsy policy” that identified the Roma as a social layer as opposed to an ethnic minority.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>187</sup> There has been relatively little written about the situation of Roma in early state socialist Hungary. Recent historical research, however, has looked not only at data gathered by local council and ministerial employees on Roma but located alternative sources from the period and applied non-traditional historical methodology, such as discourse analysis of newspaper articles and essays concerning Roma and the “solution of the Gypsy-question.” These sources reveal that even before 1961 there was considerable interest in the question. See: Péter Apor. “Cigányok tere: Kísérlet a kommunista romapolitika közép-kelet-európai összehasonlító elemzésére, 1945-1961 [The Space of the Gypsies: An Interpretation of the Birth of the Communist Roma Policy in East-European Comparison, 1945-1961],” *Aetas* 2 (2009): 69-86; János Bársony. “Romák sorsa az 1940-es évek második felében Magyarországon [The Fate of Roma in the Second Half of the 1940s in Hungary],” *Múltunk* 1 (2008): 222-256; Feitl; Erna Sággy. “Cigánypolitika Magyarországon az 1950-1960-as években [Gypsy Politics in Hungary in the 1950s and 1960s],” *Múltunk* 1 (2008): 273-308.

<sup>188</sup> Sággy, 274 ; Apor, 73, 85.

<sup>189</sup> Apor, 72, 75.

<sup>190</sup> Barna Mezey (ed.). *A magyarországi cigánykérdés dokumentumokban, 1422-1985 [The Hungarian Gypsies Question in Documents, 1422-1985]*. Budapest: Kossuth, 1986, 38. “A cigánylakosság helyzetének megjavításával kapcsolatos egyes feladatokról, Az MSZMP KB Politikai Bizottságának határozata, 1961. június 20 [Tasks Connected to the Improvement of the Situation of the Gypsy Population, Decree by the Politburo of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party’s Central Committee, 20 June, 1961],” *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai [The Decrees and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party]*. Budapest: Kossuth, 1979, 602-605, cited by Mezey, 240-242. An early manifestation of assimilation being a desired pathway for Roma to be taken in Hungary appeared in a party-sponsored journal in 1946. See: András Kálmán. “A magyar cigányok problémája [The Problem of the Hungarian Gypsies],” *Társadalmi Szemle [Social Review]* 8-9 (1946): 656-658. It advocated the entrance of Roma into the industrial sector of employment

The general approach towards Roma in state socialist Hungary was assimilationist and documents discussing “the Gypsy-question,” defined them as a problem group.<sup>191</sup> This standpoint, however, did not originate with the onset of state socialism in Hungary. In the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy the issue was mainly viewed in terms of an administrative problem and focus fell on a segment of about 10 per cent of the Romani population, called “wandering Gypsies.”<sup>192</sup> Between the 1920s and World War II, as right-wing ideologies gained terrain, Roma were increasingly identified as “work avoiders” and criminals who “only brought damage to Hungarian society.”<sup>193</sup> By World War II, all Roma were already identified as a problem group. The latest scholarship also points out that efforts to annihilate the Roma during World War II were motivated mostly by their definition as “work avoiders” as opposed to the “hierarchy of races” on the basis of which “the elimination of Jews” took place during the Holocaust.<sup>194</sup>

In the first half of the 1950s, the government engaged in two characteristically discriminatory practices: issuing separate black identity cards to Roma between 1955 and 1961, and enforcing bathing between the 1940s and 1980s. The idea of using separate-color black identity cards to identify the Roma was initiated by the Ministry of Interior around the

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as a way out of their backward condition. In other countries of the region, the official declaration of an assimilationist stand towards the Roma and ensuing practice began already in the late 1940s. In Czechoslovakia Roma were defined as a “socially backward group” in 1948; in Poland the enforced settlement of travelling Roma began in 1949; in Romania, a Ministry of Interior decree declared the necessity of settling Roma among the non-Roma population in 1951; Apor, 72, 74, 75. In the Soviet Union the status of national minority was withdrawn from Roma in 1936, Stewart, 75.

<sup>191</sup> Apor, 85. For a collection of such documents focused on Hajdú-Bihar County, see: Sándor Gyergyói. *Kirekesztéstől a beilleszkedésig [From Exclusion to Integration]* (Vol.2.). Debrecen: Mozaik Kiadó, 1990;

<sup>192</sup> For further details, see: László Pomogyi. *Cigánykérdés és cigányügyi igazgatás a polgári Magyarországon [The Gypsy-Question and Administrative Regulations concerning the Gypsies in Modern Hungary]*. Budapest: Osiris, Századvég, 1995, 50.

<sup>193</sup> Gyergyói (Vol.1.), 29; Pomogyi. *Cigánykérdés*, 51.

<sup>194</sup> Apor, 80.

introduction of identity cards for all Hungarians in 1953.<sup>195</sup> The Roma's identity cards were valid for one year instead of five years, as were the regular ones, and their bearers had to go through a police registration procedure that could involve taking their finger prints. Historian Gyula Purcsi Barna reveals that behind this practice was a move to label all Roma living in segregated Romani settlements as "wandering Gypsies" without "proper work and place of living, who most likely lived from criminal activity."<sup>196</sup> Police documents produced in relation to the black identity cards included a registration of Roma in the countryside living in segregated settlements. As I describe in Chapter 6, recommendations by police included a reference to the placement of Romani children in state care.

Forced bathing was a practice related to the assumption that Roma posed a health risk to the non-Romani population.<sup>197</sup> In the name of disinfecting and cleaning Romani settlements and their population, health officials often used police and military force or assistance by local council authorities. Cleaning not only involved taking an obligatory shower but chemical disinfection with DDT powder, known by health inspectors carrying out forced bathing to have strongly damaging effects to the nervous system.<sup>198</sup> All bodily hair was cut. Forced bathing usually took place without prior notice, with officials surrounding Romani settlements to make sure nobody could escape. They lasted from half a day to four days at a time and such occasions were usually used for the public humiliation of Roma.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Gyula Purcsi Barna. "Fekete személyi igazolvány és munkatábor: Kísérlet a "cigánykérdés megoldására" az ötvenes évek Magyarországon [Black Identity Cards and Labor Camps: Attempts to the "Solution of the Gypsy-Question" in the 1950s in Hungary]," in: *A cigánykérdés "gyökeres és végleges megoldása."* *Tanulmányok a XX. századi "cigánykérdés" történetéből [The "Radical and Final Solution" of the Gypsy-Question: Studies on the 20<sup>th</sup> Century History of the "Gypsy-Question"]*. Debrecen: Csokonai Kiadó, 2004, 248-284.

<sup>196</sup> Purcsi, 253.

<sup>197</sup> For a detailed discussion, see: Gábor Bernáth (ed.). *Kényszermosdatások a cigánytelepeken, 1940-1985 [Forced Bathing at Romani Settlements, 1940-1985]*. Budapest: Roma Sajtóközpont, 2002.

<sup>198</sup> Bernáth, 114.

<sup>199</sup> Bernáth, 37, 117.

Child protection and “the Gypsy-question” had been connected over several decades in Hungarian history by the time of the onset of state socialism. I refer to this common history in the following section of this chapter.

### **3.3. Historical and Legal Background to Child Protection in Hungary, 1898-1956**

In this part of my chapter I concentrate on placing the historical and legal background of the Hungarian child protection system between 1949 and 1956 in a long-term perspective. As I argue in this dissertation child protection between 1949 and 1956, as part of the larger welfare system of Hungary, went through a period of change in which social support became attached to employment. In 1953-1954 material abandonment became attached to parents’ and relatives’ inability to work. In order to place this 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations into the larger framework of historical continuities and change, in this part of my chapter I take a historical look at state-provided child protection since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary. I show that the period between 1949 and 1956 was in fact a double transition in child protection history. The 1953-1954 shift not only entailed the reconstruction of child protection along the lines of the new welfare structure of the country, meaning a reduction of a wider understanding of postwar need to a narrower work ability based understanding of need, but also a shift from the prewar settlement- and family care-based child protection system to an institutional system.

I first introduce my use of terminology and scope of research. Then I describe the historical and legal background of child protection between 1898 and 1949, followed by an overview of the main changes that took place between 1949 and 1956 at national and local institutional levels, and the steps involved in children’s placement in state care. I also give a brief

summary of the scale of child protection in the 1949-1956 period by presenting figures and costs related to children's placement in state care. I limit this section of my introduction to the minimum of information needed to understand my ensuing chapters.

## Terminology

Before I start, I need to make a note on my use of institutional and legal terminology related to child protection. In the Hungarian usage of the term in the past, child protection covered a wide group of institutions and welfare services. The group of services usually associated with child welfare in Western European and North American literature, such as crèches, kindergartens, school day-care centers, health care services, etc., used to fall under "general child protection" or "open child protection" in the Hungarian professional terminology.

Services identified with child protection as opposed to child welfare in Western European and North American literature, including foster care, residential care, adoption and reformatory education, and usually entailing the removal of children from the care of their biological parents and relatives, were a narrower branch of child protection in Hungary, called "special child protection."<sup>200</sup> I use the term child protection to identify this latter group of services and their legal background. Child protection thus involved abandoned/endangered children's placement in state care and covered the institutions of residential care, foster care and adoption as well as reformatory education. My main focus is the state care and especially residential care of children aged six to fourteen, that is, primary-school-age children. I do not cover reformatory education. While that was part of child protection, it had a separate

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<sup>200</sup> Léna Szilvási. "Változásban a gyermekvédelem [Changes in the Structure of Hungarian Child Protection]," in: Léna Szilvási (ed.). *Gyermek-család-társadalom: Szociális munka gyermekes családokkal [Children, Families and Society: Social Work with Families with Children]*. Budapest: Hilscher Rezső Szociálpolitikai Egyesület, 1996, 7-8. The official introduction of child welfare services to Hungarian child protection terminology is connected to the so-called Child Protection Law of 1997. Act 31 of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration [1997. évi XXXI. törvény a gyermekek védelméről és a gyámügyi igazgatásról], <http://net.jogtar.hu> (last accessed: March 17, 2010).

institutional network. I also do not reflect in detail on regulations and practices targeting children with disabilities.

## Historical and Legal Background, 1898-1949

Linking material abandonment/endangerment in child protection in 1953-1954 to work inability, while part of the larger socialist restructuring of welfare provisions, was in fact in line with the historical understanding of poverty alleviation focused on the group of the so-called worthy poor. Out of the wide variety of people over different historical time periods who were unable to support themselves, state-provided social support since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary mainly addressed those it defined worthy of support, namely poverty due to work inability.<sup>201</sup> This group consisted of the physically or mentally disabled, the ill or hospitalized, and the paupers. A second group of poor, the destitute [ínséges], consisted of those who, following natural disasters, such as earthquakes, or economic hardships, although able to work, became temporarily unemployed.<sup>202</sup> After World War I and during the international economic crisis in the late 1920s, for example, the circle of those perceived to be needy and worthy of state-provided social support was much enlarged.<sup>203</sup> The last group of the poor consisted of those who were labeled unworthy and whose poverty was seen to be resulting out of their own fault.<sup>204</sup> This group of people, called wandering people [csavargó] or work-shy [munkakerülő] were generally excluded from state-provided support, and were instead criminalized.

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<sup>201</sup> László Pomogyi. *Szegényügy és községi illetőség a polgári Magyarországon [The Issue of Poverty and Place of Residence in Modern Hungary]*. Budapest: Osiris, 2001, 58.

<sup>202</sup> Pomogyi. *Szegényügy*, 58.

<sup>203</sup> Decree 42.344/1926 of the Ministry of Welfare and Labor about the placement of unemployed parents' children into child protection institutions [42.344/1926 N.M.M. rendelet a munkanélküliek gyermekeinek a m.kir. állami gyermekmenhelybe felvétele tárgyában], *Népegészségügy [Public Health]*, 8 (1926): 587.

<sup>204</sup> Pomogyi. *Szegényügy*, 58.



## The Category of Material Abandonment/Endangerment

As historian Susan Zimmerman argues, with the establishment of state-provided child protection at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary the protection of children became part of the larger system of poverty alleviation, and, from the perspective of material need, focused on the children of the first two groups of poor people.<sup>205</sup> Abandonment as a term became part of the first laws and decrees on child protection in this time period.<sup>206</sup> It originally referred to children under fifteen who “had no property and no relatives liable for their maintenance and upbringing” or whose “maintenance and upbringing was not appropriately secured by relatives, benefactors and charity institutions or organizations.”<sup>207</sup> With the rapid appearance of moral abandonment (I detail next), abandonment in fact came to denote children perceived to be in material need. It was not until 1925, however, that decree 2.000/1925 of the Ministry of Welfare and Labor specified “material abandonment” as a separate category from “moral abandonment” targeting children under fifteen without property who, as foundlings or for other reasons, had no parents or relatives “liable and able to provide for their maintenance and upbringing,” and whose support could not be secured by other relatives, “charitable persons and charity institutions or organizations.”<sup>208</sup> This means

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<sup>205</sup> Susan Zimmerman. *Prächtige Armut: Fürsorge, Kinderschutz und Socialreform in Budapest. Das “Socialpolitische Laboratorium” der Doppelmonarchie im Vergleich zu Wien, 1873-1914* [Splendid Poverty: Poor Relief, Child Provision and Social Reform in Budapest. The “Social Laboratory” of the Habsburg Monarchy Compared to Vienna, 1873-1914]. Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997.

<sup>206</sup> Act 20 of 1877 about the organization of tasks concerning guardianship [1877. évi XX. törvénycikk a gyámsági és gondnoksági ügyek rendezéséről], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=5784> (last accessed: April 18, 2010); Act 21 of 1898 about the coverage of the costs of the public care for the sick [1898. évi XXI. törvénycikk a nyilvános betegápolás költségeinek fedezéséről], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=6717> (last accessed: April 18, 2010); Act 8 of 1901 about state-provided children’s homes [1901. évi VIII. törvénycikk az állami gyermekmenhelyekről], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=6822> (last accessed: April 18, 2010); Act 21 of 1901 about the care of children above seven years old in need of public relief [1901. évi XXI. törvénycikk a közsegélyre szoruló 7 éven felüli gyermekek gondozásáról], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=6835> (last accessed: April 18, 2010); Decree 1/1903 *MRT* 1903.

<sup>207</sup> Decree 1/1903 *MRT* 1903, 534.

<sup>208</sup> Decree 2.000/1925 of the Ministry of Welfare and Labor about the placement of children to the Hungarian Royal children’s homes, the modification of the costs and the method of their collection for the care of children accepted and the exceptional extension of the period of care [2.000/1925 N.M.M. eln. sz. rendelet a m. kir.

that besides foundlings, they were the children of paupers and those unable to work who were covered under material abandonment.

### **The Category of Moral Abandonment/Endangerment**

Children of the last group of poor, those seen unworthy of material support were, however, also addressed by state-provided child protection. Concern about children's moral depravity and delinquency was a growing force behind declarations of abandonment and from the early 1900s onwards abandonment as a term was gradually narrowed down, and delinquency and the protection of delinquent children came to the forefront of child protection.<sup>209</sup> There were already references to fathers' obligations concerning their children's morality in the so-called Guardianship Law of 1877, which limited the parental authority of fathers in cases when they "completely neglected the upbringing and education of their children or endangered their morality or physical well-being."<sup>210</sup> Drawing on this act, decree 1/1903 of the Ministry of Interior stated that abandoned children whose "legal guardians refus[ed] to place them in the care of children's homes" and who "neglect[ed] their upbringing and education and endanger[ed] their morality or physical well-being" were to be assigned an official guardian. It also allowed Orphan Guardianship Authorities to order the institutionalization of children "not abandoned" if they saw it to be "in the interest of the child" and temporary institutional

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állami gyermekmenhelybe való felvétel módja, a felvett gyermekek gondozási költségeinek viselése s a költség behajtásának módja tekintetében fennálló rendelkezések módosításáról, úgyszintén a gyermekek gondozási idejének kivételes meghosszabbításáról], *Magyarországi Rendeletek Tára [The Collection of Hungarian Decrees] (MRT) 1903*, 669- 670.

<sup>209</sup> For a detailed discussion of child protection and the institutionalization of delinquency in the two capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, see Susan Zimmermann and Gerhard Melinz. *Gyermek és ifjúságvédelem Budapesten és Bécsben a dualizmus korában [Child Protection in Budapest and Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy]*, in: *Gyermeksorsok és gyermekvédelem Budapesten a Monarchia idején [Children's Lives and Child Protection in Budapest during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy]*. Budapest: Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár, 1996.

<sup>210</sup> Act 20 of 1877, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=5784> (last accessed: April 18, 2010). Father's parental authority was also limited if they endangered the inheritance of their children by maltreatment. This law ordered the establishment of Orphan Guardianship Authorities [Árvaszékek], working as independent authorities at local municipal level. Until the early 20th century they mostly dealt with organizational issues around inheritance and thus targeted orphans of the middling classes.

placements in “vitally urgent cases.”<sup>211</sup> Beginning with 1907 authorities already had the right to interfere in families’ lives on basis of “moral abandonment.”<sup>212</sup> Orphan Guardianship Authorities had the right for the immediate temporary placement of children below fifteen who committed a crime as well as those claimed to be “exposed to moral depravity in their present environment or were on the way towards delinquency.”<sup>213</sup> According to the decree of 1925 moral abandonment was independent from parents’ and relatives’ material circumstances and targeted children under fifteen “in danger of moral depravity due to the neglect of their upbringing or the harmful influence of their environment or if as a result of the aforementioned or their own inclination [children] were on the way towards delinquency.”<sup>214</sup> This means that the regulation of families under the umbrella of “moral abandonment” was well-established in child protection by the systemic changes of 1949.

Historians pointed out that the appearance of the state as a provider of child protection services in the 19<sup>th</sup> century brought about a new framework for the regulation and policing of families. Gábor Gyáni, for example, emphasizes that the rapid expansion of the category of abandonment beginning in the early twentieth century brought both juvenile deviancy and children’s lives outside the legal framework of the family under the umbrella of policing by state authorities, thus leading to the criminalization and illegitimacy of such conditions.<sup>215</sup>

Thus by the time of the political turn to one-party governance in Hungary in 1949, moral

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<sup>211</sup> Decree 1/1903 *MRT* 1903, 535.

<sup>212</sup> For a detailed discussion of child protection and the institutionalization of delinquency in the two capitals of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, see Susan Zimmermann and Gerhard Melinz. *Gyermek és ifjúságvédelem Budapesten és Bécsben a dualizmus korában* [Child Protection in Budapest and Vienna during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy], in: *Gyermeksorsók és gyermekvédelem Budapesten a Monarchia idején* [Children’s Lives and Child Protection in Budapest during the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy]. Budapest: Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár, 1996.

<sup>213</sup> Decree 60.000/1907 *MRT* 1907, 1293-1306.

<sup>214</sup> Decree 2.000/1925 *MRT* 1925, 669- 670.

<sup>215</sup> Gábor Gyáni. “A regulázó gondoskodás [Regulative Care],” in: Pál Léderer, Tamás Tenczer and László Ulicska (eds). “*A tettetésnek minden mesterségeiben jártasok....*” *Koldusok, csavargók, veszélyeztetett gyerekek a modernkori Magyarországon* [“Well-Versed in all Forms of Pretence:” *Beggars, Vagrants and Endangered Children in Modern-Age Hungary*]. Budapest: Új Mandátum Könyvkiadó, 1998, 11-28.

abandonment was already associated with illegitimate birth and thereby the gender-specific connotations of single motherhood and prostitution. It was also associated with juvenile criminality due to children's own inclination or the harmful influence of the parental and home environment.

### **Child Protection as a “Solution of the Gypsy-Question,” 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> Century**

It is moral abandonment/endangerment that links child protection history to the history of Roma in Hungary, and it is another continuity in which the early state socialist approach to the “Gypsy-question” and state care must be seen. Legal historian László Pomogyi, draws attention to the fact that at the introduction of the state-provided child protection system in Hungary and the appearance of the first moral abandonment regulations in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “due to an unlucky overlap of events,” moral abandonment came to be applied “frequently against Romani children.”<sup>216</sup> The unlucky overlap of events concerns a series of murders in 1907 that were proved to be committed by a group of Roma. In the ensuing “national hysteria” the convicted were claimed to have eaten up the body parts of their victims and were brutally executed.<sup>217</sup> National discussion from the time shows that as a result, the morality of all Roma became implicated, and at this point, child protection emerged as a possible solution to the “entire Gypsy-question”. Advocates of this position argued that “the lifestyle” of all Roma was “morally endangering” and that the placement of Romani children in state care would be the way to “save” the youngest generation and thereby also affect change among Roma. Numerous Romani children were taken away from their parents and

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<sup>216</sup> Pomogyi. *Szegényügy*, 95; Pomogyi. *Cigánykérdés*, 209.

<sup>217</sup> Pomogyi. *Cigánykérdés*, 37-38; Zita Deáky. “Cigány gyermekek a családon kívül (a 18. századtól a 20. század első feléig) [Gypsy Children Outside the Family from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century],” in: Zita Deáky and Pál Nagy (eds). *A cigány kultúra történeti és néprajzi kutatása a Kárpát-medencében [Historical and Ethnographic Research on Gypsy Culture in the Carpathian Basin]*. Budapest, Gödöllő: Magyar Néprajzi Társaság Szent István Egyetem Gazdasági és Társadalomtudományi Kar, 2010.

placed in state care over the following decade. A regulation brought against “wandering Gypsies” as late as 1916 still embraced this idea. According to decree 15.000/1916 of the Ministry of Interior children of “wandering Gypsies” could be removed from their parents’ care if they were perceived not to be under “proper care.”<sup>218</sup>

Pomogyi also underlines that this early 20<sup>th</sup> century “solution of the Gypsy-question” was not entirely new but related to 18<sup>th</sup> century regulations and practice towards Roma under the rule of the Habsburg emperors Maria Theresa and Joseph II.<sup>219</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Habsburg Empire, Maria Theresa and Joseph II attempted to assimilate Roma into the Hungarian peasantry by the prohibition of traveling, wearing traditional clothes and speaking their language, and by pressure on Roma to take up occupations, such as road construction and agriculture. Part of this program was the forced removal of Romani children “for re-education as wards of the state,” and children’s placement with peasant foster families. In 1780 over 17,000 children were taken from their families but “within a few years nearly all of them ran away from their foster families and schools.”<sup>220</sup>

As I claim in chapter 6, the idea that the placement of Romani children in state care was a way to solve “the entire Gypsy-question” did not disappear by the early 1950s. In fact, it dominated public discussion concerning Roma during World War II and re-emerged in Ministry of Interior documents in 1953. It is this larger picture concerning the continuing connection between child protection and the “solution of the Gypsy-question” that serves as one of the main backbones of this dissertation.

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<sup>218</sup> Pomogyi. *Szegényügy*, 99.

<sup>219</sup> Pomogyi. *Szegényügy*, 97.

<sup>220</sup> Erin Jenne. “The Roma of Central and Eastern Europe: Constructing a Stateless Nation,” in: Jonathan P. Stein (ed.). *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-Communist Europe: State Building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*. Armonk, New York: East-West Institute, 2000, 195.

## **Changes in the Preconditions of Children's Placement in State Care in the Early 1950s**

In the following section, I show that the introduction of a new welfare model in Hungary, I referred to earlier in this chapter, manifested in the change of regulations governing the practice of child protection in 1953 and 1954. As I pointed out above, since the appearance of the state as provider of child protection services in Hungary, material need was evaluated by judging relatives' ability to "maintain and provide" for their children, and material abandonment was defined in terms of parental absence or inability to work. Children of those able to work but temporarily unemployed were included among the abandoned/endangered in the scope of state care only at times of a perceived increase in poverty, for example, following both world wars when special homes and provisions were made to children of war widows and war orphans and a much higher number of children needed to be accommodated in institutions of state care. The 1953-1954 change in the Hungarian child protection system in fact fits into this long-term trend as it moved from a wider understanding of material need, motivated by the general poverty of the population following World War II, to a narrower one, tying it back to inability to work.

Historians have pointed out that time periods in political history do not necessarily overlap with those of social history.<sup>221</sup> Child protection regulations reveal that the widened understanding of material need following World War II did not immediately end with the change of the political system in 1948-1949 but lasted up to 1953-1954. Although there were already restrictions put on the form children could be placed in state care for material reasons in 1949 and 1950, until 1953-1954 the preconditions for children's material and moral

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<sup>221</sup> Valuch, 16.

abandonment/endangerment did not alter. Up to this point, abandonment was defined according to a child protection decree issued in 1925.

In 1948 and 1949 amendments were made to moral abandonment that widened the category of endangering parental behavior. In 1948 this included the endangerment of children's "physical or mental development or health."<sup>222</sup> In 1949 "permanent cruelty to children" and "health-related endangerment," meaning "the neglect of the medical treatment of children suffering from a treatable chronic disease," also became part of moral abandonment.<sup>223</sup> The legal construction of material need as defined in 1925 was, however, left untouched.

There were restrictions in the form children could be placed in state care for material reasons that took place in 1949 and 1950 concerning whether children could stay with their biological relatives. While right after the war a wide circle of children could stay with their parents during their period in state care, in 1949 and 1950, the Ministry of Welfare brought out two decrees that drew the attention of child protection institutions to the fact that "[...] only in exceptionally well-founded cases should they place children under the age of three and twins, without an age limit [...] into the care of their biological relatives [vérszerinti hozzátartozó]."<sup>224</sup> When the decree of 1949 declared that placement with biological relatives

<sup>222</sup> Decree 12.050/1948 of the Government of the Hungarian Republic about the modification and amendment of certain decrees concerning child protection [12.050/1948 Korm.sz. rendelet az állami gyermekvédelemre vonatkozó egyes rendelkezések módosítása és kiegészítése tárgyában], *Magyar Közlöny Rendeletek Tára [The Hungarian Journal of Decrees] (MKRT)* 1948 (272): 2527-2528.

<sup>223</sup> Decree 10/1952 of the Ministry of Interior on the regulation of guardianship authorities' proceedings [10/1952 B.M. sz. utasítás a gyámhatósági eljárás szabályozása tárgyában], *Belügyi Közlöny (BK)*, Special Issue, January 6, 1953, 1-16.

<sup>224</sup> Decree 131.100/1949 (IX.10.) of the Ministry of Welfare on the care for children placed with biological relatives, *TRHGY* 1949, 1330; Decree 3.365-42/1950 (IV.6.) of the Ministry of Welfare about the renewed regulation of the placement of children in state care with biological relatives. *TRHGY* 1950, 1250. Just prior to the introduction of local municipal councils, the decree still refers to the pre-Second World War administrative structure and makes use of its terminology. In 1947 so-called new settlers with more than three children could have their children under fifteen in state care for material reasons without their being removed from home. New settlers were usually poor Hungarian agricultural workers moved into the houses and farms of ethnic Germans forced to leave the country between 1945 and 1948. In 1947 and 1948 another two decrees allowed children of prisoners of war and war widows without any restriction on age to remain at home while officially in state care.

was not to be “viewed as a social aid or welfare measure in support of relatives but as serving solely the advancement of the subsistence and development of the child,” it restricted the use of child protection as a poverty alleviation measure which had been introduced following World War II in support of war widows and poor agricultural families.<sup>225</sup> Nevertheless, the preconditions of state care were left unaltered, and even the introduction of the Family Law of 1952 that otherwise brought about important changes in child protection did not touch on them.<sup>226</sup>

It was in 1953 and 1954 that large-scale changes in the system of welfare provisions in state socialist Hungary affected the field of child protection regulations. Accordingly, the organization of the child protection system as well as the preconditions of children’s placement in state care altered. In 1953, a set of guidelines were issued by the Ministry of Interior to social policy committees and activists involved in child and adult care at local councils, that called out for the monitoring of families “who placed their children in state care because “they were or turned temporarily incapable of making a living [keresetképtelen].”<sup>227</sup> “Ability to maintain and bring up” children was hereby connected to wage work. In other words, the rationale of finding parents worthy of financial support via the placement of their children in state care for material reasons was reduced to temporary unemployment.

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These forms of state care for materially abandoned children were in fact social benefits paid directly to parents. In 1923 a similar attempt allowed the home-care of materially abandoned children but had to be withdrawn in 1929 due to the great increase in the number of children placed in state care. Decree 15.000/1923 of the Ministry of Welfare and Labor [15.000/1923 N.M.M. rendelet]. For details, see Ferenc Gergely. *A magyar gyermekvédelem története (1867-1991)* [*The History of Hungarian Child Protection, 1867-1991*]. Budapest: Püski, 1997, 37-39; Gál, 37-40.

<sup>225</sup> Gergely, 37-39.

<sup>226</sup> Act 4 of 1952 <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=5784> (last accessed: April 18, 2010). It increased the age limit of state care to eighteen and addressed the status of children born out of wedlock. See Chapter 5. for more details.

<sup>227</sup> Guidelines to the social policy committees of local councils at county, regional, municipal, municipal district and community-level [Útmutató a megyei, járási, városi, városi kerületi és községi tanácsok szociálpolitikai állandó bizottságai részére], *BK Special Issue*, 11 January, 1953, 1-8.



Furthermore, in 1954 new guardianship regulations were issued by the Ministry of Education that replaced the decree of 1925 and its amendments of 1948 and 1952, thereby reshaping the preconditions of state care. These regulations stressed that placement in state care for material reasons could occur only if minors' parents were "unknown, not alive, or unable to work" and neither parents nor other relatives "were able to provide for their maintenance and upbringing."<sup>228</sup> They emphasized that guardianship office case workers, who were to bring about the final decision regarding children's and their parents' material need, were to pay attention that "children of parents able to work" were not placed in state care for material reasons.<sup>229</sup> Finally, in early 1955, the Minister of Education now responsible for child protection, called out for a strict separation of clients deemed worthy of having their children placed in state care for material reasons from those who were not.<sup>230</sup> The order emphasized that "contrary to previous practice," besides "orphans or children with unknown parents who did not have relatives liable for their upbringing," only children of parents "unable to work" could be placed in state care for material reasons.<sup>231</sup> With emphasis falling on citizens' participation in productive work and the attachment of welfare services to employment, worthiness regained its restricted meaning as inability to work.

### The Structure of Child Protection and Children's Placement in State Care

<sup>228</sup> Decree 955-84/1954 of the Ministry of Education about the regulation of guardianship procedures [955-84/1954 O.M. sz. utasítás a gyámügyi eljárás szabályozásáról], *Tanácsok Közlönye [The Journal of Local Councils] (TK)* 2, 78 (1954): 909-924.

<sup>229</sup> The new method for the coverage of the expenses of state care was tied to parents' employment. The expenses of care were settled at 20 per cent of the salary of relatives liable for the upbringing of the child. In case of two or more children in state care expenses could be settled under 20 per cent. If child support fees and expenses of state care were to be paid at the same time the two were not to exceed 50 per cent of relatives' salaries liable for the upbringing of the minor. Guardianship Authorities responsible to enforce payment were entitled to directly order companies to withhold the required proportion of relatives' salaries and pay them to the bank account of local councils.

<sup>230</sup> Decree 14/1955 of the Ministry of Education about certain issues related to the execution of decree 955-84/1954 of the Ministry of Education about the regulation of guardianship procedures [14/1955 O.M. sz. utasítás a gyámügyi eljárás szabályozásáról szóló 955-84/1954 O.M. sz. utasítás végrehajtásának egyes kérdéseiről], *TK* 3, 9 (1955): 90-93.

<sup>231</sup> Decree 14/1955 *TK* 3, 9 (1955): 90-93.

In chapters 4 and 5 I return to the discussion of material and moral abandonment/endangerment and provide further details about the 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations. Now I give some background information about the structure of placements in state care up to the early 1950s so that the meaning of the transition between 1949 and 1956 in terms of the system of children's placement in state care becomes better understandable.

Since the beginnings of state-provided child protection the majority of children in state care were placed with foster parents. The 1903 regulation of child protection practice set up a so-called settlement [telep] system made up of villages or small towns with a minimum of thirty foster families and a resident doctor. Settlements had to be within the district of the child protection institution and easily reachable by public transportation. Children were to be placed out to settlements unless they were ill, for the period of which they were kept at institution, or disabled in which case they were to be placed to appropriate homes for their care. Besides settlement doctors, so-called settlement overseers [telepfelügyelő], who used to be local women employed by the child protection institutions, were also to check regularly on foster parents and the children.

### **National-Level Child Protection Authorities**

From the early 20<sup>th</sup> century until 1919 child protection belonged under the Ministry of Interior from when onwards under the Ministry of Welfare and Labor. Between 1949 and 1956 child protection and residential care were moved many times among various national and local authorities. In 1950 the Ministry of Welfare was dissolved and local councils were established. This affected the handling of child protection at both the national and local

institutional level. The Ministry of Welfare's former responsibilities in overseeing child protection were divided up and distributed among three different ministries.<sup>232</sup> The Ministry of Interior took over most issues related to child protection, including supervision of placement in state care and guardianship carried out by local councils, and the work of child protection institutions and homes for children between the ages of four and fourteen. Responsibility for the education of children in state care was given to the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Health became responsible for supervising state care and its institutions related to mother and infant care and care for children up to three years old.

For a brief period between October 1953 and September 1954, an independent Social Policy Center was set up and supervised by the Ministry of Health to coordinate and unite the tasks of child protection and guardianship as well as some other welfare tasks, such as for example, social benefits, care for the disabled and care for Greek and Macedonian communist refugees.<sup>233</sup> Concerning child protection, the center's Guardianship and Child Protection Department was directed to prepare regulations concerning child protection and guide the work of Guardianship Authorities and Social Policy Committees run independently at the local council level. During this period the Ministry of Health became the top authority for child protection and guardianship.

A major shift took place in 1954, when the ministerial responsibility for child protection tasks, previously overseen by the Ministry of Interior, and authority for child protection and

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<sup>232</sup> Decree 3.365-79/1951 of the Ministry of Health about the regulation of certain issues related to the reorganization of child protection 3.365-79/1951 (III.17.) Eü. M. sz. rendelet az állami gyermekvédelem átszervezésével kapcsolatos egyes kérdések szabályozása tárgyában, *TRHGY 1951*, 952-955.

<sup>233</sup> Decree 1.067/1953 of the Council of Ministers about the National Social Policy Center and the amendment of 172/1951 about the renewed regulation of the tasks of the Minister of Health [1.067/1953 (X.29.) M.T. sz. határozat az Országos Szociálpolitikai Központ felállításáról és az egészségügyi minster ügykörének újabb szabályozásáról szóló 172/1951 (IX. 16.) M.T. sz. rendelet kiegészítéséről], *TRHGY 1953*, 214.

guardianship held by the Ministry of Health were given to the Ministry of Education.<sup>234</sup> It meant that from this point on, child protection was predominantly understood as an educational issue. From the summer of 1953 onwards, with the dissolution of the Administrative Department of the Ministry of Interior, responsibilities were gradually handed over. Accordingly, the Ministry of Education oversaw the education of children over three in state care and it supervised placement in state care and guardianship carried out by local councils as well as the work of child protection institutions and residential homes for the care of “trainable” [képezhető] disabled children. Issues related to the state care of children under three, and “non-trainable” [képezhetetlen] disabled children remained with the Ministry of Health.

### **Institutional-Level Child Protection Authorities**

In 1950, Orphan Guardianship Authorities that used to deal with decision-making concerning guardianship and the state care of children were dissolved. First, while the Ministry of Welfare was in operation, these tasks were given to the Public Health and Welfare Departments of the newly established local councils.<sup>235</sup> County-level councils and the Municipal Council of Budapest received local-level overseeing responsibility for mother and infant care and for children under three as well as the guardianship and state care of children between four and fourteen. County councils and the Municipal Council of Budapest were also to form committees with five to nine council members and the head of the department concerned, to support departmental work. From January 1951 on, following the dissolution of

<sup>234</sup> Decree 2.111/1954 of the Council of Minister about certain organizational tasks concerning child protection [2.111/1954 (IX.15.) M.T. sz. határozat a gyermek- és ifjúságvédelem egyes szervezési kérdéseiről], *TRHGY 1954*, 354-355.

<sup>235</sup> Decree 160/1950 of the Council of Ministers about the structure, tasks and sphere of action of the secretariat and departments of the executive committees of the Municipal Council of Budapest and the county councils [160/1950 (VI.14.) M.T. sz. rendelet a budapesti városi és a megyei tanácsok végrehajtóbizottsága titkárságának és osztályának belső szervezetéről, ügyköréről, valamint egyes hatásköri szabályokról], *TRHGY 1950*, 359-362.

the Ministry of Welfare, child protection tasks were divided among different local council departments.

Decision-making concerning guardianship and state care became a two-level process overseen by the Ministry of Interior. The Administrative Departments of local councils in cities and the municipal district councils of Budapest as well as regional district councils became so-called “primary Guardianship Authorities.”<sup>236</sup> Regional district councils were serving as primary Guardianship Authorities in cases arising at the community level, such as in villages and small towns. Primary Guardianship Authorities had a central role in placing children in state care. The guardianship officer [gyámügyi előadó], helped by a couple of case workers called child protection officers [gyermekvédelmi előadó], decided about requests for state care. They determined whether children were to be placed in state care for material, moral, or health reasons and fulfilled public guardianship tasks.<sup>237</sup> Primary Guardianship Authorities also made decisions about requests for adoption, regulated child contact with parents and dealt with the “legalization” of children born out of wedlock. County-level councils and the Municipal Council of Budapest were “secondary Guardianship Authorities.” They settled cases of appeal and oversaw the work of primary Guardianship Authorities.

Guardianship Authorities also acquired a number of other, more general welfare tasks, such as care for veterans, war widows and war orphans, and elderly care. Furthermore, they were responsible for “maintaining a large bureaucracy surrounding the family, including the registration of birth, and overseeing the upbringing of children in their districts.”<sup>238</sup> Other areas

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<sup>236</sup> Decree 5.021/15/1951 of the Ministry of Interior about local councils’ tasks concerning social policy [5.021/15/1951. (I.4.) B.M. sz. A belügyminisztérium tájékoztatója a helyi tanácsok szociálpolitikai feladatairól], *BK* 22 (1951): 391-395.

<sup>237</sup> Directors of child protection institutions became the public guardians of children in state care following the issuance of the Family Law of 1952.

<sup>238</sup> Haney, *Inventing the Needy*, 45.

of child protection, such as overseeing the care of infants and children younger than three, relegated to the Ministry of Health, were the responsibility of the Health Departments of local councils. Finally, the Education Departments of local councils oversaw the work of residential homes for children between four and fourteen, homes for children with disabilities, and the secondary education of children in state care,

While Guardianship Authorities were populated by only one or two case workers, they could rely on the assistance of Social Policy Committees. Committee members participated in a number of both general welfare and child protection tasks. Concerning the latter, they could help find adoptive parents, check on the work of settlement overseers and foster parents and the situation of children in foster care. The active contribution of committee members varied greatly. In some localities they were put to work on issues considered to have priority over welfare and child protection, such as assistance with bureaucratic work or the collection of products from peasants. Their importance grew in 1953 when the Social Policy Center was created and Social Policy Committees gained independence within local councils.

In 1954 the ministerial responsibility for child protection and guardianship was handed over to the Ministry of Education. Changes at the local council level entailed the relegation of child protection and guardianship tasks to the Education Departments. In this way, the Education Departments of municipal councils became Guardianship Authorities and Social Policy Committees were transformed into Educational Committees and Child-and Youth Protection Committees.

### **The Process of Placement in State Care**

Since the beginnings of state-provided child protection various actors were entitled to initiate children's placement in state care. Besides parents and relatives liable for children's upbringing, national and institutional-level authorities described above, including Social Policy Committees, as well as the child protection institutions described below, and schools, doctors, nurses, various organizations (from 1949 onwards so-called people's organizations), and finally, the police could also request state care.<sup>239</sup>

The involvement of the police in child protection was twofold. Part of their work with youth was related to crime prevention and juvenile criminality. The police forwarded to the juvenile punishment system the children and youth they found to be guilty of crime. Reformatory schools formed part of this system.<sup>240</sup> Children who did not commit a crime were transferred to the child protection system. From 1952 onwards, however, children caught by the police and waiting for the decision on their cases were also sent to child protection institutions. Among the nine police headquarters set up in the country in 1950, the Budapest Police Headquarters had its own child protection department.<sup>241</sup> Until 1952, children could be placed in state care up to their fifteenth birthday. In 1952, the age limit for state care was raised to eighteen.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>239</sup> People's organizations were national organizations with, in most cases, a monopoly in their field, and a party-appointed leader. Organizations included, for example, the Hungarian Women's Democratic Association [Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, MNDSZ] or the Democratic Youth Association [Demokratikus Ifjúsági Szövetség, DISZ]. For more details, see: János Kornai. *A szocialista rendszer. Kritikai politikai gazdaságtan* [The Socialist System: A Critical Political Economy]. Budapest: HVG, 1993, 65-80.

<sup>240</sup> For an analysis of reformatory care in Hungary and in particular the Reformatory School of Aszód (a boys' reformatory school in the vicinity of Budapest), see: Judit Hegedűs. "Politikai élet az ötvenes évek javítóintézeti világában [Politics in Reformatory Schools in the 1950s]," in: Éva Szabolcs (ed.) *Pedagógia és politika a XX. sz. második felében Magyarországon* [Pedagogy and Politics in Hungary in the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century]. Budapest: Eötvös Kiadó, 2006, 134-159; Judit Hegedűs. *Javítóintézeti neveltek 1945-1950 között Aszódon* [Residents of the Reformatory School of Aszód between 1945-1950]. Budapest: Önkönet, 2005.

<sup>241</sup> Following the regime change, the country was divided into nine police districts. The Budapest Police Headquarters oversaw District 1, the area of which extended to the administrative boundaries of the capital. Decree 15.400/1950 of the Ministry of Interior about the organization of the police [15.400/1950 B.M. sz. rendelet a rendőrség szervezetéről] *Rendőrségi Közlöny (RK)*, 13 (1950): 235-236.

<sup>242</sup> Decree 13/1952 of the Council of Ministers about questions related to the placement in state care of children (minors) [13/1952 (II.9.) M.T. sz. rendelet a gyermekek (kiskorúak) állami gondozásba vételével kapcsolatos

## Change in Children's Placement to Foster and Residential Care in the Early 1950s

The declared goal of the state socialist regime was to prioritize residential care and dismantle the foster parent network. This was in line with communist ideology that placed an emphasis on the community care of children as opposed to care by the family. It disregarded, however, the fact that by this time in the Soviet Union, because of the country's economic difficulties, children were already placed with foster families. Another motivation for changing the placement system in Hungary was identified in the misuse of children by foster parents.<sup>243</sup>

Although community care and large children's cities existed in Western Europe as well at the time, the model to the restructuring of the Hungarian child protection system was based on Soviet examples. Anton Makarenko who was working with juvenile criminals in the Soviet Union in the 1920s became an emblematic figure, not only in the field of child protection but generally in child pedagogy in Hungary in the 1950s.<sup>244</sup>

Just as in the 1920s in the Soviet Union, efforts to shift to a residential home system in Hungary brought about several difficulties. As the foster family system had formed the basis of child protection for several decades there was a severe lack of children's homes in the country in the late 1940s-early 1950s. As a result of a lack of institutional places, the foster

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egyek kérdésekről], *TRHGY* 1952, 135. An optional increase of state care up to children's eighteenth birthday was available since 1925 but it was aimed at children enrolled in secondary education.

<sup>243</sup> The misuse of children by foster families was especially applied in case of kuláks who were turned into "class enemies" in the early 1950s. The placement of children with kuláks was, for example, forbidden in 1955. See: Decree 100/1955 of the Ministry of Education about organizational issues related to the network of child protection supervisors, their tasks and work methods and the rights and obligations of foster parents [100/1955 O.M. utasítás a gyermekvédelmi felügyelői hálózat egyes szervezeti kérdéseinek, a gyermekvédelmi felügyelők feladatainak és munkamódszerének szabályozásáról, valamint a nevelőszülők jogainak és kötelességeinek megállapításáról], *TK* 1955. Also see, earlier note, 152 on p. 52.

<sup>244</sup> Anton Semenovich Makarenko (1888-1939) was one of the founders of Soviet pedagogy. He elaborated the theory and methodology of children's upbringing and advocated self-governing children's collectives relying on the concept of productive labor. He established homes for juvenile delinquents left orphaned after the Civil War in Russia. Among his most renowned books published on the history of these communes and his pedagogical ideas is *Road to Life: An Epic of Education*, translated into Hungarian in 1947 [*Az új ember kovácsa. Pedagógiai hősköltemény*. Budapest: Új Magyar Könyvkiadó].



parent system, in fact, remained in place throughout the entire state socialist period. The work of settlement overseers was further professionalized as early as 1955.<sup>245</sup> Then named child protection supervisors [gyermekvédelmi felügyelő], they were to check on about eighty children in foster care within their district and keep contact with members of the various council committees, school teachers, parental working committees, people's organizations and the police.<sup>246</sup> There were also early efforts to locate new foster parents outside the pre-war settlement system in 1948.<sup>247</sup>

Remedying the urgent need for homes, following Soviet examples again, former villas and homes of the upper class and bourgeoisie were turned into social institutions, among them children's homes. These buildings were usually in a bad condition due to war damages and looting, and they were not designed to house large numbers of children. Residential home teachers often faced difficulties, such as the need for renovation, the lack of running water and overcrowding.

Overcrowding was intensified by two additional changes at the time: the development of independent children's hospitals and amendments to the juvenile criminal system.<sup>248</sup> In 1951, children's hospitals were set up in place of former child protection institutions. The hospital section was detached from the transport section of institutions to form the basis of the new children's hospital system. Transport sections that housed children waiting for placement

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<sup>245</sup> Decree 100/1955, *TK* 1955.

<sup>246</sup> According to the former director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County, there were between sixty-five and hundred and ten children under the care of an overseer in the county in the 1950s. Their work was difficult because some children were placed to farms in the countryside detached from villages and they had to visit children on foot or by bicycle. Gyula Patkós, interview by Eszter Varsa, 20 May, 2008, Szolnok.

<sup>247</sup> Decree 249.000/1948 of the Ministry of Welfare about the placement of children within the scope of child protection outside settlements [249.000/1948 N.M. az állami gyermekvédelem körébe tartozó gyermekek telepen kívüli elhelyezése tárgyában] *Magyar Közlöny* [*The Hungarian Journal of Decrees*] (MK) 1948, 2684-2685.

<sup>248</sup> Decree 3.365-79/1951, *TRHGY* 1951, 952-955.

were moved to a new location and usually suffered a loss of space and personnel.<sup>249</sup>

Overcrowding was intensified from 1952 on, when children whose case was handled by the police had to be accepted by child protection institutions.<sup>250</sup>

Nevertheless, due to official focus on the development of the residential home system, statistics show a decrease in the proportion of children placed with foster parents and an increase in placements in children's homes between 1949 and 1956 (see Table 1. in the Appendix). In 1949 out of 25,940 registered children in state care, 17,406 were placed with foster parents while only 6,323 were in children's homes, including those in the child protection institutions.<sup>251</sup> By the end of 1954, there were 23,310 children in state care with 11,670 children with foster parents or biological parents and 11,640 in institutions. The first year when proportions changed was 1955. According to the report of the Central Statistical Office this was due to a radical decrease in the number of placements to scattered farms that were difficult to oversee.<sup>252</sup> Out of 19,330 children in state care at the end of the year, less than 40 per cent, 7,580 children, were in foster care, and a little over 60 per cent, 11,750 children, in residential care.<sup>253</sup>

<sup>249</sup> For a discussion on the consequences of the separation of the medical and the transport sections of child protection in Budapest and Veszprém County see: Mátyás Dickmann. "A Fővárosi Gyermek- és Ifjúságvédő Intézet (GYIVI) története [The History of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest]," *Család, Gyermek, Ifjúság* 3 (2001): 4-9; György Hogya. *A gyermek és ifjúságvédelem múltja és jelene Veszprém Megyében [The Past and Present of Child Protection in Veszprém County]*. Veszprém: Veszprém Megyei Gyermek- és Ifjúságvédő Intézet, 1986.

<sup>250</sup> Decree 2/1952 of the Ministry of Interior about the fulfillment of the tasks of the executive committees of local councils in the interest of children and minors falling within Act 34 of 1951 [2/1952 (I.29.) B.M. sz. rendelet a helyi tanácsok végrehajtóbizottságainak az 1951. évi 34. tvr. hatálya alá tartozó gyermekek és fiatalok érdekében teljesítendő feladatai ellátásáról], *TRHGY* 1952, 303.

<sup>251</sup> *Szociális Intézmények, 1950. évi adatok*, 12.

<sup>252</sup> *Gyermekevédelem az 1955.évben*, 5.

<sup>253</sup> *Gyermekevédelem az 1955.évben*, 2.

Residential homes were not evenly distributed in the country.<sup>254</sup> Budapest, for example, had a higher concentration of homes, while there were areas such as Szolnok County where the number of homes was very low. In Budapest, therefore, a higher proportion of children were placed in residential homes than with foster parents already in 1951 (see Table 2. in the Appendix).<sup>255</sup> Residential homes in this time period were sex-segregated. They usually had their own primary schools and only in a minority of cases did children attend local, so-called “outside” schools. As opposed to regular primary school children who attended mixed-sex schools, residents of children’s homes attended separate-sex schools. The residential home system was otherwise based on the Hungarian school system. Accordingly, there were homes for infants up to three year old, homes for kindergarten-age children between four and six, two types of primary school homes, one for the lower classes up to the end of fourth grade, that is, for children up to ten years old and for the upper classes from fifth to eighth grade, up to age fourteen. After that, children left for secondary education and were to stay in the boarding homes of the institutions they attended. This was the first stage in their education when they lived together with students who were not in state care. A major drawback of this system was that children had to switch institutions frequently. Another problem was that it could not cope easily with over-aged children, who due to various reasons had to repeat or did not attend certain grades at all.

### Case Workers and Case Work

<sup>254</sup> For an overview of the short history and description of all residential homes in Hungary in the mid-1980s, see: László Dobos (ed.). *Magyarországi bentlakásos gyermek- és ifjúságvédelmi intézmények [Residential Homes in Hungary]*. Budapest: Művelődési Minisztérium Gyermek- és Ifjúságvédelmi Önálló Osztálya, 1986.

<sup>255</sup> This applies to children above three years old. Younger children were easier to be placed with foster parents and among children under three, there was also a higher proportion of children in foster care than in residential care in Budapest in 1951, The Posthumous Documents of Mrs. Dési-Huber [Dési-Huber Istvánné hagyatéka], The Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest.

Writing about the history of social work in Hungary, Katalin Pik argues that social work disappeared with the onset of state socialism and its slow revival began only in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>256</sup> My sample of cases and interviews with child protection workers testify to the opposite, and present that contrary to official declarations about the elimination of all kinds of welfare work, social work continued to exist and in certain areas was further professionalized. As I referred to it above, while the residential home network was slowly widened, the foster family system stayed in place, and the professional training of settlement overseers began in 1955.

Traditional forms of charity work also continued to exist. One of my interviewees, Mrs. Nemeshegyi, who used to work at the 9th district Guardianship Office of Budapest from 1955, for example, recalled that she included among her tasks the social support of Romani people at one of the district's most poverty-stricken area, the Maria Valeria Settlement.<sup>257</sup> First, "going from hut to hut" she recorded the number of Roma and their various needs.<sup>258</sup> Then she organized regular clothes-drives in the district and she personally distributed the clothes that she stored in her own office at the local council, among Romani women.

The division of labor among case workers and institution workers in the field of child protection, like in many other types of occupations, was sex-segregated. At the top of the institutional hierarchy there were mostly men. Child protection institution directors and most residential home directors were men, even in all-girl homes. There were few exceptions, such as Mrs. Dési-Huber, director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, who

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<sup>256</sup> Katalin Pik. *A szociális munka története Magyarországon, 1817-1990 [The History of Social Work in Hungary, 1817-1990]*. Budapest: Hilscher Rezső Szociálpolitikai Egyesület, 2001.

<sup>257</sup> See detailed reference to Mrs. Nemeshegyi, Ilona Sass and the Maria Valeria Settlement in Chapter 5.

<sup>258</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest.

were considered to have accessed these positions through their involvement with the party.<sup>259</sup> The gender composition of educators and personnel at children's homes differed according to whether it was an all-girl or an all-boy home. Smaller children, no matter their gender, were looked after by women.

### **Child Protection Institutions**

The child protection decree of 1925 allowed children's temporary placement in state care. This meant that children were registered and taken in by child protection institutions while their cases were in progress. Child protection institutions were transitory institutions or temporary homes for children waiting for their final declaration of state care and placement to foster or residential care. Originally, the child protection regulations of the turn of the twentieth century, specifically Act 8 of 1901, ordered the establishment of state-financed children's homes [állami gyermekmenhely] for the care of "sick and weakly developed children" and those needing medical care. Directors of these State Children's Homes were required to be pediatricians, and homes had hospital sections. Children were otherwise to be placed with foster parents, "mainly with peasants and craftsmen."<sup>260</sup> Up to the Trianon treaty there were seventeen such homes in the country, while afterwards only eight remained, mostly located at county centers and well-connected cities.<sup>261</sup> Homes were renamed in 1949 with the declared goal of eliminating the negative connotation of the Hungarian term "orphanage" [menhely]. Their new official name became child protection institution [gyermekvédő intézet]. They were also reorganized, so that children's hospitals and child protection institutions had to be set up separately.<sup>262</sup> Although the name of institutions changed more

<sup>259</sup> See detailed reference to Mrs. Dési-Huber in note 266, on p. 86.

<sup>260</sup> Act 21 of 1901, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=6717> (last accessed: April 18, 2010).

<sup>261</sup> Dickmann, 4.

<sup>262</sup> See earlier reference on p. 81.

than once in the 1950s, I stick to this first term throughout my analysis. Since not all counties had their own institution, the “catchment area” of the institutions did not follow county borders. In 1949 there were ten institutions in the country located in the following cities: Budapest, Debrecen, Gyula, Kecskemét, Miskolc, Pécs, Szeged, Szombathely, Veszprém and Nagykanizsa.<sup>263</sup>

The three institutions I gathered data from were the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, Szolnok County and Szabolcs-Szatmár County. Since the children I refer to in my analysis were first brought to these institutions and then placed with foster parents or to residential homes, I give further background information about these homes.<sup>264</sup>

**The Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County** was originally called the Royal State Children’s Home of Budapest, and was established in 1909.<sup>265</sup> It attended to the child protection tasks of not only the capital but Pest, Szolnok and some other counties as well, such as Nógrád and Fejér.<sup>266</sup> Children were only temporarily located in the home and after medical examination about 80-90 per cent of them were placed with foster families in these counties. Until the reorganization of children’s homes into children’s hospitals in 1951, the Child Protection Institution was located in its original building.<sup>267</sup> The so-called “transport” section was then moved to the new (and present) location of the Child Protection Institution of

<sup>263</sup> According to the former director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County, the organization of the institutions depended much on the support of local, county-level authorities. Gyula Patkós, interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 May, 2008, Szolnok.

<sup>264</sup> For an overview of the history of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, see: Dickmann, 4-9. There are a few other child protection institutions the histories of which were published. See: Hogya; László Tóth. *Hajdú-Bihar Megye Gyermekvédelme [Child Protection in Hajdú-Bihar County]*. Debrecen: Hajdú-Bihar Megyei Tanács V.B. Gyermek- és Ifjúságvédő Intézet, 1974.

<sup>265</sup> Dickmann, 4.

<sup>266</sup> Pest County was then called Pest-Pilis-Solt County and was different in size than in the 1950s. László Dobos (ed.). *Magyarországi bentlakásos gyermek- és ifjúságvédelmi intézmények [Residential Homes in Hungary]*. Budapest: Művelődési Minisztérium Gyermek- és Ifjúságvédelmi Önálló Osztálya, 1986, 285.

<sup>267</sup> Today’s Pál Heim Children’s Hospital still functions on the same site in the 9<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest (Üllői street 86). One of the original main buildings of the children’s home is still around although waiting to be pulled down in the near future. A small exhibition in the hall of the hospital commemorates the establishment of the children’s home and its first director-pediatricians.

Budapest/Pest County into a former poorhouse in the 8<sup>th</sup> district.<sup>268</sup> Between 1950 and 1952, the institution was overseen by the municipal council of Pest County. From 1 January 1953, the institution was moved under the Municipal Council of Budapest but still attended to the child protection tasks of both the capital and Pest County.<sup>269</sup> The director of the institution during the period my investigation covers was Mrs. Dési-Huber.<sup>270</sup> The yearly inflow of children in the 1949-1956 period was between three and four thousand (see Table 3. in the Appendix). According to a report by Mrs. Dési-Huber from the early 1950s, thirty-six employees worked at the institution.<sup>271</sup> It was usually overcrowded with children. In November 1951, for example, there were ninety-three children in the building. Overseeing all these children were altogether three male and ten female educators, of whom five persons had a diploma; two women were kindergarten nurses. There were ten office workers, mostly women, with a male bookkeeper and a lawyer. The cleaning and kitchen staff was all female.

In 1952 the Municipal Council of Budapest operated nine children's homes outside Budapest, and nineteen within the capital (see Table 4. in the Appendix). From the early 1950s onwards formerly private or church-run orphanages and children's homes were merged under the operation of the Municipal Council of Budapest. Budapest thus had the highest number of children's homes and unlike in other counties, such as Szolnok, by 1955, the majority of children could be placed in homes (see Table 1. in the Appendix).

<sup>268</sup> Present-day Alföldi street. The 8<sup>th</sup> district is still in one of the poorest districts of the capital. The major difference of the old and the new building was that the latter was not built for the purposes of a children's home, was much smaller in size, leading, among others, to overcrowding, Dickmann, 4.

<sup>269</sup> The two were finally separated in 1964, when Pest County opened its own child protection institution, see: Dobos, 182.

<sup>270</sup> Mrs. Dési-Huber, Stefánia Sugár (1897-1987), born in Budapest into a working class Jewish family. She graduated from high school in 1914 and worked as a bookkeeper and secretary. She spoke three foreign languages. She worked for the underground Hungarian Communist Party, which she joined in 1932 with her husband, István Dési-Huber, a painter. She got married in 1923, and her husband died in 1944. After the end of World War II she worked for the Hungarian Women's Democratic Association and the Hungarian Workers' Party. From September 1949 she was director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County until 1957, when she was removed from her position.

<sup>271</sup> The Posthumous Documents of Mrs. Dési-Huber, The Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest.

**The Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County** was established in 1952 in the city of Szolnok, the county center. Before its opening, foster parents in the county received children from the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County. In 1952, the home took over the care of 2,000 children from Pest, Hajdú-Bihar, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Békés counties.<sup>272</sup> The first director in Szolnok was Gyula Patkós, who ran the institution for over three decades.<sup>273</sup> The home was set up in a former villa in the center of the city of Szolnok. It contained one large room for boys and another for girls. At its opening, it housed fourteen boys and girls between the ages of two and fifteen and the director who lived there together with his family.<sup>274</sup> From 1952 on, there were 1,500-1,600 children in state care in the county yearly, and the inflow of children was around 700 a year. In the beginning, the home was run by twenty-one employees and had ten settlement overseers. As the county did not have a sufficient number of residential homes, the majority of children were placed with foster parents until the 1970s.<sup>275</sup>

<sup>272</sup> Dobos, 233. These were the counties where formerly children from Szolnok County were placed to.

<sup>273</sup> Gyula Patkós (1925-2008) was born in Mezőtúr (Szolnok County) where he graduated from the Protestant High School in 1944. In 1946, he was social secretary [szociális titkár] at Mezőtúr and Kunhegyes. Among his main tasks was the reorganization of poor-houses into homes for old people. From 1949, he worked in Vas County (Western Hungary) as county-level social inspector [szociális felügyelő] and participated in setting up the Child Protection Institution of Vas County as well as kindergartens and primary school day-care centers. He took part in the organization and became the director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County when the institution was opened in early 1952. He got married in 1959 and had three children. He was director of the institution until his retirement in 1986. He was coauthor of *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes*, published by the Ministry of Education in 1959. In the 1970s he also worked as child protection inspector for the Ministry of Education, and participated in the training of child protection institution directors. During his work, he placed great emphasis on the maintenance and professionalization of the foster care system in Szolnok County.

<sup>274</sup> Dobos, 233. Gyula Patkós recounted that the villa was owned by a Jewish family before World War II, who were deported to Auschwitz in 1944. The head of the family returned after the war, and according to Patkós, he assisted the former owner to take some of his belongings (by then state property) with him. As in so many of the post-war children's homes, the fact that these buildings were not meant to house many children made living conditions difficult. In Szolnok in the early 1950s, for example, all children had to share one common bathroom and toilet. There were only two sleeping rooms, and the yard of the building was also too small. Gyula Patkós, interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 May, 2008, Szolnok.

<sup>275</sup> Until 1956 there were two children's homes in the county. One home, for primary school age girls, was opened in 1953 in Kisújszállás, another for boys in 1954 in Tiszakürt. See: Dobos, 235, 241.



**The Child Protection Institution of Szabolcs-Szatmár County** was opened in 1953 in Nyíregyháza. Earlier, children from the county were received by the Child Protection Institution of Debrecen.<sup>276</sup> The county had several children's settlements since the early 20th century and opened three children's homes in the first half of the 1950s, in Tiszadob, Balkány and Berkesz.<sup>277</sup> The child protection institution in Nyíregyháza first operated in a former villa where they could house twenty children, and in 1953 had eleven employees.<sup>278</sup> A year later, it moved to the buildings of a former synagogue and Jewish school.<sup>279</sup> In 1953, there were altogether 711 children in state care in the county, in 1954, 744, 30 per cent of whom were placed with foster parents and the rest in homes.<sup>280</sup>

### **Costs and Parents' Financial Contribution**

Parents or relatives liable for the care of children had to contribute to the costs of state care unless children were in state care for material reasons. While in the latter case state care was free of charge in the former, the amount of parental contribution was set by the Orphan Guardianship Authorities and later, Guardianship Authorities at local councils, according to

<sup>276</sup> The Child Protection Institution of Debrecen opened in 1904 and covered the child protection tasks of not only Hajdú-Bihar County (of which Debrecen is the center) but also Szabolcs, Szatmár and Máramaros (belongs to today's Romania) Counties. See: Ibolya Gaál. *A közigazgatás feladatkörébe utalt gyermekvédelem Szabolcs és Szatmár vármegyében, 1867-1950 [State-Provided Child Protection in Szabolcs and Szatmár County, 1867-1950]*. Nyíregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Múzeumok Igazgatósága, 2007, 56.

<sup>277</sup> Children's settlements were located, for example, in Nagykálló, Újfehértó, Bököny, and Kisvárd. The children's home of Tiszadob opened in 1951. It was called "the Children's City of Tiszadob," and was a successor institution of the first children's city of the country that was set up in 1946 in Hajdúhadház. In 1951 it housed primary school age boys and girls but was turned into an all-boys home in 1952. The children's home of Balkány opened in 1951 too and housed 60 primary school age boys. The one in Berkesz was opened in 1954. Berkesz became an all-boys home with 74 places in 1954, while Balkány was then turned into an upper primary school age all-girls home with 80 places. Dobos, 219, 221, 228. All three homes were located in former castles and villas.

<sup>278</sup> Dobos, 213. The villa was built in 1928-1929. Although it had five sleeping rooms, two entry-halls, two terraces, an office room, two kitchens, two rooms for storing clothes, four for storing firewood, and three further storage rooms, it had only one bathroom, and two toilets (and a third non-flush toilet in the garden). Furthermore, there was much trouble with the water supply due to damages in the pipelines and the silting up of the well that supplied water to the building. See: Gaál, 57-58.

<sup>279</sup> Dobos, 213.

<sup>280</sup> Dobos 213. According to Gaál, there were 839 children in state care in Szabolcs-Szatmár County on 15 April, 1953. Gaál, 54.

the financial status and income of families.<sup>281</sup> These costs were, however, not easy to collect, as evidenced by repeated ministerial decrees calling for their stricter enforcement and by local authorities' reports.<sup>282</sup> According to reports by regional district guardianship officers and the county guardianship officer in Szabolcs-Szatmár County, only one out of four parents paid the required costs of care in 1954.<sup>283</sup>

Between 1949 and 1956, the cost of state care was twice regulated by the Ministry of Welfare. The cost of foster care was always less than those of residential care. In 1949 the state-provided monthly fee for foster parents caring for children under two was 60 Forints and 42 Forints for raising children older than that.<sup>284</sup> From 1950 onwards, foster parents raising infants could receive a daily 12 Forint fee per child.<sup>285</sup> Train travel necessitated with children in state care was also financed by the state.<sup>286</sup>

<sup>281</sup> Decree 95.750/1949 of the Ministry of Interior about the regulation of payment concerning the costs of children's care accepted to child protection institutions [95.750/1949 B.M. sz. rendelet az állami gyermekvédő intézetek kötelékébe felvett gyermekek gondozási költsége megtérítésének szabályozása tárgyában], *TRHGY 1949*, 618-619; Decree 3365-12/1951 of the Ministry of Interior about the regulation of payment concerning the costs of children's state care [3365-12/1951 B.M.sz. rendelet az állami gondozásba vett gyermek gondozási költsége megtérítésének szabályozása tárgyában], *BK 2*, 1 (1952): 3-4.

<sup>282</sup> Decree 116.600/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare about the payment enforcement of the costs of children's care accepted to child protection institutions [116.600/1949 N.M. sz. körrendelet az állami gyermekvédő intézetek kötelékébe felvett gyermekek gondozási költségeinek érvényesítése tárgyában], *TRHGY 1949*, 1295-1296; Decree 3366-148/1951 of the Ministry of Interior about the payment enforcement of the costs of children's state care [3366-148/1951 B.M. sz. rendelet az állami gondozásban levő gyermek gondozási költségeinek behajtása tárgyában], *BK 2*, 1 (1952): 4.

<sup>283</sup> Gaál, 53.

<sup>284</sup> Decree 114.000/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare about the costs of children's care accepted to child protection institutions [114.000/1949 N.M. sz. rendelet az állami gyermekvédő intézetek kötelékébe felvett gyermekek gondozási költségeinek megállapításáról], *TRHGY 1949*, 1285. For reference to an average income, see note 1 on p. 1.

<sup>285</sup> Decree 3365-51/1950 of the Ministry of Welfare about the modification and amendment of decree 114.000/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare costs of children's care accepted to child protection institutions [3365-51/1950 N.M. sz. rendelet az állami gyermekvédő intézetek kötelékébe felvett gyermekek gondozási költségeinek megállapításáról szóló 114.000/1949 N.M. sz. rendelet módosítása és kiegészítése tárgyában], *TRHGY 1950*, 1254.

<sup>286</sup> Decree 3365-50/1950 of the Ministry of Welfare about the remuneration of train tickets for children in temporary state care [3365-50/1950 N.M. sz. körrendelet az állami gondozásba ideiglenesen beutalt gyermekek szállítására hitelezett vasúti utalványjegyek kiszolgáltatása tárgyában], *TRHGY 1949*, 1253.

The cost of residential care was set as a daily sum that rose according to the defined difficulty of care. In 1949, 4 Forints and in 1950, 6 Forints per day per child were provided to homes raising “normal” children not needing extra care. Homes raising children enrolled in secondary education or those found to require special care due to “moral delinquency” or disability were given 5 Forints per day per child in 1949.

My research is placed in the above described legal and political context of early state socialist Hungary and the long-term historical context of child protection history. Next, I examine the entrance of children to state care (Chapters 4 and 5) and their education once in residential care (Chapter 6) between 1949 and 1956.

## Chapter 4. Child Protection as an Institution Constructing Material Need and the Morality of Productive Work

This chapter discusses how child protection functioned as an institution constructing material need and the morality of productive work in early state socialist Hungary. It looks at the legal regulation and the institutional practice of children's placement in state care for both material and moral reasons with a focus on the issue of productive work. As I point out in this chapter, although legal regulations separated state care for material from moral reasons (and later health reasons), it does not mean that placement in state care for material reasons was detached from the construction of morality. I claim that the regulation and practice of child protection reflected a general shift in the organization of welfare in Hungary in the early 1950s. The new socialist approach identified welfare as an outcome of citizens' involvement in productive work. Employment became a social right as well as a financial and moral obligation.<sup>287</sup> In other words, as numerous scholars have underlined it, social policies and social support in their traditional sense of poverty alleviation were deemed unnecessary since the well-being of people was to be secured through "efficient economic organization" and via "existing social institutions."<sup>288</sup> Accordingly, as I already pointed out in Chapter 3, welfare provisions were attached to employment.

In Chapter 3 I also presented that with the shift towards economic productivity and the consequent alteration of the welfare system, children's placement to state care for material reasons was from 1953 and 1954 onwards restricted to parents' and relatives' "inability to work." I underlined that the reduction of material need to work inability, that is, the construction of clients worthy of support in light of their willingness to work, was not new in

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<sup>287</sup> Lynne Haney. "Familial Welfare: Building the Hungarian Welfare Society, 1948-1968," *Social Politics*, Spring 2000, 101-122.

<sup>288</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 9.

Hungarian welfare and child protection history. At the same time, children's placement in state care for moral reasons became attached to parental "unwillingness to work."

As I claim in Chapter 2, welfare provisions are not only a reaction to perceived social differences but also shape them. Pointing to the mistakes of the pre-war regime in terms of social inequalities and holding up the promise of the disappearance of, especially class, but also gender and "racial"/ethnic inequalities was one of the main means by which the introduction of the new socialist political, economic and welfare model was justified in Hungary. While attention has already been paid to the way class and gender inequalities were shaped by welfare measures in state socialist Hungary so far little has been said about their intersections with "racial"/ethnic inequality.

In the following, I first analyze the text of child protection policies defining material and moral abandonment/endangerment between 1949 and 1956. I show that the shift in the construction of material need was accompanied by an emphasis on the morality of productive work which had clear gender and "racial"/ethnic implications. Then relying on 80 material abandonment/endangerment cases from the archives of the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest, altogether 391 moral abandonment/endangerment cases from Budapest and the archives of the Child Protection Institution and Children's Home of Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County and finally, the 159 mixed case files collected at the Regional Child Protection Center of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County, I show that this change was not only accompanied by a revision of all former material abandonment/endangerment cases and a consequent drop in the number of children in state care for material reasons, but also a tangible difference in the rationales behind council decisions. The number of cases referring to a lack of or insufficient income decreased and references to parents' inability to work, often

because of illness, increased. Meanwhile, issues related to parents' perceived unwillingness to work, such as unemployment or begging started to appear among the reasons for children's moral abandonment/endangerment.

I argue that at the national policy level, the level of institutional practice and at individual level child protection shaped gender by moving from the post-war wider understanding of material need to its restriction to inability to work. Mothers were increasingly viewed as productive workers after 1953-1954 (while, as I point out in the next chapter, their responsibility for reproductive work was retained), and as Haney pointed out, employment was the main channel by which case workers tried to integrate them, including single mothers, into society. Due to the inadequacy of socialized child care provisions it was often child protection that had to step in when both parents were at work or single mothers were involved and children were left without care.

I also claim that through the altered construction of material need and an emphasis on the morality of productive work, child protection measures and practice reinforced already existing anti-Romani prejudice concerning the "unwillingness" of Roma to work. Both child protection policy and implementation fulfilled a regulative role in the early 1950s targeted at Roma and other social groups, such as beggars.

Finally, children's case files also point to the ways in which parents tried to negotiate their own needs. As I underline in Chapter 3, the two-wage-earner, full-time employment system marginalized some groups of women. Most clients, especially single mothers, and women and Roma in rural areas faced poverty and a lack of employment opportunities. Material abandonment/endangerment cases highlight that parents, and especially mothers, used the

system of child protection to ease their financial circumstances and tried to balance their productive and reproductive responsibilities at a time period when other child care opportunities were scarce.

#### 4. 1. The Morality of Productive Work in Child Protection Regulations

As I described in detail in Chapter 3, it was in 1953 and 1954 that large-scale changes in the system of welfare provisions affected the field of child protection in Hungary. Before describing the gender, “racial”/ethnic and class implications of this change in child protection regulations, I first turn to the issue of work in communist morality.

##### The Morality of Work in Communist Ideology

It is important to realize that in early state socialist Hungary productive work was not only the key to economic development, but as the centerpiece of Marxism, it was constructed as people’s moral obligation. Communist ideology popularized in Hungary following 1949 via the abundance of theoretical as well as practical manuals on communist morality placed a strong emphasis on people’s obligation to participate in productive work. To make this point, I evaluated eleven books and brochures published between 1949 and 1956 on communist morality in Hungary targeting a wide variety of audiences.<sup>289</sup> Most of these works were

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<sup>289</sup> A.J. Zisz. *A kommunista erkölcs [Communist Morality]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1949; Roger Garaudy. *Kommunizmus és erkölcs [Communism and Morality]*. Budapest: Budapest Székesfővárosi Irodalmi és Művészeti Intézete, 1949; P.A. Sarija. *A kommunista erkölcs néhány kérdése [Some Questions Related to Communist Morality]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1951; V.N. Kolbanovszkij. *A kommunista erkölcs: Az SzK(b)P Pártfőiskoláján tartott előadás gyorsírói jegyzete [Communist Morality: Notes taken of a Presentation at the Party-School of the Soviet Communist Party]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1951; N.I. Boldirev. *Lenin és Sztálin tanítása a kommunista erkölcsről. Marxista ismeretek kiskönyvtára. Filozófia, politikai gazdaságtan, társadalomtudomány [Lenin and Stalin’s Teachings on Communist Morality. Series on Marxism: Philosophy, Political Economy, Social Sciences]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1951; P.F. Kolonyickij. *Kommunista erkölcs és vallási erkölcs [Communist Morality and Religious Morality]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1952; A.F. Siskin. *A burzsoá erkölcs – az imperialista reakció fegyvere [Bourgeois Morality – A weapon used by Imperialist Reactionaries]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1952; A.

available to readers attending public libraries, and addressed urban as well as rural populations, participants of party-schools and primary school teachers.<sup>290</sup>

The first and main subject treated in all these publications on morality was “the communist subject’s attitude to work.”<sup>291</sup> The prototype of the “fighting builder” of communism was a “productive participant” in this process.<sup>292</sup> The exemplary communist subject was a “highly active person with a great willpower and an unshakeable character” to whom work was “a human need as well as a source of happiness.”<sup>293</sup> According to Hungarian communist journalist, Géza Losonczy this “new morality of work” was “the codex of communist morality;” it “obliged workers to work according to their capacities and execute government decrees and party orders honestly.”<sup>294</sup>

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Siskin. *A kommunista erkölcs alapjai [Foundations of Communist Morality]*. Budapest: Szikra, 1955. Géza Losonczy. *Kommunista erkölcs: Szemináriumi füzetek falusi alapfokú szemináriumok számára [Communist Morality: Notes for Introductory Seminars in Villages]*. Budapest: MDP Központi Vezetősége Oktatási Osztály, 1949; *Kommunista erkölcs: Vezérfonal városi egyhónapos pártiskolák számára [Communist Morality: Guidelines for One-Month Party-Schools in Cities]*. MDP Központi Vezetősége Oktatási Osztály, date unknown; *Kommunista erkölcs: Vezérfonal falusi egyhónapos pártiskolák számára [Communist Morality: Guidelines for One-Month Party-Schools in Villages]*. MDP Központi Vezetősége Oktatási Osztály, date unknown.

<sup>290</sup> They were mostly publications of the Szikra Publishing House, which was established and run by the Hungarian Communist Party between 1944 and 1948. In 1949 the printing house of its headquarters was nationalized and became Szikra Lapnyomda Nemzeti Vállalat. In the early 1950s, Szikra mostly published communist literature, theoretical pieces and propaganda material for the Hungarian Workers’ Party. In 1956 it was merged into Kossuth Publishing House, run by the Hungarian Socialist Workers’ Party, and became one of the largest national publishing houses in Hungary until it was dissolved in 2006.

With the exception of philosophers, Kolbanovszkij and Siskin, who were involved in producing course books on communist morality for students of higher education in the Soviet Union, I could not trace information on the other Soviet authors. The French philosopher was Roger Garaudy (1913- ). He joined the French communist resistance during World War II, and following the war he became a leading theoretician of the French Communist Party and a Communist deputy to the French National Assembly. After his condemnation of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, he was expelled from the party. In the 1960s his interest in theology grew and he first converted to Catholicism, then in the early 1980s to Islam. He was sentenced to suspended imprisonment and fined by the French court in 1998 for denial of the Holocaust following the publication of his most controversial work *The Founding Myths of Modern Israel*.

<sup>291</sup> Kolonyickij, 24.

<sup>292</sup> Kolonyickij, 25.

<sup>293</sup> Garaudy, 177; Kolonyickij, 25.

<sup>294</sup> Losonczy, 11. Géza Losonczy (1917-1957), was a journalist who joined the communist movement in the 1930s in France. He became member of the Hungarian Communist Party in 1939. In 1949 he became State Secretary of Public Education but was arrested and imprisoned during the Rajk trials. He was released in 1954 and became close to Imre Nagy’s political circle. He was an active participant of the 1956 Revolution and was sent to Romania together with a group of other communist supporters of the Revolution, such as Júlia Rajk. On his forced return to Hungary in 1957 he was charged as second defendant in the Imre Nagy trials. He went on a hunger strike in prison and the circumstances of his death are unknown.



This exemplary worker was usually identified with a working class, male character. He was a skilled worker, employed in a traditionally male, industrial area of work, and he served as a role model to others. Bortkevics, “an outstanding turner in Leningrad,” for example, not only did his best at his job but was also ready to embark on further studies and “appreciated knowledge, science and technology.”<sup>295</sup> There were also textual signs of a covert male bias concerning work: “Communist morality demands selfless patriotism, bravery and *manliness* in building and protecting the nation.”<sup>296</sup> “The Soviet nation learns about new communist morality from their great leaders, Lenin and Stalin. They learn from them a clear vision and decidedness in setting their goals, and *manliness* and fearlessness in the fight.”<sup>297</sup>

Some books presented a more progressive vision of women’s presence in productive and collective work. One author, for example, warned men that women want to lead an “active” life and work for the community even following marriage.

There are several men, who think that participation in productive work and public life are the sole rights of husbands, and think that women, even if they are trained, should only deal with the household. If husbands do not want to accept their wives’ rightful efforts to do useful work for the community, the fact that such women will have a serious feeling of lack, will lead to problems in their family life.<sup>298</sup>

The brochure for primary school teachers also made sure that teachers directing discussions on ethics and morality in the classroom related to boys as well as girls. The publication contained stories that teachers could present to their students. Each illustrated one of the character traits of communist morality. A good case in point is a story where there were girls who “worked in rubber clothes, their hands became stiff [...] they worked [in the cold water]

<sup>295</sup> Siskin. *A kommunista erkölcs*, 195.

<sup>296</sup> *Vezérfonal*, 8.

<sup>297</sup> Zisz, p. 54. The text did not address whether men were also to participate in household work. It also accentuated the need for women’s presence in communal work that were often feminized areas of work, for example, in the field of welfare.

<sup>298</sup> Siskin. *A kommunista erkölcs*, 297.

thinking of [nothing but] repairing as soon as possible the dykes destroyed by the barbarian Germans.”<sup>299</sup>

While it is questionable how useful in practice these Soviet publications were, for example, to Hungarian primary school teachers, they nevertheless highlight that work was conceived of as productive work and that participation in productive work, was a moral obligation to both men and women. Numerous feminist scholars have already pointed to the male bias embedded in the construction of the “worker” in Marxist ideology as well as its gendered consequences in the organization of productive and reproductive work in state socialist Eastern Europe, including Hungary.<sup>300</sup> As I show next, the 1953-1954 turn in child protection regulations was in line with the centrality and the morality of productive work, and the consequent immorality of not participating in productive work. It embedded a similar gendered implication that intersected with the ideology of work by constructing women primarily in terms of productive workers. The immorality of not participating in productive work expressed by these regulations had also “racial”/ethnic implications.

### **The Gender, “Racial”/Ethnic, and Class Implications of the 1953-1954 Shift in the Regulation of Child Protection**

Placing “inability to work” central to the reception of welfare support from the state, on the one hand, expressed the ideology of socialism: employment was to contribute to the general welfare of society and only those unable to participate in productive work were seen worthy of state assistance. Being employed, however, was not only a right but a financial and moral obligation for citizens. The guidelines of 1953 to social policy committees, for example,

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<sup>299</sup> Rivesz, 13.

<sup>300</sup> Fodor, *Working Difference*; Zimmermann, “Gender Regime.”

contained passages of advice for committee members how to “reduce the number of beggars.”<sup>301</sup> They were to “explain to people that in the People’s Democracy there was no more need for a person to live of the charity donations provided by others” because the state could “secure employment opportunities even to those beggars who were of reduced work ability.”<sup>302</sup> All beggars, except those unable to work, were presented as having the right to work: “beggars with reduced work ability can be employed in a field appropriate to their physical disability due to which they will become equal to people who are of full work ability.”<sup>303</sup> The 1953 and 1954 shift in child protection regulations thus contained the idea that all could and had to participate in productive work.

The new regulations show that child protection was a field where case workers were to make sure that all citizens fulfilled their moral obligation, and participated in productive work. Social policy committees’ tasks, as I describe in Chapter 3, were manifold in the terrain of child protection, and their importance grew in 1953.<sup>304</sup> In light of the Foucauldian model of governmentality, social policy committee members were to use “tactics” with beggars in order to shape their conduct. They were, for example, recommended to find out where beggars resided in the cities, districts and settlements and facilitate their employment by naming specific work places in accordance with their work ability where they could be hired “and could do good work.”<sup>305</sup> Their tactics were to extend over begging children as well. Committee members were made responsible for contacting the parents of these children in order to find out if begging was their or their children’s “fault.”<sup>306</sup> In case of the former, they

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<sup>301</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 4-5.

<sup>302</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 4.

<sup>303</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>304</sup> In order to understand the full relevance of committee work concerning the elimination of begging it is also important to know that begging has been part of the issues the state tried to tackle from the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards by sanctioning it. See: Zimmerman. *Prächtige Armut*; Léderer, et al. (eds). “*A tettetésnek.*”

<sup>305</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>306</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

were to inform the executive committee of the local council so that parents could be “warned” or assisted in solving their “difficulties.”<sup>307</sup> In case it was children’s own fault, they also had to contact and “talk with parents in the interest of these children’s upbringing.”<sup>308</sup> School-age children’s teachers had to be contacted as well, and “their attention be called to the behavior of the child,” so that “the necessary methods of upbringing be applied.”<sup>309</sup> Further tactics included the “regular monitoring of fairs and market places, pubs and railway stations and other places good for and frequented by beggars.”<sup>310</sup> At the same time, committee members were also given direct means of exercising power over their clients. They were called upon to inform the police in case of “notorious” beggars who were “work-shy” and “left their workplace,” because these beggars “as work avoiders, posing a public danger, were, in the last case, to be interned.”<sup>311</sup>

The gender-relevance of the 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulation concerns women’s large-scale entrance to paid work. Women “able to work” were from this point onwards not entitled to have their children placed in state care free of charge. At the same time, as child care services were scarce, numerous children were placed in state care for moral reasons. As I show in the next section of this chapter, although according to the new child protection regulations women were constructed primarily as productive workers, case workers nevertheless still saw them as mothers who did not provide sufficient care to their children.

Emphasis on productive work and the inclusion of work ability in the new child protection regulations had “racial”/ethnic implications as well. The 1953 guidelines to social policy committee members, for example, included specific reference to Roma in relation to

<sup>307</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>308</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>309</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>310</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 4-5.

<sup>311</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

participation in paid work. Aside beggars, members and activists were called on to pay special attention to “the protection of Gypsies.”<sup>312</sup> This task concentrated on the “education of Gypsies,” the central piece of which was “showing them that they were of equally honored members and workers of our people’s democracy as any other citizens of the Hungarian People’s Republic.”<sup>313</sup> In other words, one of the most important activities concerning Roma was perceived to be their involvement in productive work. At the same time, the wording of the guidelines suggests that the main issue at stake was that Roma had no respect for work. Members “need to point out to them to honor and respect work, and help with their suggestions to secure them appropriate work opportunities.”<sup>314</sup> In order to be effective at this, committee members were also to “explain them that in these days some of them have already become teachers, and other intellectuals, as well as Stakhanovites and lead workers.”<sup>315</sup> Activists were told to pick out exemplary families “highlighting some or other Gypsy families who have already reached good and nice results.”<sup>316</sup> These examples were to serve a double purpose: the justification of the regime by showing that these families “really live liberated since the Liberation,” and emphasizing the importance of productive work by presenting that “through the respect of work nice results were reached.”<sup>317</sup> The new regulations concerning the placement of children in state care thus suggest that through the centrality of productive work certain groups of the populations, such as beggars or Roma could be viewed in terms of their unwillingness to or lack of respect for work.

The image of Roma as having no respect for work was not unique in this time period in Hungary nor historically, and needs to be evaluated in terms of parallel decrees focused on the

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<sup>312</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>313</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>314</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>315</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>316</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

<sup>317</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK Special Issue*, 1953, 5.

regulation of the “Gypsy-question.” Historian Péter Apor’s comparative study of Eastern European communist Roma policies during the 1945-1961 period also supports that “rhetorically” there was a continuity between past approaches to Roma and that of state socialist regimes in the region; the difference was in “the mode of exercising power.”<sup>318</sup> In Chapter 3, I pointed out that 1953 was the year when identification cards were issued nationally and the Ministry of Interior issued different color IDs to Roma based on the assumption that all Roma were work avoiders. Nor was it the first time that child protection became targeted by reform ideas concerning the “solution of the Gypsy question.” As I point out in Chapters 3 and 6, the regulation of the “Gypsy-question” was attached to child protection already in the 18<sup>th</sup> century in Hungary and had direct precedents during World War II and the late 1940s in Szabolcs-Szatmár County. In the following section, I turn to how case workers and other members of the institutional-level system of child protection engaged in the construction of clients’ need following the 1953-1954 shift in regulations, and what means clients had to negotiate their own needs.

#### **4. 2. The Institutional-Level Construction of Material Need in the Practice of Children’s Placement in State Care**

In this part of my chapter I argue that following the 1953-1954 change in regulations institutional-level authorities constructed clients’ need differently. After state care for material reasons became tied to work inability, the number of cases referring to parents’ lack of income decreased, and instead, references to parents’ illness came to the forefront. Institutional-level practice also confirms that this shift produced an emphasis on women’s participation in productive work and reinforced anti-Romani prejudice among care workers.

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<sup>318</sup> Apor, 71.

To reflect on the institutional-level practice of the construction of clients' material need I mainly rely on the 80 case files of children declared materially abandoned/endangered by the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County between 1949 and 1956, and the 159 mixed files of Roma and non-Roma children from Szabolcs-Szatmár County. I also made use of the files of children placed in state care for moral reasons from all three locations of my research to highlight to connection of inability to work with the construction of immorality. To emphasize anti-Romani prejudice I also draw on documents from the Archives of Szabolcs-Szatmár County and the Hungarian National Archives.

#### **4.2.1. The Institutional-Level Construction of Material Need before 1953**

Parents' and relatives' ability to "provide for the maintenance and upbringing" of their children was to be carefully examined before a declaration of abandonment. Case workers were to investigate the living conditions of parents and the circumstances of children's home environment before making a decision about placement in state care. Reports of living conditions in the case files I studied show that such investigations extended over parents occupation, sources and amount of income, the number of persons living in the household and housing conditions. Files of children placed in state care for material reasons in Budapest/Pest County and Szabolcs-Szatmár County between 1949 and 1952 manifest that up to 1953 case workers were much more generous in their judgment about the financial means of relatives, including food, clothing and housing, and granting poor children state care free of charge.<sup>319</sup> Decisions brought by local councils usually claimed that parents had no or too little income to

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<sup>319</sup> If material abandonment was denied, the costs of care relatives were to pay were to be decided on by guardianship authorities following a recommendation by the director of the relevant child protection institution. The amount to be paid depended on relatives' earnings and financial standing, see: Decree 10/1952 *BK*, Special Issue, January 6, 1953, 1-16.

support their children. The following cases illustrate that rationales mostly focused on parents' poverty, due to temporary jobs or lack of income. Mothers, especially single mothers, with newborn children were rather seen as mothers than productive workers, who were considered to be unable to return to their jobs while their babies were small. While the case files of Romani children placed in state care for material reasons show a similar generosity with the description of their material need and were positive in tone, archival material reveals that local prejudice against Roma in Szabolcs-Szatmár County undermined this wider understanding of clients' need in child protection already in 1949 and influenced the action of institution directors in various parts of the country.

The postwar more generous construction of material need is visible from the following cases. In 1949, for example, the one and a half year old Miklós F. was placed in state care for material reasons after the orphan guardianship authorities established that his parents and relatives did not have "financial means or earnings from which they could support their child from their own power."<sup>320</sup> Miklós' file shows that case workers highlighted the family's financial difficulties, such as a "factory worker [gyári munkás]" mother, formerly a cleaning woman, as the only stable earner in the family, a "temporary worker [alkalmi munkás]" father without earnings and paternal grandmother with earnings of 60 Forints a week, and a peasant maternal grandmother, with eight "hold" donated land and 10 Forint daily earnings.<sup>321</sup> The maternal grandfather had died; the paternal one had not been located. Case workers also emphasized that the house of the parents was a "wet and dark cellar in a ruined building."<sup>322</sup> In another case from 1950, seven-year-old Hajnalka L. was placed in state care for material reasons. The local council provided proof of her need with a certificate of poverty

<sup>320</sup> Archives of the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest (CPMSB), III. 32357/1949.

<sup>321</sup> "Hold" is a Hungarian unit of land measurement. One "hold" of land equals 0.57 hectares or 1.42 English acres of land.

<sup>322</sup> CPMSB, III. 32357/1949.



[szegénységi bizonyítvány].<sup>323</sup> According to this, her father, a day-laborer, owned half of a house valued at 800 Forints and “his income did not surpass the general income of day-laborers.”<sup>324</sup> As he was “without resources” and had to “support two other children,” Hajnalka was declared materially abandoned.<sup>325</sup>

The files of children placed in state care for material reasons born of single mothers reveal ample detail about case workers’ supportive attitude towards their financially troubled situation. Irén Sz., for example, a seven-day-old baby girl, was placed in state care for material reasons upon the recommendation of a district nurse at the hospital in Pécs where her mother gave birth. Case workers pointed out that her mother was thirty-five years old and had already a fourteen-year-old son and a four-year-old daughter who were being raised by her peasant mother. Her father had died that year and she worked as a domestic servant. All of her children were born out of wedlock and this child was given up for adoption with the mother’s consent. The natural father had died seven months before the birth of the baby. The local council therefore established that the family was “without resources and could not support the minor from their earnings.”<sup>326</sup> Another case from Szabolcs-Szatmár County is of a seventeen-year-old single mother who got pregnant from the son of her foster family, and “could not support [her baby].”<sup>327</sup> After she gave birth she was placed to the Debrecen child protection institution together with the child. According to the child’s files “the relatives were not in the position to care for the minor from their own income.”<sup>328</sup> It was also pointed out that the mother had no property and no relatives.

<sup>323</sup> A certificate of poverty was an official declaration of a person’s income and financial background. On its use in Hungary, see: Pomogyi, *Szegényügy*, 75-77.

<sup>324</sup> CPMSB, III. 37001/1950.

<sup>325</sup> CPMSB, III. 37001/1950.

<sup>326</sup> CPMSB, III. 32382/1949.

<sup>327</sup> Archives of the Regional Child Protection Center of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg County (CPCSZ), 492/1949.

<sup>328</sup> CPCSZ, 492/1949

Several other children, who were born out of wedlock, were placed in state care from Szabolcs-Szatmár County based on the perceived financial need of their single mothers. A one-year-old child, for example, was declared materially abandoned by the orphan guardianship authorities of Debrecen in 1950 because “the mother [was] without income altogether and thus [could] not support the minor.”<sup>329</sup> Another sixteen-year-old girl who got pregnant in 1951 was living with her parents. Case workers gave a supportive account of their financial need. They pointed out that the family had altogether seven children, all minors. “The large family was living in very difficult circumstances on the yield of only five ‘hold’ of given land.”<sup>330</sup> In another case, a fourteen-year-old child with a single mother who was working as a household servant [bejárónő] was declared materially abandoned in 1951 because “her mother could not support him.”<sup>331</sup> She was “without property,” maintaining another child and herself from temporary work, and “had no relatives who could have helped her financially or with the upbringing of the child.”<sup>332</sup>

Mothers, and especially mothers raising their children alone, were presented by case workers as “unable to go to paid work because of the children.” In the case of a widowed mother of two from Szabolcs-Szatmár County in 1952 case workers underlined that not just due to her poor health but “especially because of the children” she could not be employed and “provide appropriate maintenance and upbringing to her children.”<sup>333</sup> They recommended that the mother did not have to pay for the costs of state care because “she was without property, had no income” and the children had “no other relatives liable for their upbringing.”<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> CPCSZ, 847/1950.

<sup>330</sup> CPCSZ, 156/1951.

<sup>331</sup> CPCSZ, 668/1951.

<sup>332</sup> CPCSZ, 668/1951.

<sup>333</sup> CPCSZ, 842-843/1952.

<sup>334</sup> CPCSZ, 842-843/1952.

Cases of children's placement to state care for moral reasons due to children's misbehavior reveal that reproductive work clearly remained women's responsibility.<sup>335</sup> In many such cases it was a lack of child care facilities that led to children's moral abandonment/endangerment. These cases fell into three main types: where children were raised by two parents both of whom were at work during most of the day or where children were practically raised by either a working mother or a father because of the absence of the other parent.<sup>336</sup> Most numerous were mothers remaining single parents. Out of the 58 files from Budapest, 33 cases were related to the employment of single mothers, 14 to single fathers and 11 to both parents at work. In Szolnok, out of the 53 employment-related moral abandonment/endangerment cases of children, there were 28 related to the employment of single mothers, 12 to single fathers and 13 to the employment of both parents. No matter this variety of cases, however, all files related to parents' employment testify to women's double responsibilities in the fields of both productive and reproductive work, in other words, double burden.<sup>337</sup> Cases, however, show that especially before 1953, authorities still judged mothers to be the primary caretakers of children, while fathers were mainly evaluated as wage-earners. If fathers were the single maintainers of a family case workers usually found them unable to look after their children because of the absence of mothers.

Before 1953, there are numerous files in which case workers' reports on the living conditions of children, especially children with employed single mothers or single fathers highlight the absence and negative consequences of women's caring responsibilities. In single mothers'

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<sup>335</sup> On efforts to renegotiate the gendered content of work and private relationships, see Adamik.

<sup>336</sup> This absence in case of women as single parents could be because fathers were dead, prisoners of war, ill, alcoholic or otherwise uncommitted to the relationship and the raising of their children. In case of fathers as single parents mothers' absence could also be due to their death or illness, in a few cases alcoholism as well as their efforts to leave a violent partner.

<sup>337</sup> On women's double burden during state socialism, or called by some authors women's triple burden, taking into account child bearing as a third expectation towards women besides participation in wage work, and their responsibility for household work and child rearing, see Lampland; Fodor. "Smiling Women;" Haney. *Inventing the Needy*.

case, this duality is well-illustrated by the frequent use of phrases that connect and handle women's productive and reproductive responsibilities as givens. The mother of a fourteen-year-old boy caught wandering, and being absent from school was described for example, as "unable to provide the necessary care" and "command her son" because she was at work. A report on her living conditions conducted by a case worker underscored that "the woman was decent, tidy, care[d] a lot about her family, and work[ed] from morning to night." She was "an honest working woman" keeping "a proper and very clean home" and raising her child as well "very properly."<sup>338</sup> Similarly, in other single mothers' cases too, their occupation at wage work was sufficient explanation to their inability to care for their children. Nevertheless, the negative consequences of the absence of women's caring responsibilities remained a standard formula in the phrasing of decrees. Employed single mothers were usually found "unable to provide for the caring and education of [their] children because of [their] employment," "unable to care for the minor because of [their] factory worker occupation," "unable to provide the necessary care for [their] child because [they were] busy at work," "unable to discipline the minor because of being at work and caring for [their] two other children."<sup>339</sup> Women as single parents were described in terms of caretakers who were hindered in fulfilling their role as mothers due to wage earning responsibilities.

Typically, especially in single mothers' case women were identified as the sole but occupied providers of child care work: "The child has no other caretaker than her mother and because she is at work, during her presence at work she cannot discipline her child."<sup>340</sup> A widowed mother of three children working as a conductor "could not look after her children" who in consequence were avoiding school and committing small thefts. The children were recommended for state care. According to the case worker, "their poor mother was unable to

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<sup>338</sup> CPMSB, 1950/37

<sup>339</sup> CPMSB, 1950/12, 1949/18, 1950/40, III. 40.826/1951

<sup>340</sup> CPMSB., III. 41.110/1951.

perform at her job because she was shaking from fear what her children were doing by the time she got home.”<sup>341</sup>

In some cases, single as well as married mothers’ employment is presented as done under the pressure of necessity. A family where both parents were employed, authorities’ phrasing emphasized that “the mother “was forced to enter work because of their great destitution.” Two of their children already institutionalized, their ten-year old daughter was recommended to be placed into state care because “as a result of [her mothers’ absence] she spent the entire day without care and got into bad company.”<sup>342</sup>

Cases from Szabolcs-Szatmár County show that up to 1953-1954 case workers were sympathetic to the financial difficulties of Romani parents as well. The case of an about one-year-old Romani girl whose mother died, was supported by the local public welfare committee and was placed in state care for material reasons with her three siblings. The father was a day-laborer and “relatives [were] not in a situation to be able to bring up the minor from their own income.”<sup>343</sup> In 1949 a “non-trainable mentally weak” child of most likely at least half Romani origin was placed in state care for material reasons because “the father had died, the widowed mother works as a stall keeper, and looking after the child would take up all her time and could not earn a living to cover the child’s care.”<sup>344</sup> In another case, a Romani child “born out of wedlock” was placed in state care for material reasons because “the parents [were] without property” and “the mother who was raising the child [had] an about 50 Forint weekly income that [was] barely sufficient for her own maintenance.”<sup>345</sup> The case was supported by the public welfare committee of the family’s place of residence. Another child’s

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<sup>341</sup> CPISZ, 1357/1952.

<sup>342</sup> CPMSB., 1950/18.

<sup>343</sup> CPCSZ, 497-500/1951.

<sup>344</sup> CPCSZ, 40/1949.

<sup>345</sup> CPCSZ, 2121/1949.

material abandonment, who was placed in state care in 1945, was maintained in 1950 “as the mother was without property and there were no other relatives liable for the child’s upbringing.”<sup>346</sup> According to the original decision, the mother had “an uncertain day-laborer’s income.”<sup>347</sup> The single mother of an eleven-year-old boy was described in 1950 as “a temporary worker who [had] such little income that she [could] not support even herself.” The request of a widowed Romani mother of two to have her children placed in state care was taken down at the local council of B in 1951. Her husband, a former musician had died during the war and “she remained with her two children in outmost need and poverty.”<sup>348</sup> She was recorded to say that she “would like to place [her] children in the child protection institution because [she] could not provide for their maintenance any further.”<sup>349</sup> Another case of a poor Romani single mother with a daughter “born out of wedlock” was supported by the local health protection circle and district nurse in 1952. They stated that the baby was endangered because of “a lack of mother’s milk due to the insufficient nourishment of the mother.”<sup>350</sup> The local council recorded the mother’s request of her daughter’s placement in state care, and explained that “the mother needs to care for another two children but because of her bad financial circumstances she cannot support them.”<sup>351</sup> Another similar malnourishment case was reported by the health protection service of P. to the doctor of the Child Protection Institution of Debrecen. They requested the placement of a fifteen- and a one-month-old boy “because her mother had not fed the small baby for already three days” and was “in great danger.”<sup>352</sup> The single mother whose child was “born out of wedlock” was described as being in “very bad financial circumstances.”<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> CPCSZ, 2368/1950.

<sup>347</sup> CPCSZ, 2368/1950.

<sup>348</sup> CPCSZ, 547/1951.

<sup>349</sup> CPCSZ, 547/1951.

<sup>350</sup> CPCSZ, 1814/1952.

<sup>351</sup> CPCSZ, 1814/1952.

<sup>352</sup> CPCSZ, 864/1952.

<sup>353</sup> CPCSZ, 864/1952.

Romani children's files show that before 1953-1954 case workers tried to support Romani mothers when parents were not married. A mother's new born baby and two-year-old child were placed in state care in 1950, because "the relatives [were] not in such a situation as to be able to care for the child from their own income."<sup>354</sup> The mother [was] without property and income and the maternal grandparents were not alive."<sup>355</sup> In 1951, the executive committee of the local council of V. gave a supporting statement to the request of a Romani mother of two "who wanted to place her one and a half-year-old child in state care. She [had] no property and [could] not secure the maintenance of the child. She [could] just about support her seven-year-old child but not the smaller one. She ha[d] difficulties in securing even her daily bread, wherefore," wrote case workers, "we recommend that the child is accepted in care."<sup>356</sup> The two-year-old son of a nineteen-year-old Romani mother was placed in state care for material reasons in 1952, because she "could not maintain and support him."<sup>357</sup> The decision stated that "the father's whereabouts [were] unknown and thus the maintenance of the minor [was] not secured."<sup>358</sup>

Even when both parents were alive but perceived to be in material need children were placed in state care free of charge. An about one year-old Romani child's parents, for example, where the mother was termed "dependent" and the father was a wooden wash tub maker, were perceived to be "unable to maintain the minor" because "they had no property and no income."<sup>359</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> CPCSZ, 997/1950.

<sup>355</sup> CPCSZ, 997/1950.

<sup>356</sup> CPCSZ, 866/1951.

<sup>357</sup> CPCSZ, 848/1952.

<sup>358</sup> CPCSZ, 848/1952.

<sup>359</sup> CPCSZ, 373/1950.

The above cases illustrate that case workers constructed need in terms of parents' financial circumstances and took into account factors, such as poor living conditions, lack of income, or malnutrition. There seemed to be no vital difference between how Romani and non-Romani clients were evaluated. Nevertheless, two cases from 1949 highlight that local prejudice against Roma lingered in the background and influenced the work of institution directors as well as the effectiveness of local care work.

The first case relates to the 1949 restriction in the placement of materially abandoned/endangered children with their biological relatives. The two reports that I analyze originate from Budapest and Kecskemét from 1950, and came about as a result of the Ministry of Welfare's call to local-level authorities, including the directors of child protection institutions in the country, to review cases of placements in state care for material reasons and potentially decrease the number of children in state care. Implicated in this call was that following the issuance of decree 131.000/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare about the care of children placed with biological relatives, these placements had to be terminated in cases when children were older than three and not twins.<sup>360</sup> The first report I analyze was written in answer to this call by Mrs. Dési-Huber, director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County in April 1950. Reviewing the results of the first round of reports on how many and what age children were left in state care for material reasons in the country, the Ministry issued a second and a third call, this time including a warning about punitive measures to directors who failed to abide by the restrictions on children's placement with their biological relatives. The second report I analyze was written by Tivadar Keszler, director of the Child Protection Institution of Kecskemét, in answer to these later calls.

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<sup>360</sup> Decree 131.100/1949 *TRHGY 1949*, 1330.



In April 1950, Mrs. Dési-Huber summed up the lessons of her “experiment” in a small town in the vicinity of Budapest to the Ministry of Welfare, concerning altogether twenty-four children’s placement with their biological relatives. She suspected that mothers who requested the placement of their children in state care for material reasons misused this financial support. Her experiment covered nine children who were already granted state care for material reasons, and she denied their placement with their mothers: “I asked orphan guardianship authorities to review these decisions as well as some previous such decisions there, which in most cases concerned Gipsy children. If they found our suspicion well-founded, I asked them to terminate the status of abandonment or remove the child from the care of their parents.”<sup>361</sup> In other words, Mrs. Dési-Huber experimented with how Romani parents reacted to the news that they could have their children in state care for material reasons only if they agreed to their children’s removal from home. Not surprisingly, she found that parents were reluctant to separate from their children. She therefore concluded that her experiment was successful. She stated that out of the nine children, only one was thought to be rightfully placed with his or her parents. She also discovered another fifteen, “almost without exception Gipsy children,” whose material abandonment was to be terminated unless parents agreed to their removal from home.<sup>362</sup> Mrs. Dési-Huber closed her letter to the Ministry by stating that she was going to call on all small towns with “similar conditions” under the supervision of her institution to review children’s placement with their biological relatives, and she recommended that her experiment be repeated by other institutions in the country.

<sup>361</sup> Dési-Huber Istvánné [Mrs. Dési-Huber], MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>362</sup> Dési-Huber Istvánné [Mrs. Dési-Huber], MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

Tivadar Keszler's report from Kecskemét to the Ministry of Welfare illustrates a similar differentiation of Romani mothers in the process of reviewing cases of state care for material reasons and placements with biological relatives. In answer to the Ministry's call to review such placements under his supervision, Keszler claimed that no children above the age of three remained with their biological relatives. In fact, he reported, the state care of even younger children and twins "had to be on most occasions terminated." Aside "a lack of proof for material abandonment," this was motivated by "the inappropriate placement of children with their relatives" because the money received was "not spent on the child," and "it was impossible to control how the money was spent."<sup>363</sup> As proof Keszler attached the report of a settlement overseer who, like Mrs. Dési-Huber, found that parents in the district were unwilling to let their children be raised by "a foreign foster parent." Taking such statements as proof of parents' lack of financial need, they terminated the state care of these children. "As a matter of fact," the overseer concluded, "with one or two exceptions, there were mistakes with all: either [the child's] inappropriate nutrition, or the improper use of financial support, or an inappropriate environment. Especially with the Gypsies, the latter was impossible to be avoided."<sup>364</sup>

These cases show that when the eligibility criteria for children's placement with their biological relatives grew stricter, institution directors relied on what Sonya Michel called a "sub-policy" in the selection of needy clients. The prejudices and values of local authorities of child protection dictated who would receive this form of support.<sup>365</sup> The reports by Mrs. Dési-

<sup>363</sup> Dr. Keszler Tivadar, igazgatófőorvos [Dr. Tivadar Keszler, director], MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>364</sup> Sarudyné, telepfelügyelő [Mrs. Sarudy, settlement overseer], MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>365</sup> Concerning mothers' pensions in the United States in early the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Michel pointed out that "African American mothers were systematically denied benefits" although more of them would have qualified in terms of being heads of families than white women, see: Michel. *Children's Interests*, 82. In making this argument she relied on political scientist Libba Gaje Moore's terminology, see: Libba Gaje Moore. *Mothers' Pensions: The*

Huber and Keszler revealed that, upon pressure by the Ministry to decrease the number of children in state care for material reasons, directors' negative opinion about Roma, including their belief in the inappropriate parental environment provided by Romani families, led to terminating the state care primarily of Romani children. Knowing the history of Romani children's removal from their parental care and placement with "foreign foster parents" in Hungary, one should not find families' distrust towards such forms of state care surprising. The assumption that Romani children would receive a better upbringing if removed from their biological relatives was in line with historical practice concerning the assimilation of the Romani population into majority culture and population in Hungary I pointed out in Chapter 3.

The second case comes from Szabolcs-Szatmár County, and was initiated by the head of the secretariat of social affairs, Sándor Hegedűs, in the summer of 1949. He wanted to provide in-kind support to Romani families via a clothes-drive that would enable Romani families to send their children to school in the autumn. He identified Roma in his district to be in a much worse situation than the rest of the population: Despite "the rise in all layers of workers' standard of living in the People's Democracy," Roma "living in hovels on the edges of villages" are the only group "that still look like as if they were social outcasts."<sup>366</sup> His wording shows that he approached the "Gypsy-question" as a social issue: "The Constitution of the People's Democracy of Hungary did not discriminate against Roma. They are entitled to have the same rights and obligations as all other workers in Hungary. Naturally, in consequence of their social backwardness they are unable to rise out of their uncultured state alone, and reach a standard of living and circumstances equal to those of other workers." As a

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*Origins of the Relationship between Women and the Welfare State*. Ph.D. Dissertation. University of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1986.

<sup>366</sup> A cigány-kérdés megoldása Szatmár-Bereg vármegye területén, Szociális felügyelőség, Mátészalka [The Solution of the Gypsy-Question in Szatmár-Bereg County, The Social Secretariat of Mátészalka], Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg Megyei Levéltár (SZSZBML), XXIV. 562. 593/1949.

social question Hegedűs saw it to be the task of the social secretariat to take action: “It is the obligation as well as the perfect work terrain of social services to urgently address and analyze [the question] appropriately and embark on successful action as soon as possible.”

This approach entailed an understanding that it was not out of a lack of willingness to educate but because they lacked the means, such as appropriate clothing, that Romani families did not send their children to school.

Hegedűs’ initiative exemplifies a new socialist approach to the “Gypsy-question” as opposed to prior racist discourse centered on “the solution of the Gypsy question” during World War II, I referred to in Chapter 3. As he entitled his initiative a contribution to “the solution of the Gypsy-question in Szatmár-Bereg County” he must have been aware of the ongoing discussion concerning Roma initiated by authorities and professionals in 1947. This post-war search for “the solution of the Gypsy-question” in Szatmár-Bereg County contained a mixture of arguments and positions on how to address health, educational and employment issues related to Roma. Continuing earlier discourse taking place during the war it contained radically racist recommendations, such as sending Roma into labor camps. They were the less radical who recommended children’s placement in state care as a way to pressure those Roma who were identified as “work avoiders” and not living “an orderly life” to send their children to school. This position finally made its way to a decree brought by the General Assembly of Szatmár-Bereg County in October 1948.<sup>367</sup> Hegedűs’ contribution to this discussion was therefore sided with those who distanced themselves from postwar racism.

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<sup>367</sup> Szatmár-Bereg Vármegye Közgyűlésének jegyzőkönyve [The Minutes of the Meeting of the General Assembly of Szatmár-Bereg County], SZSZBML, XXI. 102. 174/1948.

At the same time, he nevertheless saw Romani poverty as a sign of social backwardness and lack of culture.<sup>368</sup> He tried to address the problem by relying on traditional forms of social support and social work. He called out to all secretaries of social affairs in the county to count and prepare separate lists of those Romani children in each village and community who were without clothes. Social workers were to accomplish this task using the help of local councils, schools, and people's organizations. Lists were to contain the names of "all needy Romani children of school age who were without clothes, whose parents were in bad financial circumstances, and whose school attendance could only be secured via social support and the provision of clothes."<sup>369</sup> The local council and the committee of public welfare had to certify the "neediness" of those on the lists. They were also to state the amount each local council could contribute towards the success of the clothes-drive.

Although lists were prepared and most admitted that Romani children were in need of a variety of clothes, Hegedűs' action did not bring about the results he had expected. There were some localities that were reluctant to certify the neediness of Romani families. They accentuated that

there were many non-Romani workers as well whose children were without clothes and deserved being supported: The people's organizations admit that children cannot be made responsible for their parents' actions but [they] claim that there are many good and hard working families among non-Gypsy workers whose children are without clothes too. And this is really not their parents' fault. They deserve more to be supported and helped by clothes.<sup>370</sup>

Others were unwilling to provide financial help to Romani families and refused to take part in the clothes-drive altogether: "The general opinion was that the Gypsies did not deserve this

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<sup>368</sup> His initiative, in fact, seems to be similar to what became the general approach in the early 1950s and later concerning Roma, I described in Chapter 3.

<sup>369</sup> SZSZBML, XXIV. 562. 593/1949.

<sup>370</sup> SZSZBML, 562. 169/1949.

form of support. Gypsies able to and willing to work have the chance to work.”<sup>371</sup> Local councils identified the problem to be in the nature of Roma instead: “Most of them work all summer long [but] a great problem is that they cannot economize. They completely neglect to cloth themselves and especially their children. They spend their money on drinking.”<sup>372</sup> The failure of Hegedűs’ initiative reveals that there was little local support for radical change concerning the “Gypsy-question” in Szatmár-Bereg County in 1949.

In the above sections of my chapter I argued that children’s case files up to 1953 testify to the postwar wider understanding of material need. I claimed that this approach constructed employed mothers mostly in terms of their reproductive responsibilities as case workers put down their children’s moral abandonment/endangerment to a lack of mothering. While Roma were also included among the materially needy, anti-Romani prejudice did not cease to exist and affected case workers’ attitude towards Romani families. Next, I examine the altered construction of material need in child protection practice after 1953-1954 and its gender and “racial”/ethnic consequences.

#### **4.2.2. Shift in the Institutional-Level Construction of Material Need after 1953**

The most visible difference between the period before and after 1953 is the drop in the number of cases where material abandonment/endangerment was declared. Between 1949 and 1956, relevant ministries underlined repeatedly that guardianship authorities were to decide on children’s material abandonment and temporary placements for material reasons following

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<sup>371</sup> SZSZBML, 562. 169/1949.

<sup>372</sup> SZSZBML, 562. 169/1949.

a “careful weighing” of circumstances and only “in the most exceptional cases.”<sup>373</sup> They were warned that they placed “a great number of children” in temporary care with reference to material abandonment who could have stayed “without any greater risks” with relatives liable for their care.<sup>374</sup> While even before the 1953-1954 shift in regulations, ministries pointed out to guardianship authorities that they proceeded without “necessary care” concerning placements, causing “unnecessary expenses for the state treasury,” it was only following this change that the number of children placed in state care for material reasons had to be strongly cut.<sup>375</sup> The total number of children in state care dropped from 1953 to 1954 by about 2000 children (see, Table 1. in the Appendix). The yearly inflow of children to the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County shows, for example, that from 1952 to 1954 there was also a close to 2000 drop in children (see, Table 3. in the Appendix). In Szabolcs-Szatmár County this number fell from 447 in 1953 to close to its half in 1954.<sup>376</sup> In my sample from Szabolcs-Szatmár County the number of children in state care for material reasons dropped after 1953 among both Roma and non-Roma. Between 1949 and 1952, out of in total 68 cases there were 54 (79%) declared materially abandoned/endangered. Among 28 Romani cases 25, and among 40 non-Romani cases 29 were in state care for material reasons. Between 1953 and 1956, out of in total 91 children there were only 42 (46%) perceived to be in material need. Among 51 Romani cases only 25, and among 40 non-Romani cases only 17 were in state care for material reasons. According to national statistics, in 1952, the reason for “the bulk of children placed in state care” was still “parents' temporary difficulties, such as a lack of appropriate accommodation or unemployment.”<sup>377</sup> In 1955, according to “strictly secret”

<sup>373</sup> Decree 128.100/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare about the temporary placement of children into child protection institutions [128.100/1949 (VII.16.) N.M. sz. körrendelet az állami gyermekvédő intézetekbe történő ideiglenes beutalások tárgyában], *TRHGY*, 1314.

<sup>374</sup> Decree 128.100/1949 *TRHGY*, 1314.

<sup>375</sup> Decree 128.100/1949 *TRHGY*, 1314.

<sup>376</sup> Gaál, 54.

<sup>377</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952*, 14.

data by the Central Statistical Office, only “close to one third” of the 6,020 children placed in state care were on material basis.<sup>378</sup>

There was a compulsory yearly overview of cases but from 1953 on this had to be carried out with more care. According to the guardianship regulations of 1954, authorities were to review the conditions of previous placements in state care and reevaluate if they could be terminated, especially in case of material reasons. Relatives of children whose state care was to be terminated for material reasons but maintained for moral or health-related reasons were to pay for the expenses of state care.<sup>379</sup> Social policy committees were also requested to monitor cases to see “if any change occurred in the situation or behavior of relatives” that could allow for the termination of children’s state care.<sup>380</sup> If they found that there was an improvement in the situation of these families due to their re-employment or some other change that occurred in the meanwhile they were to warn parents to take over the care of their children.

From 1953 onwards, case workers’ arguments explaining the necessity of children’s placement in state care for material reasons also reflect a clear change. The basis of claims-making shifted towards reasons that demonstrated clients’ inability to work, while references to a lack of income and resources decreased. The number of cases with ill parents, for example, grew threefold among the material abandonment/endangerment cases of Budapest/Pest County compared to the previous four years. From five cases out of forty during the period between 1949 and 1952, the number of cases in which at least one parent was stated to be ill increased to fifteen cases for the period between 1953 and 1956.

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<sup>378</sup> *Gyermekvédelem* 1955, 2.

<sup>379</sup> In case parents or relatives were not requested in the past or did not pay the expenses of care for their children placed in state care for moral or health-related reasons, they could be requested to pay for up to six months of prior care.

<sup>380</sup> Decree 10/1952 *BK*, Special Issue, January 6, 1953, 1-16.



The following cases illustrate this shift. For example, in 1954, the material abandonment of a newborn was declared because the father of the child was “mentally deranged” and the mother “was without employment because she was seriously ill with epilepsy.”<sup>381</sup> According to case workers, there were no other relatives “liable for the maintenance of the minor” and “the care and protection of the baby was impossible to be secured otherwise.”<sup>382</sup> In another newborn’s case, both parents were declared mentally disabled and “unable to keep the child alive.”<sup>383</sup> After a review of their case in 1955, material abandonment/endangerment was maintained because “the parents [had] a limited capacity of action and another eight children to look after at home.”<sup>384</sup>

Similarly, in case of single mothers whose children were declared materially abandoned/endangered after 1953, reasons are related to mothers’ illness. Most often, mothers were ill with tuberculosis or were found “mentally disabled.” In 1954, the nine-day-old baby of a mother was placed in state care for material reasons because “the single mother was mentally weak, living with her mother, who herself was also not sane, and they [were] unable to look after the baby properly.”<sup>385</sup> The same year, another single mother was declared “mentally disabled and unable to look after her baby.”<sup>386</sup> Authorities were afraid she might want to kill her newborn. Yet another, about one-year-old girl was placed in state care in Szabolcs-Szatmár County because her single mother had tuberculosis. The newborn daughter of a widowed mother was placed in state care for material reasons in 1953 because she was declared to be “in need of care herself” as she was “mentally disabled, and her left side was

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<sup>381</sup> CPCSZ, 2430/1954.

<sup>382</sup> CPCSZ, 2430/1954.

<sup>383</sup> CPCSZ, 2472/1954.

<sup>384</sup> CPCSZ, 2472/1954.

<sup>385</sup> CPCSZ, 2413/1954.

<sup>386</sup> CPCSZ, 2321/1954.

paralyzed.”<sup>387</sup> After the review of her daughter’s case in 1955 material need was maintained because “the mother was crippled, had a limited work ability and it was her widowed mother who looked after her.”<sup>388</sup> In another case the widowed mother of a nine-year-old boy was “on sick leave, before surgery” and had “no other relatives to leave the child with.”<sup>389</sup>

In cases where parents were perceived to be able to work, children were not placed in state care for material reasons after 1953, or such placements were reevaluated, and children’s material abandonment/endangerment was terminated. The case of a seven- and a thirteen-year-old boy placed in state care for material reasons in Budapest/Pest County in 1953 illustrates well this shift in the perception of material need. József and Lajos S. were placed in state care for material reasons in 1953 but still according to the more generous perception of material need characteristic of post-war placements in state care. Case workers declared that their mother, who was the sole earner in the family, had “no resources” and was “unable to contribute to the costs of their care.”<sup>390</sup> They found that she, as a “day-laborer on temporary basis,” did not have sufficient earnings to support her children. They established that as a single mother, she not only had to provide for her two children born out of wedlock but also supported her sixty-eight-year-old mother. Referring to a statement by the social policy committee, the decision noted, that “the children lived in the greatest of poverty [nyomorúság].”<sup>391</sup> Their material abandonment/endangerment was terminated in 1955 based on the local council’s decision that “children of parents able to work [could] not be kept in state care for material reasons.”<sup>392</sup> The mother was obliged to pay 150 Forints per month and the reason for the two children’s care was switched from material to moral need.

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<sup>387</sup> CPCSZ, 2405/1953.

<sup>388</sup> CPCSZ, 2405/1953.

<sup>389</sup> CPCSZ, 2025/1953.

<sup>390</sup> CPMSB, III. 50047/1953.

<sup>391</sup> CPMSB, III. 50047/1953.

<sup>392</sup> CPMSB, III. 50047/1953.

Another example from Szabolcs-Szatmár County also highlights well this shift in approach to material need. Two daughters of a couple with altogether seven children, were placed in state care for material reasons in 1951. According to case workers' evaluation at the time, the father, a wheelwright, "although able to work, was in such financial circumstances that he was unable to maintain his children."<sup>393</sup> They pointed out that "aside their house they had no other property and lived in outmost need."<sup>394</sup> The executive committee supported their case with a "statement of financial conditions [vagyoni bizonyítvány]."<sup>395</sup> In 1955, the case was revised and the two girls' state care for material reasons was terminated. This time what mattered was "that the children's parents were able to work" and were therefore seen to be "able to maintain their children."<sup>396</sup> According to the decision, "the father was a wheelwright and thus state care had to be terminated."<sup>397</sup>

### **The Gendered Consequences of the Centrality of Work Ability in the Practice of Child Protection after 1953**

The centrality of participation in productive work and the narrowing of the preconditions of state care for material reasons to parental inability to work also affected case workers' evaluation of employed mothers' responsibilities towards productive and reproductive work. The 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations reinforced the importance of the employment-related responsibilities of mothers. While before 1953 working mothers were mostly seen as unable to take care of their motherly tasks, after 1953 arguments appeared about children as hindering women from being employed or performing their duties at work.

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<sup>393</sup> CPCSZ, 18-19/1951.

<sup>394</sup> CPCSZ, 18-19/1951.

<sup>395</sup> CPCSZ, 18-19/1951.

<sup>396</sup> CPCSZ, 18-19/1951.

<sup>397</sup> CPCSZ, 18-19/1951.

Their primary duty was towards wage work that justified the fact that they could not look after their children. This is visible in cases of the employment-related abandonment/endangerment of children. In 1954, for example, a single mother working “as a domestic servant in Budapest” was judged as one who “cannot and does not look after [her child]” and nor was the grandparent able to.<sup>398</sup>

In other examples from Szolnok County, case workers argued that the children of single mothers had to be placed in state care so that these mothers could be employed. In 1955, a young boy was placed in state care because otherwise her mother “could not be employed.”<sup>399</sup> The mother of a young girl who separated from her husband was described as “being hindered from finding employment” by her daughter who therefore needed to be placed in state care.<sup>400</sup> In another single mother’s case the explanation was that “this way the mother could find employment.” She was obliged to contribute to the costs of care because “it is intolerable to allow parents able to work to place their child in state care but continue with *her* unemployed life.”<sup>401</sup>

After 1953, in cases when placement in state care was nevertheless found to be necessary, it was on moral basis and often with reference to parents’ “unwillingness to work.” In other words, parental unemployment was easily associated with a lack of will to work and labeled immoral. A baby “born out of wedlock” in Szabolcs-Szatmár County was placed in state care for moral reasons in 1954, initially because of his mother’s perceived “immoral lifestyle.”<sup>402</sup> In 1955 however, she was already obliged to contribute financially to her son’s care and stress fell on the fact that “although she was only twenty-seven years old and able to work, she was

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<sup>398</sup> CPISZ, 2903/1954.

<sup>399</sup> CPISZ, 3599/1955.

<sup>400</sup> CPISZ, 3153/1954.

<sup>401</sup> CPISZ, 3926/1956. Grammar mistakes in the original, revealing a gendered understanding of care work.

<sup>402</sup> CPCSZ, 2471/1954.

unemployed; she had no proper paid work.”<sup>403</sup> In another case, a single mother’s baby was placed in state care on basis of moral reasons in 1955 because, as the text of the decision said, “the mother was able to work, she was healthy, but had no permanent job, and was not willing to enter regular paid work.”<sup>404</sup> Since she was still living with her parents, her father was obliged to contribute to the costs of state care.

Some of these morality cases also referred to begging parents. A seventeen-year-old girl in Szabolcs-Szatmár County was put in state care for moral reasons in 1955 because her mother who was divorced was “unable to work and supported herself and her daughter by begging. Case workers established that she “made use her daughter’s disability [in begging] and raised her daughter to become a beggar in spite of the fact that [the child] wanted to study and work.”<sup>405</sup>

### **The Reinforcement of Anti-Romani Prejudice: The Racial/Ethnic Consequences of the Centrality of Work Ability in the Practice of Child Protection after 1953**

The 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations also affected the placement in state care of Romani children. In case of Romani families, like in the cases of non-Roma described above, when parents were perceived to be able to work, children were not placed in state care for material reasons after 1953. The case of a Romani girl placed in state care for material reasons in 1951 was changed in 1955 to moral abandonment/endangerment. In 1951 the local council’s decision supported by the public welfare committee stated that the child was materially endangered because parents were “not in a situation to maintain the minor from

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<sup>403</sup> CPCSZ, 2471/1954.

<sup>404</sup> CPCSZ, 1797/1955.

<sup>405</sup> CPCSZ, 1818/1955.

their own income.”<sup>406</sup> After the 1953 review of the case, material abandonment was maintained and case workers added that parents “had seven other children to look after.”<sup>407</sup> Although the mother had died by 1955, the father was nevertheless obliged to contribute to the costs of care by a 30 Forint monthly fee due to the fact that he “was able to work.” According to case workers, this fee was considerate of the fact that the father had only temporary work and six children to care for. In 1955 the seventeen-year-old single mother of a newborn was also obliged to contribute to the state care of her baby by a 50 Forint monthly fee. State care was declared to be necessary because “the mother was doing day labor therefore she could not care properly for her child.”<sup>408</sup> In other words, like in case of non-Roma women, women were also primarily seen in terms of their participation in waged work and only secondarily as mothers.

Different from non-Roma, however, in case of Romani parents, regulations’ emphasis on productive work contributed to the reinforcement of anti-Romani sentiments and Roma were easily labeled “unwilling to work because they were Gypsy.” A newborn Romani baby in 1955 was placed in state care for health reasons because according to the health guard, the district nurse, the health protection circle and the social policy committee of N. the child’s nourishment was not secured. While eager to “decrease the death rate among newborns” the health protection establishment put down the malnourishment of the baby to the fact that their parents were of Romani origin:

The mother of the child (!) as *they are Gypsies* they are not employed. The parents of the child support themselves only from temporary work and thus the nourishment and the maintenance of the child is not

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<sup>406</sup> CPCSZ, 497/1951.

<sup>407</sup> CPCSZ, 497/1951.

<sup>408</sup> CPCSZ, 1471/1954.

secured. The mother has no mother's milk and the father has no long-term employment contract in perspective, so the child's placement in state care is necessary.<sup>409</sup>

Parental lack of employment could result in children's placement to state care for moral reasons. A newborn of Romani origin was placed in state care for moral reasons in 1955 because case workers found "the child's life to be in danger with her parents."<sup>410</sup> According to the local doctor, the baby was healthy but not developing "due to improper nourishment."<sup>411</sup> The decree of placement obliged the father to pay a 60 Forint monthly contribution to the costs of care. The fee was seen to be appropriate to the conditions of the family "taking into consideration that the father [had] no permanent employment and [had] six children to look after."<sup>412</sup>

An unsuccessful local-level effort in Szabolcs-Szatmár County to support Romani children in 1953 also supports the idea that the work-inability-based construction of need reinforced already existing prejudices against Roma about their "work-shyness." In spite of the deep poverty of the settlement and Roma concerned, anti-Romani sentiments contributed to the exclusion of the local Romani population from the group of the needy deserving material support. In 1953 in a village, called Ópály, local initiative to support Romani families was stirred by the death of a baby in a Romani settlement due to malnutrition. Worried that a possible outbreak of infectious disease might endanger the non-Romani part of the village, a committee composed of members of the local council and the doctor went to the site. Relying on the help of a "local Romani representative," their goal was to determine the circumstances of the Romani community and the death of the baby. The minutes of the visit from February 1953 indicated that "the members of the community were in a completely abandoned state.

<sup>409</sup> CPCSZ, 2536/1955. Italics mine. Grammatically incorrect sentence in the original text.

<sup>410</sup> CPCSZ, 1980/1955.

<sup>411</sup> CPCSZ, 1980/1955.

<sup>412</sup> CPCSZ, 1980/1955.

They reported that they lived only on water [...] because they did not have any food. The children suffered from oedema caused by famine.”<sup>413</sup> The committee found that the entire community was at risk for death due to famine, and that these Roma “posited a danger” to the village. Authorities were thus interested in the issue because the weak physical condition of Roma “might make them prone to fall ill and spread disease” to the non-Romani part of the village.

The committee sent a request to the higher, county-level council recommending a number of solutions to the problem containing elements similar to those proposed by Hegedűs four years earlier. The social committee representative recommended, for example, that Roma received a better living area and that those able to work be provided work opportunities. The committee also asked for immediate food aid for eighty-six persons and that all children under fourteen be placed in state care on the basis of their health. The county-level council, however, declared that these recommendations “did not serve the final solution of the Gypsy-question.”<sup>414</sup> In line with general public discussion and practice by authorities at the time, their response emphasized that “of primary importance was that Gypsy workers able to work got an opportunity to work.” It concluded that “it was unimaginable that the eighty-six Gypsies [...] who did not work although [they] were able to work received financial support because that would lead to the rearing of a crowd of work-shy.” The county-level council also denied the request to place the children in state care since they would be eligible for this “only if they did not have relatives liable and able to provide for their support.” Although mostly outside the state sectors of employment in the early 1950s, families in extreme poverty, both Roma and non-Roma, could no longer be supported by direct financial aid after 1953 and

<sup>413</sup> SZSZBML, Az ópályi cigánytelep egészségügyi ellenőrzése, XXIII. 2. 803-5/1953.

<sup>414</sup> SZSZBML, Az ópályi cigánytelep egészségügyi ellenőrzése, XXIII. 2. 8031-6/1953.



1954. At the same time, officials believed that placing Romani children in state care for material reasons contributed to work avoidance by Roma.

These cases fit in the general picture held about the “work-shyness of the Gypsies” in Szabolcs-Szatmár County at the time. Throughout 1953 to 1955 several materials prepared by regional councils for the county center and other reports prepared about the “Gypsy-question” mention Roma in terms of their “unwillingness to work.” For example, a report about the county council’s social policy work tasks from 1953 mentions the necessity to “reeducate the Gypsies” and “educate them for work,” by involving them especially in factory work “but also in brick making, mud brick making, basket weaving, etc. home craft cooperatives.”<sup>415</sup>

According to a secret report prepared for the meeting of the county council’s executive committee in 1955

there were two different types among the Gypsies. The first type speaks its own langue, has a completely Eastern-like character; they are lazier, not aggressive and only marry among each other. They do not like physical work and prefer horse-dealing. The other type of Gypsies is mixed blooded. This type does not live such an isolated life, also undertakes physical work, but also tries to do the lighter types of [this] work.<sup>416</sup>

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<sup>415</sup> SZSZBML, Szabolcs-Szatmár Megyei Tanács VB jegyzőkönyve, 1953. március 26.[The Minutes of the Executive Committee’s Meeting of Szabolcs-Szatmár County Council, 26 March, 1953], XXIII. 2. 4.

<sup>416</sup> SZSZBML, Szabolcs-Szatmár Megyei Tanács VB Egészségügyi Osztálya, A Megyei Tanács Végrehajtóbizottságához a cigányság szociális, egészségügyi és kulturális helyzetének megjavításáról, A Szabolcs-Szatmár Megyei Tanács VB 1955. február 18-i ülésére készített jelentés [Report to the Executive Committee of Szabolcs-Szatmár County by the Council’s Health Department on Improving the Social, Health and Cultural Situation of the Gypsies, prepared for the Executive Committee’s Meeting of Szabolcs-Szatmár County Council on 18 February, 1955 ], XXIII. 2., 05-2/1955 Tük.

Clearly, like in general in Hungary, also in Szabolcs-Szatmár County, Roma were seen in terms of “work avoiders” who needed to be educated about the necessity of participating in productive work.

In the above section of this chapter I focused on institutional-level practice concerning the placement of children in state care and argued that the gendered implications of the 1953-1954 shift manifested in cases workers’ emphasis on women as productive workers. The cases related to the placement of Romani children in state care exemplify that the work-inability-based form of support that took hold from 1953-1954 onwards contributed to the reinforcement of prejudices against Roma. Next, I turn to how clients tried to negotiate their material need and coped with the change in the preconditions of state care.

#### **4.3. The Negotiation of Material Need by Clients**

In the early 1950s poverty “officially” ceased to exist and in consequence, this time period is generally described by Hungarian sociologists in terms of the disappearance of all social services. At the same time, as I underlined in Chapter 3, approaching the state as a multi-layered entity enables the discovery of gaps between ideology and reality. Following this approach I claim, that the placement of children in state care for material reasons persisted as a form of poverty alleviation. In spite of state efforts to decrease the number of children in state care, parents still used the option of material abandonment/endangerment to place their children in state care free of charge. My sample of files reveal that in spite of the legal shift in the criterion for children’s placement in state care free of charge, a large group of parents continued to seek the option of their children’s placement to state care because they were not employed, had little and/or irregular sources of income, or had no access to regular forms of child care or extended family networks able to support them.

There were a variety of reasons leading to children's placement in state care for material reasons, and clearly parents made active use of the option of placing children in state care. In my Budapest/Pest County sample of material abandonment/endangerment cases many of the children had an agricultural or industrial worker family background. According to my calculations, about 43 per cent of children came from families where parents worked in the agriculture and about 47 per cent in industry.<sup>417</sup> Concerning Szabolcs-Szatmár County, a 1954 report discussed during the executive committee's meeting about the situation of child protection noted a growth in the number of children placed in state care since January 1953. The report explained this tendency by underlining that among these cases "there were especially numerous children of parents [working in] agricultural cooperatives. [These] parents usually argue that their share [in the cooperatives] was not sufficient. This reasoning, however, in most cases is not honest."<sup>418</sup> The executive committee decided that such placements must be reviewed and "parents be obliged to pay for the costs of care."<sup>419</sup> This case exemplifies that mothers working in agricultural cooperatives were among those who had no other alternatives to balance employment with child rearing, and turned to child protection as an alternative.

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<sup>417</sup> For a number of reasons it was not possible to establish unambiguously who counted as an agricultural or an industrial worker. Industrial workers were generally urban at the time, but many lived and commuted from rural areas. There were also many involved in both fields of work. I used the categories noted in children's case files, but these did not reveal if "unskilled workers" or "skilled workers" had a job in the agricultural or industrial sector. I counted among agricultural workers day laborers, peasants, forestry workers, and cooperative members. I placed among the group of industrial workers, miners, factory workers, skilled and unskilled workers, mechanics, locksmiths, carpenters and painters. There were also a number of occupations I could not fit into either of these two categories, such as a book deliverer, a technical and a tax inspector. For a detailed account of the ambiguity of these categories, see: Valuch, 213-214.

<sup>418</sup> SZSZBML, Gyermekvédelem állásáról jelentés, Szabolcs-Szatmár Megyei Tanács VB jegyzőkönyve, 1954. május 25.[Report about the Situation of Child Protection, The Minutes of the Executive Committee's Meeting of Szabolcs-Szatmár County Council, 25 May, 1954], XXIII. 2. 2. Gaál, as a council employee was present at this executive committee meeting in 1954. In 2007, as opposed to the report's conclusion, she noted that members of agricultural cooperatives received very little compensation because "at the beginning cooperatives were not working effectively," Gaál, 54.

<sup>419</sup> SZSZBML, Gyermekvédelem állásáról jelentés, XXIII. 2. 2.

Another significant group of clients were single mothers and single mother-headed households. Fifty-four out of the eighty households (67.5%) in my Budapest/Pest County sample contained mothers raising their children alone, forty-nine out of them were heads of households. Thirty-four mothers out of the eighty (42.5%), were single mothers whose children had been born out of wedlock. The material abandonment/endangerment cases from Budapest/Pest County show that there was a high percentage of domestic servants among mothers, especially the single mothers. In 1949, for example, half of all mothers, and in 1950, four out of ten mothers were domestic servants. It is also clear that most of these single mothers were rather young; over 20 per cent were eighteen years old, and 46 per cent were between twenty and twenty-five years old. Every second child was a newborn baby of less than three weeks old and close to 18 per cent of babies were six to seven months old.<sup>420</sup>

Single mothers had to be especially resourceful in case local councils decided that following the 1953-1954 shift in regulations their children were not eligible any more for state care free of charge. As women were primarily viewed in terms of productive workers they were to be able to contribute to the costs of care or otherwise state care was terminated. A case from Budapest shows that a mother, for example, secured clothing to her children by managing to keep those given to them while they were in state care. In 1955, the case of Ms. S.' children was changed from material to moral abandonment/endangerment and Ms. S. was obliged to contribute with 150 Forints monthly to the care of her two sons. The children were declared

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<sup>420</sup> Newborns needing medical care had specific provisions with an option for state care free of charge from as early as 1949 when temporary placement to child protection institutions was regulated. These children were to be placed in the care of child protection institutions together with their mothers and treated there or in hospitals. If the treatment was to extend 30 days these children were to be recommended for placement in state care optionally free of charge in which, from 1955 on, probably due to the increased number of unwanted births following the abortion ban, the period the mother was together with the baby in state care became free of charge, even if relatives or the mother's financial situation would have permitted the payment of these costs, see: Decree 121.000/1949 of the Ministry of Welfare about the placement of children whose physical or mental development or health is endangered in the care of child protection institutions and about other child protection provisions [121.000/1949 (VII.31.) N.M. sz. rendelet a testi vagy szellemi fejlődésükben, illetőleg egészségükben veszélyeztetett gyermekeknek az állami gyermekvédő intézetek gondozásába vétele és egyes más gyermekvédelmi rendelkezések tárgyában], *TRHGY*, 1318 and Decree 14/1955 *TK* 3, 9 (1955): 90-93.

materially abandoned/endangered in 1953 because their mother had only temporary employment as a day-laborer and had to maintain her elderly mother and her two children alone. Upon receiving this news in 1955, Ms. S. “forcefully removed” her elder son from his foster parents “without permission,” and thus the state care of her two sons was terminated in January 1956.<sup>421</sup> According to a certificate from a month later, the mother and her two children were without resources. The children were raised by the mother, who was a temporary worker, and from the contribution of some relatives. The local council finally “recommended” that, “based on her social circumstances,” the mother “could keep the clothes her children had because the children had only those clothes with which they returned from the child protection institution. Therefore if the children returned these clothes they would remain completely without clothes, that is, naked, and that would be completely not right, especially in this winter time.”<sup>422</sup>

As other cases below demonstrate mothers made use of child protection services when they were unable to support their children from a single income or had no stable jobs. Importantly, a lack of child care facilities also contributed to mothers trying to make use of placement in state care. Many, if they had no other alternatives, left their children in the hospital where they gave birth, the child protection institution or with foster parents. A single mother in Szabolcs-Szatmár County was reported to have left her baby in the Child Protection Institution of Debrecen and “run away.”<sup>423</sup> As she was returned by the police, later she also tried to leave the child with relatives and “left to an unknown destination.” The relative having no financial means to support the child finally asked for her placement in state care in 1950. In another case from 1956, a Romani mother left her newborn baby in the Child Protection Institution of

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<sup>421</sup> CPMSB, III. 50047/1953.

<sup>422</sup> CPMSB, III. 50047/1953.

<sup>423</sup> CPCSZ, 315/1950.

Debrecen and left.<sup>424</sup> In 1955, a Romani single mother refused to take her children home whose material abandonment/endangerment was terminated. “Arguing that she had six other children to look after, she was not willing to take the children with her.”<sup>425</sup> The children were placed in state care in 1948 based on the fact that she could not support them from her small single income. The children finally remained in state care and the biological father was obliged to contribute to the costs of care. In another similar case, the single Romani mother also refused to take her daughter placed with Romani foster parents with her, once material abandonment/endangerment was terminated in 1955 with reference to the mother’s ability to work.<sup>426</sup> According to the settlement overseer, the mother who regularly visited her child stated that she was unemployed. Finally, state care for material reasons was resumed.

The effects of World War II were also tangible among my sample of families. For example, 25 per cent of all mothers among the Budapest/Pest County cases were lone mothers whose husbands had either died or disappeared in the war, or who were separated or deserted. In fourteen out of eighty cases (17.5%), children were orphaned, with one or both parents dead. In most of these cases children were completely orphaned or had only their mother alive.

In most cases, the time children spent in state care for material reasons was not very long.<sup>427</sup>

Out of the thirty-four single mothers whose children were born out of wedlock in the Budapest/Pest County sample, I could retrieve the time these children spent in state care in twenty-six cases (80%). In about every other single mother’s case, their children’s period of state care was terminated within half a year from its start. In over 50 per cent of these cases state care ended within one year, and in close to 20 per cent of cases, within three years.

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<sup>424</sup> CPCSZ, 2032/1956.

<sup>425</sup> CPCSZ, 2121/1949.

<sup>426</sup> CPCSZ, 1416/1954.

<sup>427</sup> Children’s files usually contained information about the recommendation and the placement of children in state care as well as the time when they were given back to their family members or given in adoption.

While a rather high proportion of these children (27%) were given up for adoption, the fact that children placed in state care for material reasons spent such a short time there suggests that families deliberately used this form of child protection as a kind of free residential child care. This is supported by statistical data on child protection cited in Chapter 3, which showed that it was partly due to the “insufficient number of places” in child care facilities that parents were forced to place their children in the care of child protection institutions.<sup>428</sup> While their children were looked after by the state, they could stabilize their material and employment situation.<sup>429</sup>

In 1950, a Romani mother in Szabolcs-Szatmár County, for example, was observed to make such a use of state care. According to her daughter and son’s case file, the children were initially placed in state care in 1947. In 1949, the mother asked for the termination of state care and “appeared at the orphan guardianship authorities and took the children, but later returned them to the institution.”<sup>430</sup> When in 1950 she asked again for the return of her children the local council observed the following:

From these precedents and the report prepared by the social department [of the local council] it could be established that the mother was not reclaiming her children each summer out of love but because she was using them to make money. In the summers she makes her children sell flowers in the street and other places and in the winters, when there are no such opportunities, she returns them to the institution.<sup>431</sup>

Authorities found it necessary to place the children in institutional care but in the end, although the mother was requested to bring her children back to the child protection institution, she refused to do so.

<sup>428</sup> *Egészségügyi és kultúrstatistikai jelentés, 1952, 2.*

<sup>429</sup> For similar findings in the United States in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see: Michel, *Children’s Interests*, 3, 40. These care provisions “constructed from whatever resources were available” Michel calls “maternal invention.”

<sup>430</sup> CPCSZ, 260-261/1950.

<sup>431</sup> CPCSZ, 260-261/1950.

To reclaim their children, mothers could rely on the idea of women's productive responsibility and financial ability to maintain their children. A mother, for example, who had left her husband and was declared to have "thrown her [two] children away" and "not look after them," managed to get them back from state care in 1953 when she proved to the Child Protection Institution of Debrecen that in fact, it was the father who had given them up without her consent, and presented that she had two part-time jobs from which she could support them.<sup>432</sup>

It was communist ideology about productive work and the catch-up industrialization project of state socialist Hungary that contributed to the fact that parents who were physically able to be gainfully employed were not to be included among the materially needy, and social support was connected to full-time employment in the state sector. Accordingly, a legal shift took place in the criteria of children's placement to state care in 1953-1954, from when onwards emphasis increasingly fell on parents' inability to work as a precondition to children's material abandonment/endangerment.

In this chapter I argued that this shift in child protection regulation affected case workers' practice and that these changes had gendered and "racial"/ethnic consequences. Authorities used different arguments to demonstrate their clients' need before and after 1953-1954. Prior to 1953-1954 most decisions brought by local councils about children's placement to state care for material reasons claimed that parents had no or too little income to support their children. They argued that parents had only temporary jobs, or that, mothers, especially single mothers, who were domestic servants and factory workers could not return to their jobs

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<sup>432</sup> CPCSZ, 741-742/1951.



because of their newborn child. Following 1953, the basis of claims-making shifted towards reasons that demonstrated clients' inability to work, such as illness, and state care was to support mothers not to be hindered from employment. Under ministerial pressure to decrease the number of children in state care local case workers' prejudices against Romani parents manifested already in the late 1940s but were reinforced after 1953-1954. Thus, in state socialist Hungary the appearance of the morality of work as an ideology contributed to case workers' evaluation of mothers as primarily wage workers and of Roma as "unwilling to work."

Relying on an approach to the state as a multi-layered entity, I also argued that need was not only constructed at national policy level but at institutional and individual clients' levels. Clients were not submissive objects of a totalitarian state but actively making use of opportunities offered by state-provided child protection. Therefore, I also claim that contrary to belief in the disappearance of welfare work, children's placement in state care free of charge was an important welfare service that parents relied on in early state socialist Hungary, especially when facing a lack of adequate child care services.

## **Chapter 5. “Delinquent” Children, “Immoral” Parents: Child Protection as an Institution Constructing Sexual (Im)Morality, Motherhood and Family Life**

In the previous chapter I presented the function of child protection in constructing the morality of work and the consequences of the 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations in terms of an increased emphasis on parents’ responsibilities towards productive work. I highlighted that it led to the reinforcement of anti-Romani prejudice in foregrounding their “unwillingness to work,” and pointed to the gendered outcomes of the conflict of productive and reproductive work. In this chapter I concentrate on the role of child protection in the field of social reproduction. I refer to social reproduction as defined in feminist welfare state scholarship, concerning not only the biological and generational reproduction of life but all activities “involved in the maintenance of life on a daily basis and intergenerationally,” such as cooking, cleaning, looking after children, etc.<sup>433</sup>

I make three points concerning the function of child protection in the field of social reproduction: 1.) Amending Lynne Haney’s discussion of welfare work in early state socialist Hungary I argue that the construction of “proper” motherhood was central to the regulative welfare politics of this time period. Along the lines of feminist scholars who pointed to the gendered function of welfare provisions in shaping the practice of motherhood, I claim that children provided an access for case workers to the regulation of families, and primarily mothers, whom they considered responsible for the social reproduction of the family.<sup>434</sup> I show that child protection regulations and practice reinforced the centrality of the family and women’s responsibilities in the terrain of child rearing. 2.) I furthermore, claim that this

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<sup>433</sup> Barbara Laslett and Johanna Brenner. “Gender and Social Reproduction: Historical Perspectives,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 15 (1989): 381-404, 384.

<sup>434</sup> Michel. *Children’s Interests*; Gwendolyn Mink. “The Lady and the Tramp: Gender, Race, and the Origins of the American Welfare State,” in: Gordon (ed.). *Women, the State, and Welfare*, 92-123.

gendered construction of social reproduction intersected with the treatment of the issue of “race”/ethnicity in early state socialist Hungary. Based on feminist scholarship on the gender and “racial” construction of citizenship, I argue that shaping Romani mothers to be “proper mothers” was seen to be an important means towards the assimilation of Roma in early state socialist Hungary.<sup>435</sup> In other words, “racial”/ethnic difference was to disappear by disciplining Romani mothers into the communist norms of family life. 3.) Finally, I argue that the control of motherhood and reproduction also extended to the terrain of female sexuality. Moral delinquency in children’s behavior had clear gendered connotations concerning female sexual immorality. I also draw attention to the fact that, especially before the appearance of the Family Law of 1952 that declared the equality of children born outside wedlock, there was a clear indication of case workers’ mixed attitude towards single motherhood combining an effort to help with negative moral judgment.

First, I examine child protection regulations between 1949 and 1956 from the perspective of their implications concerning gender and reproductive work. Next, relying on a total of 391 case files of children placed into state care for moral reasons between 1949 and 1956 by the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County (202 cases) and the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County (191 cases) as well as 159 cases from Szabolcs-Szatmár County, I claim that child protection practice was transformed into a mechanism of control over both Romani and non-Romani mothers’ lives in the terrains of child rearing as well as sexual norms.

### **5.1. The Construction of Sexual (Im)Morality, Marriage and Family Life in the National Regulation of Child Protection**

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<sup>435</sup> Mink, 105.

The following laws and decrees in the field of child protection between 1949 and 1956 show that these regulations were closely connected to the control of social reproduction. Early state socialist legislation addressed perceived injustices against women and children in the past by the equalization of children born out of wedlock and support for single mothers. At the same time, the regime relied on these measures for its self-legitimization. Central to these regulations was the control of women's sexuality and fertility and the reinforcement of their responsibility as mothers in the nuclear family.

The first two significant laws of the new communist regime concerning gender equality, the 1949 Hungarian Constitution and the Family Law of 1952, both reacted to the perceived historic oppression of women and were a legal expression of women's liberation.<sup>436</sup> The 1949 Constitution that was not only Hungary's first codified constitution but also a declaration of the governing principles of the new Hungarian People's Democracy, specifically addressed the issues of women's equality. In its introduction, it announced the opening of a new era in which together with "the leadership of the working class" it declared "women's equal rights with men."<sup>437</sup> The Family Law of 1952 brought about significant changes concerning women's equality in the areas of marriage and family and guardianship. It erased patriarchal family patterns by instituting marriage as the equal partnership of "two working people," and it ended discrimination against women regarding property ownership, divorce procedures and child custody.<sup>438</sup>

<sup>436</sup> Act 20 of 1949, The Constitution of the Hungarian People's Republic," in *Netjogtár*, the Legal Database of CompLex Kiadó Kft, <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=8365> (last accessed: March 13, 2011).

<sup>437</sup> The Constitution," *Netjogtár*; Act 4 of 1952 <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=5784> (last accessed: April 18, 2010).

<sup>438</sup> Act 4 of 1952; On a gendered assessment of the law, see: Zimmermann. "Gender Regime," and Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 29-30.

Feminist scholarship draws attention to the fact that policy-making in the field of social reproduction, used by new regimes or governments to construct the state, is “one of the keys to understanding how politics is being reshaped,” and underline the gendered messages of this process.<sup>439</sup> The new socialist regime used both the declaration of women’s equality and state-provided child protection to legitimate itself by juxtaposing these newly assured rights against “the anti-people state power of landlords and capitalists” that preceded Hungary’s “Soviet liberation,” as expressed in the Constitution.<sup>440</sup> Political scientist Joanna Goven, in her content analysis of publications by the Hungarian Women’s Democratic Association [Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, MNDSZ] directed at “working women” in the end of the 1940s and the early 1950s, underlined that women’s newly gained liberation was repeatedly contrasted with their oppression in the past.<sup>441</sup> Publications argued that with the rise of the new regime all obstacles to women’s equality have been removed, and thereby justified the new political system.<sup>442</sup> In the terrain of child protection, Decree 13/1952 of the Council of Ministers, for example, banned the term “abandoned children,” which had been in use since the origins of charitable and state-supported child protection in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, and introduced instead the notion of “children in state care,” “endangered children” and “endangerment.”<sup>443</sup> MNDSZ publications also emphasized that in socialist Hungary, motherhood was not a difficult experience any more, like in the past, as “the state enabled women to raise their children under free and healthy conditions.”<sup>444</sup>

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<sup>439</sup> Susan Gal and Gail Kligman. *The Politics of Gender After Socialism*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000, 14-26.

<sup>440</sup> “The Constitution”, *Netjogtár*.

<sup>441</sup> Joanna Goven. *The Gendered Foundations of Hungarian Socialism: State, Society, and the Anti-Politics of Anti-Feminism*. Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Berkeley: University of California, 1993, 40. The Hungarian Women’s Democratic Association [Magyar Nők Demokratikus Szövetsége, MNDSZ] was established in 1945 as the women’s section of the Hungarian Communist Party. It was the only official women’s organization in early state socialist Hungary.

<sup>442</sup> Goven argues that identifying the reason for women’s oppression solely in the old ruling class and connecting women’s emancipation to the erasure of class oppression (and thus avoiding any possibility of intra-familial conflict), was a way to blame women for any hindrances to the realization of women’s equality. Goven, 37-54.

<sup>443</sup> Decree 13/1952 *TRHGY* 1952, 135.

<sup>444</sup> Goven, 56.

At the same time, the Constitution of 1949 and the Family Law of 1952 as well as further measures for “the protection of mothers and infants” reinforced the centrality of the nuclear family and women’s roles as mothers. The Constitution of 1949 declared that it protected the rights of youth and placed “the structure of institutions for the protection of mothers and children” among policies intended to support “women’s equal rights with men.”<sup>445</sup> The 1952 Act on Marriage, the Family, and Guardianship expressly followed up the constitutionally declared protection of youth, and declared that “in line with” the “social order and socialist moral understanding” of the state its goal was to “regulate and protect the institutions of marriage and family, ensure women’s equality and children’s protection in the marriage and the family, and forward the development and education of youth.”<sup>446</sup> Importantly, it gave equal rights to children born out of wedlock when it “effectively outlawed single parenthood by requiring children to have two officially recognized guardians.”<sup>447</sup> This is significant, when one considers that prior to 1946, children and mothers of children born out of wedlock were legally, in terms of access to social services and societal evaluation, second-class citizens.<sup>448</sup> Case workers were entitled to conduct paternity tests to locate fathers and require them to pay 20 per cent of their salaries as child support.<sup>449</sup> At the same time, the law emphasized the centrality of the nuclear and extended family, and case workers’ efforts were

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<sup>445</sup> “The Constitution”, *Netjogtár*.

<sup>446</sup> Act 4 of 1952.

<sup>447</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 29. The first step taken towards this direction following World War II was Act 29 of 1946 on the legal status of children born out of wedlock [1946. évi XXIX. törvény a házasságon kívül született gyermek jogállásáról], <http://www.1000ev.hu/index.php?a=3&param=8247> (last accessed: April 18, 2010).

<sup>448</sup> István Varga. “Kísérlet a törvénytelen gyermekek két világháború közötti helyzetének bemutatására Magyarországon [Towards Presenting the Situation of Illegal Children in Interwar Hungary],” in: Dénes Némédi and Vera Szabadi (eds). *Kötő-Jelek 2006, 2007*. Budapest: ELTE Társadalomtudományi Kar Szociológia Doktori Iskola, 2007, 203-221, <http://www.tarsadalomkutatás.hu/termek.php?termek=TPUBL-A-765> (last accessed: April 20, 2011).

<sup>449</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 29.

primarily directed toward securing women in these networks as well as in paid employment, to which welfare provisions were tied.<sup>450</sup>

Several other decrees at the time that aimed to ease the balancing of paid work and family life were in fact family-oriented benefits, as Haney pointed out, reinforcing that women were responsible for both productive and reproductive work.<sup>451</sup> There were four types of family-oriented benefits in the first half of the 1950s that favored state sector employees: family allowance, motherhood benefit, short-term leave provisions and special funds. These family-oriented in-cash benefits were administered by “family cashiers” at the enterprise-level. Workers had also access to in-kind benefits, such as weekly sales or enterprise housing.<sup>452</sup> Occasional special funds were distributed on a per-case basis, such as a month’s salary to newly married workers. From 1950 onwards, working mothers were also entitled to short-term leaves that reinforced their motherhood responsibilities. Mothers with two children were given one day off without pay per month, and mothers with three children could have two days off as “housework holiday.”<sup>453</sup> Parents with children under three could also take thirty days of paid sick leave and those with children under six, fifteen days of leave a year.

In 1946, family allowance that had existed since 1912 was extended to cover all employees in the state sector without limit to the number of children they had, but employees of agricultural cooperatives were left uncovered. Cooperative workers were included in 1953 but unlike state employees, who were covered only after the second child, agricultural workers received family support only after the third child, and their allowance was also smaller.<sup>454</sup> Single

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<sup>450</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 9.

<sup>451</sup> Haney. *Inventing the Needy*, 29.

<sup>452</sup> Haney. “Familial Welfare,” 109.

<sup>453</sup> Haney. “Familial Welfare,” 109.

<sup>454</sup> Decree 6/1953 of the Council of Ministers about the family allowance [6/1953 (II.8.) M.T. sz. rendelet a családi pótlékról], *TRHGY* 1953, 66-69. The amount per child did not reach 5 per cent of the average income.

mothers were excluded from this support until 1959. The motherhood benefit was also connected to employment.<sup>455</sup> There was an additional twelve-week nursing benefit following the end of the puerperal benefit. From 1948 on, working women were entitled to sickness benefit if they had to stay at home with a child under one year.<sup>456</sup> From 1949 onwards, a one-time motherhood benefit was allocated to working women.<sup>457</sup>

In 1953 abortion was banned. The introduction of the abortion ban shows, that in early state socialist Hungary child protection was closely connected to the control of reproduction.<sup>458</sup>

Feminist analysis draws attention to the significance of the abortion ban in constituting women as “vessels of the nation” who at the same time need[ed] to be controlled.<sup>459</sup>

Meanwhile, it is important to note that together with the Family Law of 1952, described above, decree 1004/1953 was part of a series of mother and infant protection regulations.<sup>460</sup> It

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Ákos Tárkányi. “Európai családpolitikák: A magyar családpolitika története [European Family Policies: The History of the Hungarian Family Policy],” <http://meh.communio.hu/eucsp.htm> (last accessed: April 18, 2010), 5. In 1955, the preconditions of receiving motherhood benefit were extended once more. Women who were employed at least 270 days prior to childbirth received their full salary and women who worked 180 days prior to birth received 50 per cent of their salaries for twelve weeks. Statutory Rule 39 of 1955 about the Sickness Insurance of Workers [1955. évi 39. tvr. a dolgozók betegségi biztosításáról], *TRHGY 1955*.

<sup>455</sup> Until 1953, according to pre-World War II regulations, working women received their full salaries as a pregnancy benefit for six weeks prior to giving birth and as a so-called puerperal benefit [gyermekágyi segély] for another six weeks after birth if they had accumulated at least ten month sickness insurance within two years prior to giving birth, Tárkányi, 7.

<sup>456</sup> Decree 8.880/1948 of the Government, cited by Tárkányi, 7.

<sup>457</sup> Decree 1.040/1949 of the Government, cited by Tárkányi, 7. Or a benefit of fifty forints less if women themselves were not employed but had an employed husband. Women working in agricultural cooperatives were only entitled to this last, one-time motherhood benefit, but they received a slightly higher amount.

<sup>458</sup> Decree 1004/1953 of the Council of Ministers about Increasing the protection of mothers and children [1004/1953 (II.8.) M.T. sz. határozat az anya- és gyermekvédelem továbbfejlesztéséről], *TRHGY 1953*, 173-176. The so-called “Ratkó Law,” termed after Anna Ratkó, minister of health at the time of its introduction. Early attempts at its withdrawal were already manifest in 1953. There was also an easing up in its practice during the Imre Nagy government, and finally following the legalization of abortion in the Soviet Union in 1955 the abortion ban was abolished in Hungary in the summer of 1956. See: Györgyi Garancsi. “*Úgy irányítjuk, mint a kocsit, az asszonyok életét...*” *A születésszabályozás a Rákosi rendszerben* [“We Steer Women’s Lives Like a Car...”: *Birth Control Policy in the Rákosi Regime*]. Thesis, Budapest: ELTE, BTK, Szociológia, Szociálpolitikai Intézet és Továbbképző Központ, 2001, 48-49.

<sup>459</sup> Gal and Kligman, 14-36.

<sup>460</sup> The text of the decree only referred to the regulation of abortion by stating that “there must be an increase in the fight against abortion,” and it was in practice that the ban was applied with extreme harshness and brutality. Aborting women or those carrying out abortions were given a court sentence. While abortions without direct medical reasons and not performed in a hospital were forbidden prior to 1953 too, up to then abortion was not actively persecuted. According to the criminal procedure of the time, it was the accused who had to prove his or her innocence. In 1953, there were three times as many persons sentenced for participating in or carrying out



entitled mothers employed in the state sector to their full salaries during the twelve-week-long pregnancy and puerperal benefit, and increased the amount of the one-time motherhood allowance.<sup>461</sup> It also entitled mothers to baby clothes at birth. Back at work, they were given two hours of paid nursing time until their child was six months old, and one hour per day until the child's ninth month. Optionally, this could be exchanged with a three-month unpaid leave.<sup>462</sup> The decree also prohibited rejecting pregnant women's job applications and ordered that mothers' employment could not be terminated within three months of giving birth. These provisions show that emphasis was put on ensuring that employed mothers did not neglect their responsibilities as mothers in the terrain of reproductive work.

The centrality of the family was furthermore popularized by Soviet publications concerning communist morality as well as MNDSZ brochures addressed to working women. As I pointed out in the previous chapter, there was a general preoccupation with morality in the newly established communist regime of Hungary. Publications that sprang to life discussing the basic principles of communist morality and the character traits of the new communist person not only highlighted the morality of productive work, but also devoted specific attention to sexual and family morals. The eleven, mostly Soviet publications I presented in Chapter 4 with reference to how productive work was constructed in them, reveal that the cornerstones of communist morality concerning sexuality and family life were the establishment of the centrality of the family and a distance from "loose" bourgeois sexual morals.

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abortions than in any of the years prior to that. Even following the easing up of this practice in 1954, there were approximately five hundred persons sentenced by the court. During a general amnesty in the summer of 1953 there were 674 women among the 25,000 persons released from prison, who were sentenced because of an abortion, Garancsi, 48-49.

<sup>461</sup> Tárkányi, 7. It was a one hundred Forint increase or a two hundred Forint increase in case of a first child. These amounts, however, did not count as significant financial support to families. Women working in agricultural cooperatives, however, were still only entitled to this one-time benefit.

<sup>462</sup> Haney. "Familial Welfare," 109.

Contrasting proletarian, “love-based” marriages to the financially motivated “bourgeois marriages” of the past, publications propagated sexual fidelity in marriage.<sup>463</sup> “Bourgeois morality that propagates men’s total freedom in love not only debauches men’s personality but humiliates women’s human dignity as well.”<sup>464</sup> The fact that sexual relationships were acceptable only within this framework implicated the immorality of single motherhood and childhood outside the nuclear family. Furthermore, “the natural goal and main meaning of the family” was identified to be in giving birth to and raising children.<sup>465</sup> The moral significance of the nuclear family was also implicated by descriptions of the family that consisted of “caring fathers and mothers, who loved their family and paid attention to the upbringing of their children.”<sup>466</sup> This also implied that childbirth was to take place within the family.

With emphasis remaining on the nuclear family, women’s roles as mothers was also affirmed. Goven pointed out concerning MNDSZ publications that they depicted working women “essentially as mothers but as mothers who worked.”<sup>467</sup> As I underlined in Chapter 4, the 1953-1954 shift in child protection regulations brought about a shift in the argumentation for children’s placement in state care, and besides cases where women were primarily viewed in terms of their motherhood, children were also presented as hindrance to women’s entrance to paid work.

The above review of laws and decrees in the field of child protection and social reproduction between 1949 and 1956 showed that the new regime introduced a number of measures to address perceived injustice against women and children in the past, among which the

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<sup>463</sup> Zisz, 51.

<sup>464</sup> Losonczy, 21. Note that similar notions were advanced by middle-class feminists in the United States in the 1920s.

<sup>465</sup> Kolbanovskij, 51.

<sup>466</sup> Kolbanovskij, 51.

<sup>467</sup> Goven, 66.

equalization of children born out of wedlock and support for single mothers were one of the central child protection measures of the time period. These measures were, at the same time, also used for the self-legitimization of the regime. They reveal that central to the building of the new state was the control of women's sexuality and fertility and their responsibility as mothers in the nuclear family. They also imply that child protection was closely connected to this control mechanism. In the next section of my chapter, I examine these processes in the terrain of local institutional practice.

## **5.2. The Construction of Sexual (Im)Morality, Marriage and Family Life in the Practice of Children's Placement in State Care**

In this chapter I argue that the protection of abandoned/endangered children was a means to exercise control over their mothers' lives. Based on my sample of cases, interviews and archival material, in the following, I focus on two aspects of this process in the practice of child protection. I first highlight the intersections of "race"/ethnicity with the gendered process of the regulation of mothers' lives in the field of institutional-level practice, and then I turn to the role of child protection in the regulation of sexual behavior in early state socialist Hungary.

In Chapter 4, I presented that with the accentuation of women's responsibilities in the field of productive work, their task in the sphere of child rearing was not diminished. In this section of my dissertation I claim that the gendered construction of social reproduction intersected with the treatment of the issue of "race"/ethnicity in early state socialist Hungary. Based on feminist scholarship on the gender and racial construction of citizenship, I argue that shaping Romani mothers to fit the communist norms of "proper motherhood" was a means towards

the assimilation of Roma into mainstream Hungarian society. “Racial” /ethnic difference was to disappear by disciplining Romani mothers to fit the communist norms of family life and raise their children to become “honest working persons.”

Children provided an access for case workers to both Romani and non-Romani families, the regulation of parents, and primarily mothers, whom they considered responsible for the social reproduction of the family. Child protection regulations instructed, for example, social policy committee members to be actively involved in prevention work. As I mentioned in my previous chapter, social policy committees were to use “tactics” to govern the lives of families. This was especially so in case of moral abandonment/endangerment. Members were encouraged to “talk to children” who were “truant and who frequently ran away or wandered away from home,” and “explain them that it was important in the interest of their development that they attended school and followed their parents’ instructions.”<sup>468</sup> Committee members were encouraged to access parents via their children and “uncover the difficulties of such families.” Guardianship authorities furthermore were to “provide a regular consulting service” but also had the right to summon parents and “request them to take steps necessary in the interest of their child.”<sup>469</sup> They could “warn them about the consequences of behavior endangering the interest of their child,” and “request the immediate termination” of such behavior.<sup>470</sup> Authorities were also entitled to call such families into the attention of “social organizations” and social policy committees. As a more serious step, the termination of parental supervision rights could be requested, or in case of fathers, a legal process could be started if they had unpaid child maintenance fees. Children could also be ordered to be placed with a different relative and finally, parents could even face criminal proceedings.

<sup>468</sup> Guidelines to social policy committees, *BK* Special Issue, 11 January, 1953, 4.

<sup>469</sup> Decree 955-84/1954 *TK* 2, 78 (1954): 909-924.

<sup>470</sup> Decree 955-84/1954 *TK* 2, 78 (1954): 909-924.

Case workers' own account of their work and involvement with families demonstrates that they tried to exercise influence over the parents and especially the mothers of children whom they perceived to be morally abandoned/endangered. This, once again, demonstrates that mothers were viewed as those responsible for care work in families, and in case of moral abandonment/endangerment they were primarily mothers who had to be "taught" and "instructed." The director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, Mrs. Dési-Huber, for example, mentions in 1951 about newly established infant homes that they were set up partly with the purpose of "the education" of mothers who relied on the state care of their newborn babies.<sup>471</sup> She highlighted that part of this education meant that mothers had to participate in the cleaning and maintenance of the homes.

The control of motherhood via children in the practice of child protection also extended to Romani mothers. Like non-Romani mothers, they were held responsible for the raising of their children and case workers posed similar norms of "proper motherhood" on them as their non-Romani counterparts. Reflecting back upon her work as case worker at the 9<sup>th</sup> district Guardianship Office in Budapest in the mid-1950s from five decades' time, Mrs. Nemeshegyi still highlighted as one of the most important parts of her work, the mapping of the living conditions and the assistance of Romani families.<sup>472</sup> These families were living at one of the most poverty-stricken areas of the district, the Maria Valeria Settlement [Mária Valéria Telep].<sup>473</sup> In addressing the issue of these families, Mrs. Nemeshegyi underlined the

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<sup>471</sup> A gyermekvédelem jelenlegi helyzete és javaslat annak megjavítására [Report about the Present Situation of Child Protection and Recommendations for Improvements], Winter 1951, The Posthumous Documents of Mrs. Dési-Huber, The Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest.

<sup>472</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest. Mrs. Nemeshegyi, Ilona Sass (1910-2008) was case worker at the Education Department of the 9<sup>th</sup> district council in Budapest between 1955 and 1960. She graduated from Péter Pázmány University in latin-Hungarian during World War II. She was director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County between 1960-1965. She was active member of the Hungarian Women's Democratic Association from 1945 on, and participated in different parent-teacher associations in primary and secondary schools.

<sup>473</sup> The Maria Valeria Settlement was set up during World War I to accommodate injured soldiers, and later the barracks pulled up on the site operated as a temporary hospital for war prisoners. It was named after the

connection between the protection of abandoned/endangered children and their mothers: “My position [at the council] was about working directly with the children and naturally with their parents as well.”<sup>474</sup> She recalled that she regularly visited the settlement and spent time talking to parents, especially mothers and grandmothers. “I checked on them and we talked, not just once, and not just as if [nem csak éppen-hogy], like out of official need once and for only ten minutes.”<sup>475</sup>

Mrs. Nemeshegyi claimed that this form of “dealing with” children and parents was effective and had a measurable impact: “I think we were not wrong to do it this way because in general [the children] became very decent people and the parents too, they pulled themselves together [megemberelték magukat] a little bit.” She placed special emphasis on the change in mothers’ lives: “When the approach of a mother [családanya] changed there, and she did not say anymore that ‘oh, it was because of my drinking husband that I did not look after the children,’ and all that, but she started to feel that this was *her* responsibility, that she had to look after her child and see after her husband a little bit too, if she could; to try to change him as well.”<sup>476</sup>

Describing her job as a case worker, Mrs. Nemeshegyi made a point about talking to Romani mothers in case schools reported about the misbehavior of a child. “Then I went there [to the settlement] and looked up [the child’s] mother, and I told her what the situation was [what she had heard from teachers] and then they were already listening to me. Sometimes they tried to

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Habsburg archduchess Maria Valeria who conducted charity work at the settlement. After the end of World War I, the buildings were turned into temporary housing for families arriving to Budapest from regions detached from Hungary following the redrawing of national borders. Meant as temporary housing, no investments were made to improve living conditions for decades resulting in the development of a slum area inhabited by the poorest. It even survived the early years of state socialism and was finally pulled down only in 1957 to be replaced by a housing estate.

<sup>474</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest.

<sup>475</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest.

<sup>476</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest.

argue against me, saying that ‘the teacher does not like my child’ and so on. But there were others, who admitted that ‘yes, my daughter likes to talk back to people [nagyszájú] and can shout very much, and she also behaves this way at home.’”

Mrs. Nemeshegyi was convinced that talking to the mothers of Romani children could result in changing the lives of the family as well as the young generation of Roma. She presented the case of a Romani mother, for example, she used to visit at the Maria Valeria Settlement whom she met by accident several years later. “Mrs. Nemeshegyi,’ she said to me, ‘I am eternally grateful to you for saving my son from delinquency. He became a very orderly adult [nagyon rendes ember lett], he has a family and looks after his children and has a proper job.’” Romani mothers’ responsibility, like non-Romani mothers’ was constructed as extending over the growing up of their children and turning their children into productive members of state socialist society. Case workers believed they had an influence over this process.

Mrs. Nemeshegyi stated that part of her case work was to “check upon” especially Romani boys from the settlement “at their work place and their employer to see how they behaved.” She argued that case workers “continued to educate children and young grown ups [even after they were employed] so that they turned out to be honest working persons [tisztességes munkásemberré váljon].” Roma were expected to turn into proletarian subjects and thereby assimilate into mainstream Hungarian socialist culture. Case workers understood their responsibility as actively shaping this process by exercising influence over Romani mothers.

Material from the executive committee of Szabolcs-Szatmár County further demonstrates this point. A report prepared by the Health Department of the County Council in 1955 for the debate at the meeting of the executive committee, I mentioned in the previous chapter in

relation to the construction of Roma as “unwilling to work,” also made specific reference to Romani mothers and children:

Also Gypsy women are trying to find employment in the industry, especially those who live a youthful, lazy life outside wedlock [fiatal, léha, házasságon kívüli életközösségben élnek]. As a result of their entrance to paid work, they gave many children in state care or asked for their placement in state care. Approximately 40-50 per cent of the children placed in state care in the county were Gypsy children. The reason for these requests for placement in state care was that they wanted to improve their living [saját megéhetésüket nívósabbá tegyék] and wanted to get rid of their parental responsibilities. Thorough examination [of these cases] enabled the prevention of the further development of this process, moreover decrease it to such an extent that in the first half of 1954 there were 50 per cent less children taken in state care than in the same period in 1950.<sup>477</sup>

This document reflected on employed Romani women as abandoning their responsibilities as mothers. It underlines that they, like non-Roma, were also to meet the double expectation towards women in the spheres of productive and reproductive work.

So far I argued that case workers’ regulative approach towards motherhood extended over both Romani and non-Romani women. Mothers were seen responsible for educating the new generation of communist subjects in becoming productive workers in society. Disciplining Romani mothers into the communist norms of family life, at the same time, was also seen to be part of the assimilation process of Roma into Hungarian society. In the following section of my chapter, I argue that the control of motherhood and reproduction also extended to the terrain of female sexuality. Especially before the appearance of the Family Law of 1952, that declared the equality of children born outside wedlock, there was a clear indication of case workers’ mixed attitude towards single motherhood combining an effort to help with negative

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<sup>477</sup> SZSZBML, XXIII. 2. 05-2/1955 Tük.



moral judgment. Moral delinquency cases concerning children's behavior furthermore show that delinquency had gendered connotations referring to female sexual immorality.

### **Single Motherhood: A Morally Questionable Lifestyle**

The majority of issues handled by authorities concerning morally endangering parental conduct and the home were related to mothers, among whom, as I already pointed out in the previous chapter, many were single mothers. The average annual proportion of moral abandonment/endangerment cases where children with a single mother were taken by the child protection institution was 22 per cent in Budapest/Pest County and 16.8 per cent in Szolnok per year, with a 44.5 per cent peak in 1949 in Budapest/Pest County and 26.6 per cent in 1953 in Szolnok.<sup>478</sup> Case files of children placed in state care for moral reasons testify that especially until the legal equalization of children born out of wedlock by the introduction of the Family Law of 1952, child protection authorities viewed single motherhood with a mixture of negative moral judgment and a desire to be helpful.<sup>479</sup>

Historian, Eszter Zsófia Tóth has pointed to a similar mixture of attitude towards single motherhood manifest in the only women's magazine of state socialist Hungary [Nők Lapja] over later decades of state socialism as well.<sup>480</sup> The magazine was silent on the subject until

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<sup>478</sup> The 1949 peak in Budapest might have been caused by the increase in single mothers as a result of World War II. I have no matching figure from Szolnok because the child protection institution did not open there until 1952. The 1953 peak in Szolnok might be a result of the introduction of the abortion ban that year. Figures from Budapest of the same year are the lowest (11.7 per cent), however, and figures fluctuate between 10 and 23 per cent per year in the two cities between 1953 and 1956.

<sup>479</sup> The association of single motherhood with negative moral judgment was not exceptional to case workers in Eastern Europe. Historian, Linda Gordon noted concerning separated women in the 1930s in the United States, called deserted wives at the time, that they were usually made suspect of the stigma of this family form, "no matter their contribution to the situation." Linda Gordon. *Pitied but Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare, 1890-1935*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1994, 26.

<sup>480</sup> Eszter Zsófia Tóth. "Gábor csináljunk gyereket, hadd vessen cigánykereket! A megesett lánytól az egyedülálló anyáig – a lányanyák megítélésének változása a szocialista időszakban [From Fallen Women to Single Mothers – Changing Public Opinion about Single Mothers under State Socialism]," in: Bakó, Boglárka

1956, when the first article was published about “unwanted children” rather than “single motherhood,” a term that appeared only in the early 1960s. The magazine highlighted the placement of unwanted children into residential homes, emphasizing that “contrary to the past when single mothers had no alternatives but to kill their babies, the People’s Democracy offer[ed] supportive services to single mothers to avoid living with the shame that surrounded birth out of wedlock.”<sup>481</sup> Tóth also noted that having the same family name as one’s mother was a sign of having been born out of wedlock and was identified as a likely sign of psychological problems even as late as the 1980s.

These two approaches were present in case workers’ practice of keeping track of single mothers and children born out of wedlock. Pre-printed official forms for collecting background data on children from pre-World War II practice were still in circulation in the early 1950s. A separate category referring to children’s “origin” [származása] ranked among the first four pieces of data about children on this form. Following their full name, date and place of birth, gender, religion and mother tongue, it asked whether they were “born in or outside wedlock.” Later forms no longer contained a specific question on “origin” but retained questions concerning parents’ year and place of marriage and divorce as well as the name and place of residence of a possible “natural father” [természetes apa] and data about the stage of legal procedures establishing biological fatherhood. Thus, although “born out of wedlock” as basis for differentiation officially ceased to exist, case file forms contained questions that allowed authorities to determine a child’s “legitimacy.”

Another sign of this mixed attitude in case records was to denote single motherhood with terminology that had a negative connotation, such as “wild marriage [vadházasság]” meaning

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and Tóth, Eszter Zsófia (eds.). *Határtalan nők: Kizártak és befogadottak a női társadalomban [Women without Borders: Inclusion and Exclusion in Female Society]*. Budapest: Nyitott Könyvműhely, 2008, 347-348.

<sup>481</sup> Tóth, 345.

“an out of wedlock partnership.” In the moral abandonment case of a girl in Budapest/Pest County, for example, her father was claimed to have declared to the guardianship authorities that “the mother living in wild marriage with him neglected the upbringing and care of the child.”<sup>482</sup> Noteworthy is the fact, that the use of this terminology was attached to the negative evaluation of the mother due to the abandonment of her motherly responsibilities. She was claimed to be an alcoholic who spent all the money she had received from the father on drinking, even money given to her for the purposes of buying food for the children. Similarly, in another case from 1950 in Budapest/Pest County, the placement of a girl in state care for moral reasons was seen necessary due to the “drinking and immoral lifestyle” of the “wild marriage partner” of her adoptive father who “had disappeared in the war.”<sup>483</sup>

In a case from Szolnok County in 1953, a boy’s moral abandonment/endangerment was explained as a result of his mother’s behavior who “does not look after her child” and “lives together, outside wedlock” with “an irresponsible natural father who had offered the child for sale [to potential adoptive parents] in return for payment.”<sup>484</sup> In couples living together but not married legally, women were easily seen as having loose morals or not caring for their children. In 1949, for example, according to the head of the Child Protection Department of the Budapest Police, the “moral development” of three siblings “was not secured” with their “not legally married” parents.<sup>485</sup> In the opinion of the female police officer, this was due to the fact that they were “born out of wedlock and their mother still led an immoral life.”<sup>486</sup> In yet another case Mrs. S., “a character not caring for her children [gyermekeivel nem törődő egyéniség]” was noted to be married “after the children’s birth [utólag férjezett].”<sup>487</sup>

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<sup>482</sup> CPMSB, III. 41. 578/1951.

<sup>483</sup> CPMSB, III. 36. 335/1950.

<sup>484</sup> CPISZ 2480/1953.

<sup>485</sup> CPMSB, III. 34186-88/1949.

<sup>486</sup> CPMSB, III. 34186-88/1949.

<sup>487</sup> CPISZ, 3088/1954.

Case workers' help to single mothers, as Lynne Haney has noted, focused on facilitating their entrance into permanent paid employment, I discussed in the previous chapter, and on enabling them to settle their family relationships and secure their position in the nuclear and wider family network.<sup>488</sup> Another sign of the interwoven nature of case workers' helpfulness and moralism towards single motherhood was manifest in how children were viewed to be morally abandoned/endangered if their mothers remained in relationships with men outside the legal framework of marriage. These women were suspect of possible prostitution. In case of a young boy's placement in state care in 1950, his single mother was, for example, described as one who "frequently changed her male supporters."<sup>489</sup> According to the description of the medical examiner in another boy's case, placed in state care for moral reasons in Budapest/Pest County in 1951, his "family background was more than suspicious."<sup>490</sup> As an explanation, the examiner stated that the boy "was born outside wedlock, and according to his mother, he had an elder sister of the same father."<sup>491</sup> Although "the mother's husband had adopted these two children" they separated and "the smallest and now seven-month-old child's origin was also very dubious."<sup>492</sup> The examiner, furthermore, said that although all reports, including the mother's, referred to "the negligence" of the husband and the poverty of the mother and children,

suddenly it turned out that the mother's existence was secured, although she was unemployed, [and at their last meeting] her clothes were also in order. The mother claimed that her husband had given her all these things but this was most unlikely. From a slip of the tongue a man's name was given away, who was presumably the father of her smallest child.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> Haney, *Inventing the Needy*, 9.

<sup>489</sup> CPMSB, III. 35. 812/1950.

<sup>490</sup> CPMSB, III. 41. 505/1951.

<sup>491</sup> CPMSB, III. 41. 505/1951.

<sup>492</sup> CPMSB, III. 41. 505/1951.

<sup>493</sup> CPMSB, III. 41. 505/1951.

In another case in Szolnok County in 1952, the mother of a boy was seen to morally endanger her son because after a whole day's work, "she spent her free time in the company of men," and "even more, she was receiving her friends in the company of her son." Because the child was wandering, the mother was described as "not caring for him."<sup>494</sup> On the other hand, if single mothers claimed to have the perspective to get married or proved that they were legally married they could receive their children back. In the last case from Szolnok County from 1952, for example, case workers stated six months after the child's removal to state care that "the mother of the child might get married in the near future and if her living conditions change[d] we [would] recommend that she [got] her child back from state care."<sup>495</sup>

The suspected prostitution of mothers was termed "immoral lifestyle," as is clear from the following cases. The mother of two children placed in state care for moral reasons in Budapest/Pest County in 1950, was claimed to have an "immoral lifestyle, keeping up relationships with men, but not doing that at her flat but in the woods of Kispest and the People's Park [Népliget]."<sup>496</sup> In another case of two children placed in state care in Budapest/Pest County in 1953, moral abandonment/endangerment was due to the fact that the mother who "neglected them" was having an immoral lifestyle."<sup>497</sup> She was seen to be able to carry on this activity because "the father of the children was always away working on a boat."

Mothers who were raising their children without a husband could also be "morally questionable."<sup>498</sup> The eleven year-old son of a single mother of three was, for example, removed from home in 1954 because, according to case workers, he did not "receive proper

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<sup>494</sup> CPISZ, 1358/1952.

<sup>495</sup> CPISZ, 1422/1952.

<sup>496</sup> CPMSB, III. 35. 663/1950.

<sup>497</sup> CPMSB, III. 50. 109/1953.

<sup>498</sup> Linda Gordon notes about the moral stigma of single motherhood in early 20<sup>th</sup> century United States that it affected not only out of wedlock mothers but single mother families as well, no matter how they were formed. Gordon. *Pitied but Not Entitled*, 32.

upbringing in his mother's care," as her "moral life [was] questionable [erkölcsi életmódja kifogásolható]." <sup>499</sup> This terminology denoted that the mother was suspect of prostitution. Reference was also made to a daughter who was already "in a [reformatory] home for young girls, exactly because of her mother's lifestyle." <sup>500</sup> As there is no explanation to why this mother, who was found to be employed and contributed to her daughter's state care from her salary was thought to be a prostitute it can only be suspected that case workers disapproved of her long-term single motherhood. As her husband had "disappeared in 1944," she had lived without getting married again for over ten years.

Cases of single mothers who had more than one child born out of wedlock were also suspect of prostitution. In a case from 1956, guardianship authorities decided to remove a three-year-old girl from her mother's care because she not only was unemployed but had "a morally seriously questionable lifestyle." <sup>501</sup> Case workers doubted the security of the child's upbringing with an unmarried mother who "had already another child born out of wedlock." <sup>502</sup> In another case from Budapest/Pest County, the moral abandonment/endangerment of a wandering boy who "kept running away from home" was also motivated by the fact that "the mother had three children, the third one not from the father." <sup>503</sup> The mother was found "to live a lively and little bit irresponsible life." In another case from Budapest/Pest County from 1950, the young daughter of a single mother was seen to be "endangered morally in the environment of her mother" who had "several children born out of wedlock" and "all these children had a different father." <sup>504</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> CPMSB, III. 51799/1953.

<sup>500</sup> CPMSB, III. 51799/1953.

<sup>501</sup> CPISZ, 3320/1955.

<sup>502</sup> CPISZ, 3320/1955.

<sup>503</sup> CPMSB, III. 40. 826/1951.

<sup>504</sup> CPMSB, III. 35. 522/1950.

There are numerous examples of children placed in state care for moral reasons due to poverty and their mothers' inability to provide for them.<sup>505</sup> Cases reveal that mothers were usually held responsible for the care of their children and the cleanliness of their household. A nine-year-old child was placed into state care for moral reasons in 1952, because "he had lice as a result of his mother's lack of care."<sup>506</sup> The mother was also claimed to have left her child in the care of an old couple above seventy years of age "in an unhealthy and wet" apartment. The mother, who was working in a nursery school, was not only criticized for not looking after her child properly, but, as a consequence, the quality of her work and thus the security of her employment were also implicated. "If she looks after her own child so irresponsibly, it is unlikely that she would treat other children placed under her care any differently," the case record stated.

Children's case files from Szabolcs-Szatmár County show no significant difference in the treatment of Romani and non-Romani mothers whose children were born out of wedlock. Cases where the "illegality of the child" [törvénytelen gyerek] or "wild marriage" was pointed out were mostly from up to 1952. In spite of the fact, that over 40 per cent (34 out of 80 cases) of Romani mothers were not legally married with their partners there were few instances where this was highlighted. There was one case in 1953, where the single motherhood of a Romani mother, called young mother [leányanya], with a nine- and a five-year-old daughter, was brought clearly in connection with her irresponsibility towards her children. The mother was claimed to live a "loose [kiscsapó] and immoral life" because she was "leaving her children alone for weeks or often for even a month, and the children [were] begging and would be endangered morally if they stayed around longer."<sup>507</sup> Case workers blamed the mother for having received back her two children already once from state care but still not

<sup>505</sup> CPISZ, 609-10/1952, 1361/1952, 4200/1956, 3911-14/1956

<sup>506</sup> CPISZ, 1079/1952.

<sup>507</sup> CPCSZ, 1049-50/1953. Mistake with word use in the Hungarian original.

looking after them: “[The children] were already placed to [the Child Protection Institution of] Debrecen once, from where their mother brought them home, as she was to behave properly from then on and look after them. But she broke [her promise] because the children are again in the streets and their mother behaves intolerably so that we cannot watch it any longer.”<sup>508</sup> Case workers asked that the mother not be informed about the placement of her children “so that she could not take them with her, as she [did] not care and look after them.”<sup>509</sup>

Moral abandonment/endangerment cases reveal that case workers viewed single mothers with a mixture of negative moral judgment and a desire to be helpful especially prior to the issuance of the Family Law of 1952. They contributed to the reinforcement of the centrality of the nuclear family by keeping track of children’s birth outside wedlock. Next, I argue through the analysis of children’s placement in state care for moral reasons due to their own behavior, that the notion of moral abandonment/endangerment was gendered.

### **Fear from Young Girls’ Sexuality: The Gendered Construction of Moral Abandonment/Endangerment based on the Behavior and Conduct of Children**

Child protection regulations, I described in greater detail in Chapter 3, named truancy and wandering as the two main reasons for which children could be found to be “in danger of moral delinquency” due to “reasons in their own person.”<sup>510</sup> In the following, I argue that there was a striking gender difference in how the categories of wandering and truancy were applied. For boys these were usually paired up with incidents of lying or minor thefts. By contrast, most cases involving girls focused on sexually inappropriate behavior and functioned in disciplining female sexuality.

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<sup>508</sup> CPCSZ, 1049-50/1953.

<sup>509</sup> CPCSZ, 1049-50/1953.

<sup>510</sup> Decree 128.100/1949 *TRHGY 1949*, 1314.



Concern about young women included numerous types of sexually inappropriate behavior that authorities labeled immoral. Historical sociologist Ann Livschiz, in an article on Soviet youth sexuality, points out that fear of youth and particularly of female sexuality was seen as both a moral and a political threat by party and educational officials in the decades after the Soviet Revolution. While going to great lengths to “get [sexuality] under control in order to ensure that Soviet girls grew up to be productive members of Soviet society” and “see the triumph of proper Soviet socialization over their female nature,” authorities expressed a “profound social conservatism” on femininity and sexual matters.<sup>511</sup>

Similar concerns seem to have motivated Hungarian communist officials. A series of letter exchanges among primary-school directors, teachers and supervisors in 1956 reveals that by the mid-1950s Hungarian educators were also addressing the subject of youth morality with a focus on female sexual delinquency.<sup>512</sup> They debated about the appropriate moral behavior of teenage girls and what they perceived as sexually immoral behavior. To justify their concern, educators listed several cases involving the misbehavior of young girls. Emphasis fell on their presence at particular events, locations and practices that were associated with possible sexual misconduct. These could range from non-school related activities, such as parties and weekend outings of sport clubs in the countryside, to watching certain “destructive” films, and reading “naturalistic passages” in novels written in a “realist style.” A typical example of the kinds of behavior and location that teachers disapproved was a girl seen after midnight at a dancing club: “She was there without her parents in the company of a young man, about to get divorced. When she noticed me, she tried to leave together with her suitor without saying

<sup>511</sup> Ann Livschiz, “Battling ‘Unhealthy Relations:’ Soviet Youth Sexuality as a Political Problem,” *The Journal of Historical Sociology* 21 (2008): 397-416, 397.

<sup>512</sup> “Vita ifjúságunk erőlcse neveléséről [A Debate around the Moral Education of our Youth],” *Köznevelés*, 1956 (10): 225-226. *Köznevelés* was founded in 1945 and has been the biweekly, and from 1973 onwards, the weekly periodical of the Ministry of Education (or its name variant).

hello.”<sup>513</sup> Divorce was frowned upon; the complaining teacher emphasized not only the suitor’s divorce but the to-be-divorced status of the girl’s mother, who was summoned in after the event: “The next day we invited in the girl’s mother, who herself, was also about to get divorced. She found nothing wrong with her seventeen-year-old daughter being out after midnight. It took us a long time to persuade her about the impropriety of her opinion.”<sup>514</sup> Teachers’ worries about their female students’ immoral behavior focused on class-specific symptoms of sexual immorality. Specific sites and parts of the day, as well as actions such as divorce or association with divorced persons, were characterized as inappropriate for young women.

In the case files of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County and Szolnok girls “immoral life” was one of the most frequently used expressions denoting undesired forms of female sexuality. One way case workers expressed concern about young girls’ sexually inappropriate behavior was by referring to their age. My sample shows that young women’s age was a sensitive subject, as entering their teenage years was viewed as a sign of being more inclined towards sexually immoral behavior. The placement of an eleven-year-old girl at Szolnok in 1953, for example, was partly motivated by the fact that “her age put her in danger of moral delinquency.”<sup>515</sup> Another girl’s statement in 1954 claimed that “numerous mistakes on moral terrain have surfaced.” Therefore, the twelve-year-old could not be “left without parental supervision.”<sup>516</sup> In a third case, initiated around a twelve-year-old girl who had weak school performance, case workers also noted that she was left alone during most of the day and concluded that “lack of proper supervision in case of a twelve-year-old young girl may

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<sup>513</sup> *Köznevelés*, 225.

<sup>514</sup> *Köznevelés*, 225.

<sup>515</sup> CPISZ, 2197-99/1953.

<sup>516</sup> CPISZ, 3080/1954

lead to further negative consequences.”<sup>517</sup> A similar case was reported by the director of a primary school in the country in 1956 where, among other issues, “being only ten years old” the girl “has spent the night away from home more than once.”<sup>518</sup> Finally, a fifteen-year-old girl was described by the director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County in 1953 as “not living a life appropriate to her age” [nem korához képes életet él] as she was “going home late at night.”<sup>519</sup>

The gendered difference of delinquency with reference to age was also apparent in case of Romani girls. Mrs. Nemeshegyi, talking about the Maria Valeria Settlement she visited in 1955 as a case worker of the 9th district Guardianship Authorities in Budapest, made a clear gender distinction between “delinquency” among teenage Romani boys, who followed their fathers’ example in stealing and “not working” and Romani girls who were their mothers’ responsibility:

This [stealing] was done by boys. Not girls. With girls...it was...the problem was rather that...let’s say...their mothers let them grow up too early. The girls were, as if left to grow up as soon as possible; [they were left to] focus on their womanhood [törődjön a maga női mívoltával]. [...] I am not saying that most of [the girls] but many. And one brought the other into this kind of life. All of them wanted to earn money and have nice clothes, a better life, but their lives went a little bit on the wrong track [félresiklott] this way.<sup>520</sup>

Mrs. Nemeshegyi added at the same time, that this was not particular to Romani girls but happened in non-Romani families as well.

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<sup>517</sup> CPMSB, P. 9551-6/3/1956.

<sup>518</sup> CPISZ, 3984/1956

<sup>519</sup> CPISZ, 2527/1953.

<sup>520</sup> Mrs. Nemeshegyi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 1 June, 2008, Budapest.

Another way case workers phrased their concerns about young women's sexual mores was by labeling their bodies as "over-developed." A statement about an eleven-year-old girl in 1954, for example, noted that she was "over-developed, relative to how old she [was]" [korához képest túlfejlett], as a result of which she had "inclinations of the sort [olyan hajlamai vannak] that might lead her to leaving her parents' home."<sup>521</sup> Disapproval could also be expressed by talking about a young girl's inappropriate "lifestyle:" She was "searching for an irresponsible, libertine lifestyle" that has led to "a serious drop down in [the girl's] moral behavior," stated a document from 1949.<sup>522</sup>

Numerous rationales for placing children in state care for moral reasons refer to wandering. While young boys' rate of wandering was significantly higher than that of young girls, still fifteen out of the ninety-six cases concerning young girls in Budapest, and fourteen out of the sixty-two cases in Szolnok mentioned wandering as one of the symptoms of immorality or danger of moral delinquency. Young girls' case files show, that as opposed to boys, officials considered this wandering and spending the day and especially the night away from home as signs of uncontrolled circumstances related to sexual immorality.<sup>523</sup> The police department in control of prostitution at Szentendre, for example, filed a report in 1953 about a fifteen-year-old girl they found wandering. According to the report, she lived "in suspicious circumstances." In order to "ensure her proper moral development in the future" the police recommended immediate placement in a child protection institution, police investigation and the initiation of a juvenile court case.<sup>524</sup> Another young girl's case was initiated by a welfare officer at a primary school [iskola gondozó] in Budapest. Her social circumstances report

<sup>521</sup> CIPSZ, 3255/1954.

<sup>522</sup> CPMSB, III. 33711/1949.

<sup>523</sup> Susan Zimmermann reveals a similar "gender-specific dimension" in the construction of the "moral destitution" of girls and boys by the child protection movement in Budapest before World War I, in: "Making a Living from Disgrace: The Politics of Prostitution, Female Poverty and Urban Gender Codes in Budapest and Vienna, 1860-1920," in: Andrea Pető (ed.). *History Department Yearbook, 1994-1995*. Budapest: CEU, 1995, 67-92, 77.

<sup>524</sup> CPMSB, III. 50115/1953.

mentioned that she was involved in all “morally questionable matters” at school. Her “openly scandalous behavior,” was manifested by being “escorted home by the police at night more than once, allegedly also in a drunken state.”<sup>525</sup> In a case from 1954, the guardianship authorities requested institutional placement for a girl because her foster parents refused her further care on the grounds that she was “wandering” and “making friends with boys” [fűkkal barátkozik].<sup>526</sup>

The case of a sixteen-year-old girl, who was taken during a police raid to control prostitution in 1956 illustrates that “wandering” as an expression in case of young girls covered suspected prostitution. The girl’s report, written by the Criminal Investigation and Warrant of Caption Department of the Szolnok County Police stated that she was caught on a Saturday night at Szolnok train station. According to the report she was taken by the police “because she was a well-known person by the police comrade. She appeared several times at the train station at night and was wandering there, and was seen several times, according to police comrades, in the company of various men.” The minutes of the girl’s statement focus on the history of her earlier sexual encounters. “At B. I got together with an unskilled worker, called Sz.L., with whom I kept a sexual relation [nemi kapcsolat]. I have not been with a man before, this was the first man in my life. When I left B. on May 1, the sexual relations with Sz. were discontinued.”<sup>527</sup> Her presence at the train station at night was interpreted in light of her supposed prostitution based on the fact that she had lived together with a man outside wedlock in the past.

Being seen in the company of men could easily raise authorities’ concern about a teenage girl’s sexual immorality. In 1956, for example, a seventeen-year-old girl’s “immoral

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<sup>525</sup> CPISZ, 2430/1953

<sup>526</sup> CPISZ, 2898/1954

<sup>527</sup> CPISZ, 3815/1956.

behavior” was explained by the fact that she had moved out of her parents’ place and “appear[ed] in various places, especially in the company of men, who [took] advantage of her weakness.”<sup>528</sup> Case workers’ description implied a gendered understanding of the difference between men’s and women’s sexual behavior. “Searching for the company of boys” and “going out with boys” as well as “bringing men up” to one’s parents’ apartment were thus equally morally questionable.<sup>529</sup>

In another case of a thirteen-year-old girl from Budapest in 1956, Maria B. was placed in state care in February 1955 because she was seen as being in danger of moral delinquency due to truancy and wandering: She had “spent the night away from home more than once,” and was “taken home by the police,” implying the danger of sexual immorality.<sup>530</sup> At the small town about 70 kilometers away from her home in Budapest where she was placed with foster parents, she was soon singled out as a problem child. About a year after her placement, the parent-teacher association of the local primary school she attended addressed the municipal council asking for the girl’s “most urgent removal.”<sup>531</sup> The letter, signed by both parents and teachers, stated that, aside from “talking back to her teachers in an ugly manner,” she was “leading an immoral life inappropriate to her age, letting herself be courted by young men [legényekkel udvaroltat magának],” and on top of all, “explaining to her school girl class mates matters inappropriate to their age.”<sup>532</sup> The letter also mentioned that although the foster parent denied it at the time, earlier she had “allegedly lost a two-month pregnancy. Apart from

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<sup>528</sup> CPMSB, 4032/1956.

<sup>529</sup> CPMSB, III. 41305/1951; CPISZ, 3711/1955; CPISZ, 3984/1956. “Going out with boys” is the closest translation of [fiús] a pejorative expression used by authorities to denote that in their view dating was considered a sexually inappropriate behavior for a girl.

<sup>530</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>531</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>532</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

this,” continued the letter, “her behavior [was] not acceptable in the company of young girls of her age, because they learn[ed] no good from her.”<sup>533</sup>

The sharp-toned answer to this letter from the director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, responsible for Maria as her public guardian, reveals, first of all, that angered teachers and protective parents alike created a larger-than-life image about the moral wrongs Maria had committed. In fact, her virginity was proven by a gynecological test. “That she liked to be courted by young men: that could have been prevented by the people around her. It can happen to a thirteen-year-old young girl that her head turns due to her youthful age [megszédül a fiatalságától], and the curious eyes of men.”<sup>534</sup> Besides protecting the girl, the director also blamed the parent-teacher association for their irresponsibility and reluctance to fulfill the missing role of the “smart and loving mother especially needed by youth of such an age.”<sup>535</sup> They “refused to stretch out a helping hand to a girl who picked up bad character traits and habits in her home environment.”<sup>536</sup> Emphasizing in her letter her disappointment at the exclusion of Maria from the school as a means to protect the other students, the director asserted that the role of schools and parent-teacher associations was to be the “arms of the protective state.”<sup>537</sup>

As the above cases show case workers found that the greatest threat to young girls’ lives was sexual delinquency. They watched out for possible symptoms signaling sexual delinquency, such as girls’ age and bodily development, and behavior they termed inappropriate, such as being seen in the company of men or in certain parts of the day in specific areas of town. The

<sup>533</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>534</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>535</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>536</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>537</sup> MOL, XIX-c-1-g, Népjóléti Minisztérium (NM) Anya- és gyermekvédelmi főosztály, 3365/42/1950 (144.d.).

case files of Romani children from Szabolcs-Szatmár County had no reference to sexual delinquency among young girls. According to a former case worker from Budapest, early sexual maturity could happen among Romani as well as non-Romani girls. These cases showed that both Romani and non-Romani single mothers could face case workers' negative moral judgment concerning sexuality.

In this chapter I presented that child protection regulations reinforced the centrality of the nuclear family and reinstated women's responsibility as mothers. I claimed that child protection practice was transformed into a mechanism of control over both Romani and non-Romani mothers' lives. Child protection practice aimed to discipline Romani mothers into the communist norms of family life through which "racial" difference was to disappear. Finally, I argued that the control function of child protection work also extended to the terrain of female sexuality. I showed that mostly before the Family Law of 1952, case workers while trying to support single mothers, also exercised negative moral judgment and tried to discipline those living outside the legal framework of marriage. Moral delinquency in children's behavior had clear gendered connotations referring to female sexual immorality with reference to both Romani and non-Romani girls.



## **Chapter 6. “Make Them Experience the Good Taste of Productive Work”: Residential Care as an Institution of Primary Education**

In the previous two chapters I presented how and why children got placed in state care. I underlined that the 1953-1954 shift in the regulation of child protection brought about a renewed emphasis on work ability as a criterion for receiving state-provided welfare support, affecting children's entrance to state care for both material and moral reasons. The number of children in state care was cut and emphasis fell on “unwillingness to work” as a morally endangering parental behavior which had both gender and “racial”/ethnic implications. While there was an emphasis on participation in productive work, women's responsibility in the sphere of reproduction and the family was also accentuated. A lack of socialized child care contributed to a growth in children's moral abandonment/endangerment that women were made primarily responsible for. At the same time, mothers and young girls' sexuality also came under scrutiny. Emphasis on work ability in child protection, furthermore, led to a reinforcement of anti-Romani prejudice, including the moral endangerment Romani parents were perceived to mean for their children, and a consequent necessity to regulate Romani women into “proper motherhood.” In sum, there were numerous children, both Roma and non-Roma, who were understood to come from a parental environment where their future was seen to be endangered due to their parents' lack of willingness to work

In this chapter I look at how child protection reacted to these perceived social problems by turning to the everyday life of children in residential homes. I claim that residential care as an

institution of education differed from regular primary school education in that it employed education for work [munkára nevelés] more than elsewhere to shape children's character.<sup>538</sup>

The roots of making children accomplish work tasks as part of their education relates to the notion of reformatory and educative labor. Teaching and imposing “education for work” on those perceived to be “unwilling to work” and “inclined towards criminality” as well as the “poor”<sup>539</sup> has a long tradition in both punishment and prevention of crime and the history of welfare provisions.<sup>540</sup> Without going into detail, it is worth noting that workhouses for “the poor” and the “morally abandoned” had existed in Europe at least since the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

They were intended to give the poor not only the means to earn a living but also moral training in the usefulness of work. The eligibility criteria for public and charitable welfare provisions that appeared during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe and North America also divided the poor into “worthy” and “unworthy” of support according to their perceived inclination or refusal to work. Workhouses as well as selective state welfare practices that pressured the needy to do “productive work” also existed in Hungary, since the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the beginnings of state welfare provisions in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, respectively.<sup>541</sup> The connection between poverty and one's lack of determination to work and make an “honest living” was by the mid-twentieth century thus already deeply ingrained in concepts of the poor and the morally abandoned.

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<sup>538</sup> While I touch upon national-level guidelines addressed to residential homes for kindergarten-age children, the main focus of my analysis is primary school education in residential care. Eight years of primary school education, a system that was introduced in 1945, was compulsory for children between six and fourteen.

<sup>539</sup> By referring to “the poor” in inverted commas I want to allude to the changing nature of who at different times in history and at various geographic locations were considered to be or were officially defined as “poor.”

<sup>540</sup> There is a vast range of literature on this field. Without even attempting to give a full account, on juvenile criminality in Hungary, see: Hegedűs. *Javítóintézeti neveltek*. On child protection in Europe see: Schafer; on the United States see: Michel. *Children's Interest*; on the history of welfare provisions in Eastern-Europe see: Sabine Hering and Berteke Waaldijk (eds). *Guardians of the Poor, Custodians of the Public: Welfare History in Eastern Europe, 1900-1960*. Opladen and Farmington Hills: Barbara Budrich, 2006.

<sup>541</sup> For an account of the history of social work and welfare provisions in Hungary, see among others: Pik; Ferge. *Fejezetek*. For an analysis of the first state-provided child protection system in Hungary at the turn into the 20th century, see: Zimmermann. *Prächtige Armut*.

In the early 1950s in Hungary, in light of the communist subject's new attitude to work, national educational discourse advocated the need to put children in touch with the world of productive work. As I demonstrate, pedagogical journals, using Soviet examples as a guideline, were filled with the notion of education for work, understood to be the means by which, aside from theoretical education, children could also be introduced to productive work. Between 1949 and 1956, however, it was mostly only at the level of theoretical discussions that education for work affected the course of regular primary school education. By contrast, the primary school education of children in residential care centered on rigorous training for work. Work tasks were largely gender-segregated but in residential homes for boys, education for work brought about a progressive understanding of the gender division of labor. Preparation to become productive members of state socialist society via work was seen to be an important part of children's -especially for Romani children's- education and formed part of their daily activities.

The perception of Roma as unwilling to work and the fact that residential care education has focused on education for work has connected child protection and the "Gypsy-question" over several decades. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century efforts towards the assimilation of the Romani population into mainstream Hungarian culture have regularly pointed to child protection as a possible "solution of the Gypsy-question" and recommended the placement of all Romani children in state care. In this chapter I highlight evidence pointing towards the existence of such ideas between 1949 and 1956.

In the coming sections, I first provide a glimpse at the general popularity of education for work in the pedagogical discourse of the early 1950s. Then I show that the national regulation

of residential care education defined education for work as essential to the goals and tasks of residential homes. It was described as part of children's moral education and a necessary means towards improving their educational performance. Then I highlight that education for work was a governing concept in policies on the "Gypsy-question" at the Ministry of Interior in the early 1950s in relation to the issuance of Hungarian identity cards. At the ministerial level, residential care was seen to be an important means of education for work with specific connotations for the assimilation of the Roma. Moving to the institutional level, I show that education for work was put into practice and understood by educators as a long-standing tool [nevelési eszköz] for improving the character of children in residential care and preparing them for their future occupations. Children in state care were understood to come from circumstances where they did not receive sufficient cultural knowledge about "work." Interviews shed light on the fact that these processes took a "racial"/ethnic character with reference to Romani children in state care. Reflections by former residents of boys' homes finally highlight that education for work also contributed to their progressive understanding of the gender division of work.

### **6.1. Education for Work in the Pedagogical Discourse of the Early 1950s**

The notion of education for work, together with the emphasis on the communist subject's new attitude to work and the liberating power of disciplined and well-accomplished labor on the individual, was part of the political propaganda in early 1950s Hungary. National educational discourse focused on raising a new generation of active workers who would become the "future builders of communism." The Hungarian Worker's Party and the Ministry of Education repeatedly called on teachers to familiarize themselves with Soviet pedagogy and

educate children in “communist morality and the love of work.”<sup>542</sup> Notions and citations taken from educators such as Anton Makarenko filled the pages of pedagogical journals addressed to teachers working with children from kindergarten to secondary-school age. A review of primary and secondary school curricula between 1949 and 1956 and the issues of *Köznevelés*, the biweekly publication of the Ministry of Education, in this period demonstrate that education for work was a popular catch-phrase signifying Hungary’s attachment to the Soviet model of communist pedagogy. The introductions to primary and secondary school curricula mentioned education for work as a new, general principle for children’s education. The primary school curriculum of 1950, for example, identified the goal of primary schools as teaching students to become, among other things, “faithful sons of the working people [...] in the name of love and appreciation of work.”<sup>543</sup> The secondary school curriculum published in the same year cited among its tasks to “organically connect school education with education for work and practical life [...]”<sup>544</sup> Articles in *Köznevelés* also demonstrate that from 1951 onwards, secondary school children were mobilized to take part in seasonal agricultural, and occasionally, construction work in the summer.<sup>545</sup> Historian of education Katalin Kéri, describing the perceptions of children in early 1950s Hungary, claims that even kindergarten teachers were enlisted in this effort. Her review of *Kindergarten Education*, a journal launched in 1953, shows that the main theme of the publication was “the working and fighting

<sup>542</sup> István Mészáros. *A magyar nevelés- és iskolatörténet kronológiája, 996-1996 [The Cronology of Hungarian Educational and School History, 996-1996]*. Budapest: Nemzeti Tankönyvkiadó, 1996, 132, 137, 138, 139, 142.

<sup>543</sup> *Tanterv az általános iskolák számára: A Vallás- és Köznevelési Miniszter 1220-10/1950 VVKM. sz. rendeletével [Curriculum for Primary Schools: Decree 1220-10/1950 of the Minister of Education]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1950, quoted by: Mészáros, 121.

<sup>544</sup> *Tanterv az általános gimnázium számára: A Vallás- és Köznevelési Miniszter 1280-10/1950 VVKM. sz. rendelethe [Curriculum for High Schools: Decree 1280-10/1950 of the Minister of Education]*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1950, quoted by: Mészáros, 121.

<sup>545</sup> Lajos Duró. “Tanulóifjúságunk nyári munkája [Our Students’ Summer-Time Work],” *Köznevelés* 12 (1951): 569-570; Tibor Horváth. “Iskoláink részvétele a gyapottermés begyűjtésében [The Participation of Our Schools in Cotton Harvesting],” *Köznevelés* 23 (1951): 925-926; “Diákfiatalok a Dunai Vasműért [Student Youth for the Iron Factory of Dunapentele],” *Köznevelés* 15-16 (1951): 667-670; Ferencné Vadász. “A tanulók nyári termelőmunkája [The Summer-Time Production Work of Students],” *Köznevelés* 11 (1952): 342-343.

child as an ideal, and education for work as the main pedagogical goal.”<sup>546</sup> Kindergartens were to raise “peace fighters, who love work and nature, who are happy participants in well-planned and well-organized work activities.”<sup>547</sup>

Finally, publications on special education reveal how education for work was persuasive and ideologically important in discourse on education in the early 1950s.<sup>548</sup> A handbook issued for use in institutions for the special education of children with disabilities indicates that productivity, defined in terms of education for work, was central to the theoretical conceptualization of education even for this group of students.<sup>549</sup> In the introduction Gusztáv Bárczi, director of the Teacher Training College of Special Education of Children with Disabilities, asserts that one of the newest purposes of these children’s homes was to make children with disabilities productive members of the state socialist labor force: “A special feature of our newly developed special education of children with disabilities is that it uses work as one of its educational tools. Its goal is: to make those able to work to whom learning work processes is impossible without education for work.”<sup>550</sup> As this quote demonstrates,

<sup>546</sup> Katalin Kéri. “Gyermekek Magyarországon az 1950-es évek első felében [Images of Children in the First Half of the 1950s in Hungary],” in: Béla Pukánszky (ed.). *Két évszázad gyermekei – A tizenkilencedik-huszedik század gyermekkorának története [Children of Two Centuries: The History of Childhood in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries]*, [http://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~comenius/eloadasok/Gyermekekortortenet/Ket\\_evszazad\\_gyermekei/](http://www.staff.u-szeged.hu/~comenius/eloadasok/Gyermekekortortenet/Ket_evszazad_gyermekei/), (last accessed: October 1, 2008), 7.

<sup>547</sup> Kéri, 7.

<sup>548</sup> Available publications include a brochure for use by educators working with industrial apprentices at the schools of the Office of Labor-Reserve: Ervin Tamás. *Munkára való nevelés. Kizárólag M.T.H. pedagógiai minimum tanfolyam használatára [Education for Work. For Use at the Pedagogical Minimum Courses of the Office of Labor-Reserve Only]*. Budapest: M.T.H., 1952. Another publication wishes to give guidelines to presentations addressed to parents on how to turn their children to be hard working communists. Designed for members of the Social and Natural Sciences Educational Society, who held such presentations, this book aimed to popularize the idea of work as a moral obligation: Sándor Komlósi. *Munkára nevelés a családban [Education for Work in the Family]*. Budapest: Társadalom- és Természettudományi Ismeretterjesztő Társulat, 1955. A third publication addresses education for work in institutions for the special education of children with disabilities: Zoltán Máriafalvi, et. al. *A munkára nevelés kézikönyve a gyógypedagógiai intézmények számára [Handbook on Education for Work for Institutions for the Special Education of Children with Disabilities]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1954.

<sup>549</sup> These institutions were residential homes for the special care of children with disabilities. Children in these institutions were placed under state care but handled independently from the residential care of children without disabilities. Following the dissolution of the Ministry of Welfare these homes were supervised by the Ministry of Health.

<sup>550</sup> Máriafalvi, et al., 3.

education for work was considered relevant for children whose participation in the state socialist industrial catch-up modernization of the early 1950s, although considered indispensable, was not seen to be self-evident. Bárczi's words clearly resonate with the theme of education for work in residential care, as declared by the Ministry of Welfare and Education.

Despite the persuasive rhetoric about the importance of redesigning education in light of communist notions of pedagogy, education for work was not treated seriously in regular primary and secondary schools.<sup>551</sup> Contrary to the amount of space given to the subject in educational publications, in practical terms, actions followed much more slowly. It was only towards the end of the 1949-1956 period that the need for a new subject, called polytechnic education, appeared in the rules and regulations governing primary and secondary school education.<sup>552</sup> The subject was introduced into some primary school curricula only in the following academic year, in 1956-1957.<sup>553</sup> Reports in *Köznevelés* on the results of students' participation in agricultural work in the summers also indicate a lack of widespread enthusiasm for familiarizing children with manual work. Each report noted schools where the issue "was not handled with sufficient responsibility." Kéri has also found that "aside from some show-case type occasions, Hungarian kindergarten educators did not at all realize in practice theories based on 'Soviet' pedagogy; they rather let kindergarten children play, walk and sing and told them fairy tales."<sup>554</sup> A decree by the Hungarian Workers' Party in 1950

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<sup>551</sup> Ferenc Gergely, interview by Eszter Varsa, August 8, 2009, Budapest. Ferenc Gergely (1932-), historian, author of the first historical overview of Hungarian child protection between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see note 222 on p. 71.). Gergely graduated in history at Szeged University in 1955, taught as a high school teacher in Baja (1955-1965) and Budapest (1965-1988), where he was also head of the all-boy high school boarding school (1961-1980). He published extensively on the history of child protection, youth organizations, urban social history as well as the practice of boarding school education in Hungary. For further information, see: <http://www.zs2.hu/gergelyferenc/publ.html> (last accessed: May 12, 2010).

<sup>552</sup> *Rendtartás az általános iskolák és gimnáziumok számára [Rules and Regulations for Primary Schools and High Schools]*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1955.

<sup>553</sup> Mészáros, 142, 144.

<sup>554</sup> Kéri, 8.

named as one of the main mistakes of educational practice that both high schools and universities had too little contact with “real life and production.”<sup>555</sup> Nevertheless, even five years later, in an investigation about the primary and secondary education of children in the capital conducted by the Ministry of Education, primary schools in Budapest were found to perform insufficiently on paying visits to factories.<sup>556</sup> From the early 1960s onwards, publications on the subject of education for work, including the field of residential care, started to proliferate, polytechnic education remained part of the primary school curriculum, and secondary school students regularly participated in summer-time agricultural work.<sup>557</sup> Still, education for work never became a central guiding principle of regular students’ education.<sup>558</sup>

<sup>555</sup> “A Magyar Dolgozók Pártja Központi Vezetőségének határozata a Vallás- és Közoktatásügyi Minisztérium munkájával kapcsolatos kérdésekről. 1950. március 29. [Decree by the Central Leadership of the Hungarian Workers’ Party on Questions Related to the Work of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, 29 March, 1950],” in: József Kardos and Kornidesz Mihály (eds). *Dokumentumok a magyar oktatáspolitikai történetéből I. (1945-1950) [Documents from the History of Hungarian Educational Policy I, 1945-1950]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1990, 377. Originally published in: *Az MDP Központi Vezetőségének, Politikai Bizottságának és Szervező Bizottságának fontosabb határozatai [The Most Important Decrees of the Central Leadership, the Political Committee and the Organizational Committee of the Hungarian Workers’ Party]*. Budapest: Szikra Kiadó, 1951. This decree was taken in preparation of the reorganization of the Ministry, that among others, entailed the criticism of the Minister of Religion and Public Education, Gyula Ortutay’s work.

<sup>556</sup> Miklós Mann. *Budapest oktatásügye, 1873-2000 [Education in Budapest, 1873-2000]*. Budapest: Önkönet, 2002, 174.

<sup>557</sup> For only a selection of the multiplicity of works available on education for work from the 1960s onwards up to the late 1980s, see: *Munkával munkára nevelés: Pedagógusok tapasztalataiból [Education for Work by Working]*. Budapest: Táncsics Kiadó, 1960; Ágnes Vincze Bakonyiné. *Tanulmányok az óvodai munkára nevelés köréből [Studies from Education for Work at Kindergartens]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1965; Ferenc Szabó. *Az úttörőmozgalom és a munkára nevelés [Education for Work and the Pioneer Movement]*. Budapest: Ifjúsági Lapkiadó, 1966; Gézáne Eperjessy. *Munkára nevelés a napközi otthonokban [Education for Work at Day-Care Centers]*. Budapest: Táncsics Kiadó, 1966; Pálné Ritoók. *Munkára és pályára nevelés: Elvek, tapasztalatok és távlatok [Education for Work and a Profession: Theories, Experience and Future Perspectives]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1974; György Ágoston. “A munkára nevelés [Education for Work],” in: Jenő Gergely. *Gimnazisták értékkorientációjának vizsgálata az életpálya vonzó indítékai alapján [Study on the Value-Oriented of Secondary School Children on Basis of Lucrative Motivations for a Choice of Profession]*. Szeged: József Attila Tudományegyetem, 1980; Tiborné Rozgonyi (ed.). *A munkára nevelés célvizsgálat tapasztalatai, 1986-87-es tanév [Results of a Study on Education for Work: The 1986-87 Academic Year]*. Nyiregyháza: Szabolcs-Szatmár M. Ped. Int., 1987. On education for work in residential care, see: Miklósné Járó and László Almássy (ed.). *Tanulmányok a nevelőotthonokban folyó munkára nevelés köréből [Studies on Education for Work in Residential Homes]*. Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Intézet, 1969.

<sup>558</sup> While I did not come across studies addressing this issue, teachers’ personal accounts and stories reflecting on summer-time work in the 1950s all point in this direction.



## 6.2. Education for Work as Designed at the National Level Regulation of Child Protection

Between 1949 and 1956 education for work was part of children's daily routine in residential homes. Education for work not only stood at the center of the rules governing the lives of residential homes in this period but it was also put into effect and was taken seriously in practice. It was both a means to educate children while growing up in children's homes and a way to familiarize them with certain types of manual labor to help them towards their future occupations. Additionally, it was also a means of contributing to the maintenance of residential homes by making use of the free labor power of its residents. Education for work gained "racial"/ethnic connotations when defined as part of the assimilation process of Roma in Hungary. These goals are manifest at national, institutional and personal levels in the design and practice of child protection between 1949 and 1956. In this section of my chapter I focus on the national level by analyzing the contents of three publications that reflect the efforts of the Ministry of Welfare and Education to unify everyday work at residential homes. I present references to the "racial"/ethnic connotations of education for work in documents related to the introduction of Hungarian identity cards in 1953 by the Ministry of Interior that underline the placement of Romani children in state care as a possible "solution of the Gypsy-question."

There were only a few documents I found on ministry-level directives concerning child protection. Between 1949 and 1956 the Ministry of Welfare and later the Ministry of Education each published their versions of *Rules and Regulations* concerning child protection. In the Hungarian National Archives, I could trace a six-page section, entitled "Tasks for Kindergarten Teachers Working in Child Protection Institutions," from the *Rules and*

*Regulations* published by the Ministry of Welfare in 1950.<sup>559</sup> Comments attached by institution directors, ministerial and local council officials as well as representatives of the Medical and Health Care Trade Union testify that “Tasks for Kindergarten Teachers” originates from the preparatory phase of the publication. The second *Rules and Regulations*, entitled *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes of Children within the Age Limit for Compulsory Primary School Education* was issued by the Ministry of Education in 1952.<sup>560</sup> A third, different type of document on the practice of child protection as designed at the level of the national was *The Organization of Education in Residential Homes* from 1955.<sup>561</sup> It gives methodological guidelines to teaching in residential care. While *Rules and Regulations* were intended to function in the lives of institutions as sets of laws, the introductory chapter of this latter document shows that it was meant to offer help instead. Authored by five men, two of whom were institution directors presented later in this chapter, this publication called out for comments and encouraged educators to share their experiences with each other and with the Ministry of Education. The above three publications contain several indications to the centrality of education for work as a means of educating children in residential care. Finally, a separate set of documents by the Ministry of Interior from the early 1950s reveals that

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<sup>559</sup> “Állami gyermekvédő intézetek keretében működő ovónők feladata [Tasks for Kindergarten Teachers Working in Child Protection Institutions],” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.). The final and complete version of these Rules and Regulation were unfortunately not available in the Hungarian National Archives, and I could not trace it in county-archives, institutional archives, libraries or private sources I had access to. Historian, Ferenc Gergely refers to it as a joint product of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Interior, entitled *Szabályrendelet az Állami Gyermekvédő Intézeteknek [Regulations for State Child Protection Institutions]* and published in 1950. For reference, see: Gergely, 92.

<sup>560</sup> *Rendtartás a tanköteles tanulók gyermekotthonai részére [Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes of Children within the Age Limit for Compulsory Primary School Education]*, Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1952, 7. For the collection of the National Educational Library and Museum [Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár és Múzeum], see: <http://www.opkm.hu>. Copies of this document, defining the “basic laws governing life in residential homes” at the national level are kept at the National Educational Library and Museum and the National Széchényi Library.

<sup>561</sup> Ferenc Csaba (ed.). *A tanulás megszervezése a gyermekotthonokban [The Organization of Education in Residential Homes]*. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1955. Also in the collection of the National Educational Library and Museum.

education for work in residential care was seen as well-suited to the purpose of assimilating the Romani population in Hungary.<sup>562</sup>

Education for work was one of the means by which education in residential care differed from regular primary or secondary school education. *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* underlines the centrality of education for work in children's homes and identifies where and how it was to be integrated into children's education and daily routine. The chapter "Life and Educational Work in Residential Homes" establishes the significance of the issue. Residential care was to be the site not only for children's school education but also their education for work.

Life in residential homes must be organized in such a manner that it allows for students' education for work. Besides careful preparation of the study material at primary school, students must also participate in the daily work around the homes (in keeping the homes clean and in food service), and in the time remaining after preparation for school work and in their free time, children must do gardening or agricultural work in the land belonging to the institution.<sup>563</sup>

Education for work was nevertheless not seen as unrelated to school work. Conceptualized as a means to develop such desired characteristics in children as the ability to concentrate or a desire for knowledge, education for work was defined to be in a specific relation with school education. According to the authors of *The Organization of Education*, it is especially hard to teach these values to "the special child material [különleges gyermekanyag]" in residential homes.<sup>564</sup> "Children do not study because they do not know the good feeling that accompanies studying and the happiness caused by the accomplishment of well-done work."<sup>565</sup> In order to get children to know this pleasure, the book advises teachers to solve the problem of

<sup>562</sup> Purcsi, 248-284. Historian Gyula Purcsi Barna presented these documents to identify racial discrimination against Roma around the issuance of Hungarian identity cards in 1953.

<sup>563</sup> *Rendtartás*, 38-39.

<sup>564</sup> Csaba, 16.

<sup>565</sup> Csaba, 16.

children's unwillingness to spend time studying by making them do physical work. Making children carry out tasks that "bring about results faster" than studying will "rouse the pleasure of work well-done."<sup>566</sup> The authors suggest that physical work, such as making children keep their immediate living environment, their bed, and their wardrobe in order, or doing work in the garden of the institution, or in the workshop, or doing handyman work, sports activities, cultural work, etc. are all able to realize this goal. The book advises teachers that it is important to show public appreciation for the work accomplished. "Following some conversation on ethics and the help of the larger community, children who are already doing work readily are usually able to shift to doing studying with pleasure."<sup>567</sup> According to the authors, some persuasion is necessary only at the beginning, after which children will gradually get to like "the work of studying and will learn to produce mental work with self-confidence and persistence."<sup>568</sup> The text thus suggests that although they come from a background where neither of these are a habit, residential care is an environment that enables children to do both mental and physical labor.

Developing "a socialist attitude to work" was one of the main educational goals that education for work was to achieve. Already in its first chapter, *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* claims, for example, that these institutions "must develop work skills, love for work and a socialist attitude towards work" in children under state care as one among their nine basic educational tasks.<sup>569</sup> The same idea is reiterated in a chapter describing the main guidelines of the education of children in residential homes. "The formation of a socialist attitude towards work" stands there as one among six prescribed governing principles of

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<sup>566</sup> Csaba, 17.

<sup>567</sup> Csaba, 17.

<sup>568</sup> Csaba, 17.

<sup>569</sup> *Rendtartás*, 9.

educational work.<sup>570</sup> In order to achieve this goal educators were to make use of the so-called “five educational tasks of socialist pedagogy:” the physical, mental, polytechnic, moral and esthetic education of children in residential care.<sup>571</sup> Education for work, under the heading: teaching children “a socialist attitude to work,” formed the heart of a lengthy passage presenting the pedagogical work to be done on children’s moral education. Teaching children “a socialist attitude to work,” was to be part of children’s moral educational tasks, together with developing their “socialist patriotism and militant protection of peace, consciously disciplined behavior, socialist attitude towards common property, socialist humanism” and finally, their “team spirit, friendship and comradeship.”<sup>572</sup>

Another goal of education for work in residential care was to familiarize children with manual labor. *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* directs educators to present work as children’s moral obligation. Statements usually applied in studies on communist morality are used to introduce work tasks children were to practice. Work, the publication states, ceased to be “an oppressive weight or forced labor” and was turned instead into the “source of real happiness” and “a necessity for the healthy body.” More than that, children were to be reminded that it was an issue of “honor and glory.” The concept of a socialist attitude to work entailed clear goals: Work was defined as “all people trying to give the most to the community, increasing work productivity to an extent as to advance the fulfillment of the economic plans or even over-achieve them.”<sup>573</sup> Educators were supposed to pass on this attitude to children.

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<sup>570</sup> Rendtartás, 27.

<sup>571</sup> Rendtartás, 27.

<sup>572</sup> Rendtartás, 31-36.

<sup>573</sup> Rendtartás, 34.

Almost all tasks assigned to educators in teaching children a socialist attitude to work in *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* were connected to manual labor and activities.

“Children should take part in completing the daily tasks around the home, they must do gardening or agricultural work in the land belonging to the home, and during workshops they must familiarize themselves with different work processes and the joy of work.”<sup>574</sup> Children were also to study the lives of “the heroes of socialist work, work champions, outstanding workers, and the Stakhanovites.”<sup>575</sup> Teachers were encouraged to invite such workers to residential homes so that students might “get in personal contact with work champions.”<sup>576</sup> These events were to be organized in such a way that they remained as “unforgettable memories and motivating forces” to all children.<sup>577</sup> Finally, in the summer, children in the homes, like the students of regular secondary schools, were to take part in the work of state farms and agricultural cooperatives.

“Tasks for Kindergarten Teachers Working in Child Protection Institutions,” from the *Rules and Regulations* published by the Ministry of Welfare in 1950, contends that already at an early age, the concept of work and education for work in residential care should be central to children’s education.<sup>578</sup> It opens up with a general description of the children who could be taken into these kindergartens, and underlines that kindergartens within the system of residential care fulfill different tasks from regular kindergartens. According to the text, the main difference between the two types of kindergarten care lies in the length of time children are expected to spend there: Children in kindergartens within the system of residential care are expected to be there only temporarily as opposed to regular kindergartens that children are supposed to attend over the entire three-year period. The text instructs teachers therefore to

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<sup>574</sup> *Rendtartás*, 34.

<sup>575</sup> *Rendtartás*, 34.

<sup>576</sup> *Rendtartás*, 34.

<sup>577</sup> *Rendtartás*, 34.

<sup>578</sup> “Ovónők feladata,” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.).

pay special attention to the quality of experience this might be for children: “Although the time children spent in the institution might be brief and would probably not bring about significant educational results, still it affects the future development of children’s character and skills.”<sup>579</sup> Similarly relevant to my point about efforts to educate children about and introduce them to “work” is the section of the curriculum which points out that, for the children, being in the institution “might be the first occasion to be with other children,” and “certainly the first occasion for them to encounter a state institution.”<sup>580</sup> It is, therefore, important to make this time a positive and “reassuring” experience. “For the new incoming child, it is reassuring if they arrive among peers immersed in play or work. If they arrive among peers just hanging about, being bored or noisy, or among fighting children, they will feel themselves terribly distressed and lonesome.”<sup>581</sup> The emphasis on work is clearly central to the curriculum: “no matter how simple children’s pieces of work are,” kindergarten teachers are to “value” them so that children would “feel that they are able to do work, and that they will feel like doing [work].” Children are to be “motivated during the short time spent at the temporary home, to like and appreciate work.”<sup>582</sup> While the first part of the curriculum seems to focus on children’s emotional well-being, the second part of the document hones in on the necessity of educating children about work already at kindergarten-age. This curriculum reveals that according to Hungarian authorities, alike in the Soviet Union, it was never too early to start on education for work in residential care.<sup>583</sup>

Education for work in residential care had specific “racial”/ethnic connotations as is indicated by documents produced at the Ministry of Interior in relation to the introduction of Hungarian

<sup>579</sup> “Ovónők feladata,” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>580</sup> “Ovónők feladata,” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>581</sup> “Ovónők feladata,” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>582</sup> “Ovónők feladata,” *MOL*, XIX-c-1-g-3365-49/1950 (144.d.).

<sup>583</sup> Lisa A. Kirschenbaum documents that education for work was a central idea governing the organization of Bolshevik pre-school education. Children were viewed “as naturally interested in labor,” and were at times exposed to work tasks far beyond their capacities, such as washing their own linen, work in the vegetable garden or make educational field trips to factories, 73-75, 120-123.

identity cards in 1953. In a study on anti-Romani racism manifest by the issuance of temporary black identity cards to Roma in 1955, historian Gyula Purcsi Barna has drawn attention to the perception of Roma by ministerial authorities as criminals who had a lack of will to participate in productive work.<sup>584</sup> With reference to several reports about Roma produced in these years at the ministry, Purcsi has pointed out that the different type and color identification cards were one of the ministerial efforts to ensure control over them.<sup>585</sup> The ministerial attitude is well-illustrated by the fact that reports generally defined Roma homogenously as “wandering Gypsies” who posed a danger to Hungarian society. The character of a national survey ordered from county-level police headquarters in 1953 is exemplary.<sup>586</sup> Police were asked to provide data on the number of Roma and Romani settlements in their counties, together with the number of Roma charged with criminal activities and imprisoned in the previous year and the types of criminal activity they were charged with. Relevant to the anti-Roma connotations of education for work is an official recommendation from early 1952 by the ministry’s Criminal Department “on the settlement and education for work of the wandering Gypsies.”<sup>587</sup> A lieutenant detective in the criminal department of the ministry, the author of the document, emphasized the “loose morals” of Roma as evidenced by the “great number of wandering Gypsies capable of working” but living “in abandoned circumstances, and endangering the fortune of our working people.” As a solution to this problem the lieutenant suggested setting up “centralized camps,” “under

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<sup>584</sup> Purcsi, 248-284.

<sup>585</sup> Tibor Pöcze, Police Major General, Deputy-Minister, “A személyi igazolványok kiosztásának befejezéséről [On the Completion of the Distribution of Identification Cards].” BM Központi Irattár [Archives of the Ministry of Interior (AMI)], BM Koll. 106-1-45 öe. 10-1218/1955; László Piros, State Security Lieutenant General, Minister of Interior, “A kollégium 1955. június 17-i határozata a személyi igazolványok kiosztásának befejezéséről [Decision by the Council of the Ministry of Interior on the Completion of the Distribution of Identification Cards].” AMI, BM Koll. 106-1-45 öe. 5-65/1955, cited by Purcsi, 281.

<sup>586</sup> István Horváth, Police Major, Head of Department, “Jelentés. Cigányok szerepe a bűnözésben [Report: The Role of the Gypsies in Criminal Activity].” AIM, ORK TŰK, Közrend Főo. 130.00574/1953 (51.d.) BM Országos Rendőrfőkapitányság IV. osztálya, cited by Purcsi, 282.

<sup>587</sup> István B. Tóth, Lieutenant Detective, The Criminal Department of the Ministry of Interior, “Javaslat a kóborcigányok letelepítésére és munkára nevelésére [Recommendation on the Settlement and Education for Work of the Wandering Gypsies],” January 2, 1952, Budapest, Open Society Archives (OSA)-357-2-1/1-2 cited by Purcsi, 281.



police control” for the settlement of “the Gypsies living scattered around in the country.” In order to enforce the education for work of Roma, who he said lacked willingness to do “any sort of productive work,” he advised placing “wandering minors” in the residential institutions run by the Office of Reserve Labor Power, “where they would be made accustomed to working.” Concerning “wandering children,” he recommended their placement to child protection institutions. These reports signal that police authorities at the Ministry of Interior identified Roma with an unwillingness to work and found it necessary to control them and enforce education for work. They saw the placement of Romani children in residential care as a desirable means to carry out the education for work and thus the enforced assimilation of the Romani population in Hungary.

As I noted in Chapter 3, by the early 1950s, the idea of Romani children’s placement in state care institutions as a way to “solve” the “Gypsy-question” has had a long history in Hungary. The last revival of the topic was in Szabolcs-Szatmár County in the late 1940s I referred to in Chapter 4, that reached national-level discussion in 1947 and 1948 in the pages of *Népegészségügy* [*Public Health*], a medical monthly. In 1947 József Galambos, medical officer addressed a lengthy study entitled “The Regulation of the Gypsy-question” to the county medical officer in which he recommended that the children of “disorderly” and unemployed Romani parents be placed in state care:

The solution is given by the child protection decrees of 1901 and 1903. Based on these, all children up to fifteen of wandering, unemployed, and destitute Gypsy families living in slums and among disorderly circumstances should be declared morally abandoned and placed in state care, in special homes organized for this purpose, where children would be raised collectively. Afterwards they should be employed in the agriculture and industry.<sup>588</sup>

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<sup>588</sup> József Galambos. “A cigánykérdés rendezése, [The Regulation of the Gypsy-Question],” SZSZBML, XXIV. 1008, 1138/1948 (7.d.).

Children's placement in state care was thus seen as a way to ensure their proper upbringing by their removal from "the bad influence of their environment" and their "education for a human and working life [emberi és munkás életre nevelés]."<sup>589</sup> According to Galambos, this was in accordance with "humanitarian values" since it would lead to the "uplift of morally and materially abandoned children from destitute."<sup>590</sup> He projected that the placement of these Romani children in state care would "bring about great results already among the first generation of Gypsies and be a complete solution for the second generation."<sup>591</sup> Romani children as a result of "hygienic and higher standards of living" provided in residential care and their education for work "would not be work avoiders any longer."<sup>592</sup>

Romani children's placement in state care would not only serve the purposes of educating a young generation of children for work but also in disciplining their parents. "The Gypsies would do anything asked of them in order to keep their children" and those "who do not wish to part with their children would be encouraged towards taking up a working life [munkás életre ösztönözné]" while those whose children were placed in state care would "get them back in case they switched to an orderly working life [rendes munkás életre tér]."<sup>593</sup>

Along these lines, a thirteen-member committee of experts was set up, composed of representatives of the county's medical, legal and educational profession, the catholic and protestant church, and the police, who wished to decide on the "radical solution of the Gypsy-question" in Szatmár-Bereg County.<sup>594</sup> In spite of the fact that in the national-level discussion of the subject in the pages of *Népegészségügy*, the director of the Child Protection Institution

<sup>589</sup> Galambos. "A cigánykérdés rendezése."

<sup>590</sup> Galambos. "A cigánykérdés rendezése."

<sup>591</sup> Galambos. "A cigánykérdés rendezése."

<sup>592</sup> Galambos. "A cigánykérdés rendezése."

<sup>593</sup> Galambos. "A cigánykérdés rendezése."

<sup>594</sup> "Cigánykérdés megoldása," 6850/1947 and ad. 8171/1947. alisp. sz. határozat, Szatmár-Bereg megye alispánja, 1947. December 23. [The Solution of the Gypsy-Question, Decrees 6850/1947 and ad. 8171/1947 by the sub-prefect of Szatmár-Bereg County, 23 December, 1947] SZSZBML, XXIV. 1008, 1138/1948 (7.d.).

of Budapest/Pest County, László Dobszay warned against the “solution” offered by Galambos, due to among others, a lack of capacity of institutions to house all abandoned Romani children in the country, Galambos’ principles formed the basis of the expert committee’s proposal.<sup>595</sup> It contained seven different type of measures, including the settlement of Romani families in the vicinity of mining, factory and wood industry areas and their involvement in industrial and agricultural production, the organization of “Gypsy missions” by the church with the purpose of regularly “visiting” and educating families, the organization of special “Gypsy classes” in primary schools and adult literacy classes, as well as the stricter health and police surveillance of Roma.<sup>596</sup> Concerning child protection the placement of Romani children up to fifteen in “special child protection institutions and with foster families” was recommended in case families “against all efforts towards their support and education, continued with their work-shy lifestyle that was damaging for the villages [where they lived].”<sup>597</sup> The proposal also found support at national level, indicated by the fact that a representative of the Ministry of Welfare was to attend the expert meeting that the sub-prefect of the county called together for 28 January 1948, with the planned participation of “Gypsy representatives” as well. Due to a flood in the region in early 1948 the meeting was cancelled, and the upcoming systemic changes sidelined the issue for a while.

A decree by the Executive Committee of Szabolcs-Szatmár County from 1951 on the “regulation of the Gypsy-question” shows, however, that the discussion from the end of the 1940s concerning the “the work avoidance of the Gypsy population” stretched across the political changes of 1949. The executive committee ordered all regional and city councils “to examine Gypsy settlements in their areas” and write a detailed report with reference to the

<sup>595</sup> “Cigánykérdés megoldása,” ad. 8171/1947. alisp. sz. határozat, Szatmár-Bereg megye alispánja, 1947. December 23. [The Solution of the Gypsy-Question, Decree by the Sub-Prefect of Szatmár-Bereg County, 23 December, 1947]. SZSZBML, XXIV. 1008, 1138/1948 (7.d.).

<sup>596</sup> “Cigánykérdés megoldása,” ad. 8171/1947.

<sup>597</sup> “Cigánykérdés megoldása,” ad. 8171/1947.

number of Roma who “had proper employment,” who were “unable to work,” who were “able to work but had no proper employment” as well as the “number of children who could be declared abandoned and sent to child protection institutions.”<sup>598</sup> The decree furthermore declared that “the intolerable lifestyle [tűrhetetlen életmód] of the Gypsies was mostly the result of a lack of education [nevelés hiánya] and their deep ignorance [tudatlanság]. It ordered local councils to “send those children to child protection institutions as soon as possible whose upbringing was not appropriate,” including their attendance to kindergarten and primary school. The county council stated that this was necessary as a form of “pressure [megszorítás]” on parents since “the more orderly parents rather sent their children to school” instead of having them removed from home to residential homes.<sup>599</sup> These documents show that Romani children’s presence in residential care was constructed as a means towards their education for work and the disciplining of their parents. Romani children’s placement in state care was a reaction to the racialized understanding of unwillingness to work among Roma.

Finally, before moving to the discussion of institutional practice it must be noted that children’s work around residential homes not only had an educational motivation but also an economic one. *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* reveals that children’s work was to contribute to the maintenance of these institutions. “Children’s homes, with the permission of the local county or municipal council’s executive committee, for both educational and economic purposes, might have an animal or an agricultural farm.”<sup>600</sup> As became clear in educators’ and former students’ recollections as well as I describe later in this chapter, the contents of these rules and regulations did not simply remain ideas but teachers in residential homes made sure that children practiced them.

<sup>598</sup> “A cigánykérdés rendezése,” Szabolcs-Szatmár Megye Tanácsa VB. Jegyzőkönyve [“The Regulation of the Gypsy-Question,” The Minutes of the Meeting of Szabolcs-Szatmár County’s Executive Committee] February 14, 1951, SZSZBML, XXIII. 2. 5.

<sup>599</sup> “A cigánykérdés rendezése,” 1951.

<sup>600</sup> *Rendtartás*, 39.

“Tasks for Kindergarten Teachers Working in Child Protection Institutions,” *Rules and Regulations for Residential Homes* and *The Organization of Education*, publications by the Ministry of Welfare and Education in 1950, 1952 and 1955 respectively, reveal that at the national level, residential care was designed to fulfill two types of educational goals with the help of education for work. First, it was important as a way to help children develop a socialist attitude to work and familiarize them with manual labor. Children were to internalize perseverance and punctuality, the characteristics of the new communist subject, through work activities. These characteristics were then also to help them towards success in their school work. Second, reports on the Romani population of Hungary by the Ministry of Interior compiled in relation to the introduction of identification cards in 1953 and the council decree of Szabolcs-Szatmár County in 1951 highlight the idea that education for work had a specific “racial”/ethnic connotation in connection with the assimilation process of Roma. As part of a continuing tradition in the construction of the “solution of the Gypsy-question” in Hungarian history, following the political changes of 1949, child protection institutions were still viewed as sites appropriate for the early assimilation of Romani children. Education for work practiced at these institutions was understood to have a central role in this process. In the following part of the chapter I present that the above ideas, formulated at the national level, had consequences for the daily practice of children’s education in residential care.

### **6.3. Education for Work as Practiced at the Institutional Level**

In this part of the chapter I focus on sources documenting the institutional level practice of education for work. Relying on interviews with former teachers and directors of child protection institutions and residential homes between 1949 and 1956 I present evidence that

education for work was foremost remembered by them as a method for shaping the character of children. I built this subchapter on a total of twelve interviews conducted with six interviewees.<sup>601</sup> I also used six written documents on the daily work at residential homes produced by four former teachers and directors. Retired teachers and directors who used to work in institutions under the governance of the Municipal Council of Budapest (for a list of these institutions, see Table 2. in the Appendix), formed the bulk of those interviewed. There were also two interviewees from other regions of the country; one was the retired director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County while the other was the director of the Residential Home of Hajdúnánás.

Interviews showed that, at least in retrospect, teachers had a clear understanding of the educational [nevelő] character of manual work. Béla Kövecs, a retired teacher who spent his entire professional career working in residential homes for boys in Budapest, for example, pointed out that in the institutions where he had worked, teachers placed special emphasis on the educative nature of accomplishing work tasks with children.<sup>602</sup> He recalled that when their institution had decided to build a foot tennis court, teachers spent days on selecting children who would be allowed to participate in this work.

We selected out the children who were diligent and trustworthy. Because we put stress on everything.

...It was heaven for the person if he was allowed....So it was a play-off by us on some of these things.

...That is, we elevated this thing. Preparations would go on for days, the selection of children and the

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<sup>601</sup> Five out of the twelve interviews were conducted by members of the Department of Methodological Consultation of the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest in the capital and Bicske between 2003 and 2006. I owe special thanks to Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann for offering their interviews for use in my research. The remaining seven interviews were done by me in Budapest, Bicske and Hajdúnánás in 2008 and 2009.

<sup>602</sup> Béla Kövecs, interview by Eszter Varsa, 28 April, 2008, Budapest. Béla Kövecs (1925-) retired teacher. Born in Pécs (Southern Hungary) he graduated from the Teacher's Training College of Pécs in 1946. He started to work in Budapest the same year as a teacher and worked in different children's homes of the Municipal Council of Budapest until his retirement in the early 1990s (József Boys Orphanage, Bakonyoszip, Fót, Szob, Mayer, Táncsics, Makarenko, for a list of these homes see, Table 4. in the Appendix).

organization work, and God knows what around it. So that by the time we got to the point of doing it, it was God's special grace sort of, if someone was allowed to do it.<sup>603</sup>

Kövecs emphasized that elevating work tasks to positions of honor among children was a means of education. "So these became outstanding things. ...And by this, all kinds of disciplinary, rewarding and other tasks became easier, because this [work] could and in fact had to be used for such purposes. Because there were no other means available, really. Of course," he added in answer to a question about whether education for work was clearly a means of education.

This was almost one of the main means of education, you see. Because work tasks were not given by us as forms of punishment. ...But it was a reward that you were allowed to clean the windows, for example....Not because you behaved badly. ...This [education for work] was a fashionable slogan of the times, but it was useful, and it enabled us to achieve something.<sup>604</sup>

The words of Béla Kövecs reveal that education for work was a consciously thought over method used in residential homes to shape the character of children by reinforcing with positive methods the pleasure of work.

A similar point was made by Lajos Barna, a former residential home director, who claimed that education for work was in fact his main means of disciplining even highly misbehaving children.<sup>605</sup> He argued that making children work together on building and creating a home for themselves was one of the fundamental ways of educating children in residential care. He

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<sup>603</sup> Béla Kövecs, interview by Eszter Varsa, 28 April, 2008, Budapest.

<sup>604</sup> Béla Kövecs, interview by Eszter Varsa, 28 April, 2008, Budapest.

<sup>605</sup> Lajos Barna (1921-2003), teacher and residential home director. In the early 1950s, he was director of the boys' home of Berkesz and Balkány. In 1957, he became the first director of the Children's City of Fót, from where he retired in 1983. In the late 1990s and early 2000s when child protection politics turned to the revival of the foster care system he witnessed the dismantling of the Children's City. According to his former colleagues, he devoted his entire teaching career to educating children in residential care, for which he used to be called "the Hungarian Makarenko." "Lajos Barna, Director of the Children's City of Fót," interview with Tivadar Kemenesi, László Kosztics, and Gáborné Kuncz, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey, 7 April, 2004, Fót.

described, for example, his first encounter with such children, a group of boys aged between six and sixteen years old, who regularly disobeyed their teachers. Instead, they were fighting with each other, stealing from their teachers and neighboring houses, and were generally very destructive. “It was simple physical work, I started with, and that helped,” Barna stated, detailing how he managed to make these boys work enthusiastically together and be proud of their work achievements within the time of two short months.<sup>606</sup> His method or “this change” in children’s life, as he put it, was “created by work... they did for their own benefit.” He encouraged children to “experience the pleasure of well-done work” by setting them the collective goal of repairing buildings, and creating sport facilities, fruit and vegetable gardens, animal farms and parks for their own use.

Following World War II, numerous residential home teachers emphasized this point and argued for the educational power of “creating a home.” Many of these homes, usually former manors of the upper classes or church buildings, were either in ruins as a consequence of the war or needed much repair before they could be put to use as children’s homes. A number of charismatic teachers, inspired by Makarenko and Pestalozzi, searched for such ruined buildings themselves while others were singled out by the Ministry of Education or the local council to become residential home directors.<sup>607</sup> Having to cope with an almost complete lack of financial resources, these teachers were pushed towards realizing the educational potential of group work led by a common goal. Uncovering the possibility it offered to build group cohesion and a community, teachers set out to repair and build up these homes together with the children under their care.

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<sup>606</sup> Lajos Barna. *A Főti Gyermekváros [The Children’s City of Fót]*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, 1967, 21.

<sup>607</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Swiss pedagogical and educational reformer, established and ran several homes for poor and delinquent children. His methods were based on the ideology of linking moral and intellectual education to doing physical exercises.



Ede Peterdi, the retired director of the all-girl Zsuzsa Kossuth Residential Home in Bicske, for example, recalled: “This was our home. So there were no work hours here. We had to do our work; us as well as the children. But we did it for ourselves.”<sup>608</sup> He emphasized that it was teachers’ and children’s collective work that turned a ruined mansion into their new home.

It was work that made this home into what it is now. In the beginning we worked day and night. Work hours and timetables were unknown in those times. ...The residential home was not our workplace but a home to all of us, where we wished, if not from nothing but from very little, to build up a new world....Our teachers, aside from their pedagogical work, repaired children’s socks, knitted winter hats, scarves and gloves; they washed and cut children’s hair, they scraped the old paint, carried the debris, varnished the floors, cleaned the windows together with the children and technical staff.<sup>609</sup>

Recollections usually emphasized the devoted work of both teachers and children in this so-called “home building” period.

Teachers saw children’s work for the home as a necessary step in turning residential institutions into children’s real home. The former director of the Makarenko Youth Home described the process of moving into a building in the 8<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest assigned to the institution in early 1956 in similar terms: “Moving into the building and getting it furnished happened mostly with the help of teachers’ and children’s free labor. It was done enthusiastically. Work carried out side by side brought teachers and children close to each

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<sup>608</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 16 June, 2008, Bicske. Ede Peterdi (1920– ) retired teacher and residential home director. After graduating from the Teachers’ Training College of Buda in 1943 he was employed as a primary school teacher in a Northern Hungarian village. During World War II he was taken prisoner in Germany. Upon his return to Hungary, he first worked in a textile factory and in 1948 as a teacher in working-class neighborhood primary schools in Budapest. The Municipal Council of Budapest placed him to Bicske in 1949 to open up a child protection institution in the building of a former noble palace, housing a church orphanage before the war. He was director of the all-girl Residential Home of Bicske for forty years, up to his retirement in 1988. He also worked as educational inspector at residential homes and participated in the training of residential home teachers. He published several books on the pedagogical theory and practice as well as the history of child protection. For reference on the latter, see note 608. Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>609</sup> Ede Peterdi. “A bicskei gyermekotthon története, I. rész: 1861–1987 [The History of the Residential Home of Bicske, Part One: 1861–1987],” in: János Vásárhelyi (ed.). *A bicskei gyermekotthon története [The History of the Residential Home of Bicske]*. Bicske: Fővárosi Kossuth Zsuzsa Gyermekotthon, 2006, 5–86, 48–49.

other unnoticed and warmed us up to each other. And we realized that this was good.”<sup>610</sup> The Children’s City of Tiszadob, housed in the former manor of the Andrássy family in 1950, was also “put into habitable state by children and teachers together” and thus became “their new home.”<sup>611</sup> In 1952, Lajos Barna, remembering the restoration of the Residential Home of Balkány that was completed a year earlier by the joint effort of thirty children aged ten to fourteen and four teachers, stated: “There are no children who have worked so much for their home as those thirty, but there are no children grown that much attached to their home either, as they have through their drops of sweat!”<sup>612</sup> Ede Peterdi even contended that it was disadvantageous to the character development of children if they “received everything ready-made [and] ... in the best of quality.”<sup>613</sup> In his view education for work was central to children’s education in residential care, and has criticized the practice of institutions where this was not the case: “They did not have to work for receiving things that could give them the feeling that it was really theirs.... This was a grave mistake since when [children] entered the real world, this was not what they experienced .... They had to be transformed and made to do work here.”<sup>614</sup> Peterdi defined education for work from a pedagogical perspective as a precondition for children to feel at home in residential care. More than that, he insisted on retaining the practice of making children work from the pre-war history of the institution as a girls’ orphanage run by Catholic nuns. Recalling that he was sent to Bicske by the Ministry in 1949 “to do something different” with children than was the practice of former religious children’s homes, he admitted: “I did not subvert everything; ... I kept what was good.”<sup>615</sup> According to him, “the order” and “the cleanliness” of the orphanage were positive

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<sup>610</sup> Antal Simek, Kornél Babura, Csaba Szabó and György Szabó. “A Makarenko Nevelőotthon 20 éves története [The 20-Year History of the Makarenko Youth Home],” in: János Kóti (ed.). *Tanulmányok, cikkek a fővárosi gyermekvédelem köréből [Studies and Articles on Child Protection in the Municipality of Budapest]*. Budapest: Fővárosi Tanács V.B. Művelődésügyi Főosztály Nevelőotthoni és Kollégiumi Osztály, 1976, 110-141, 115.

<sup>611</sup> Sándor Csatlós. *A Tiszadobi Gyermekváros története [The History of the Children’s City of Tiszadob]*. Thesis, Nyíregyháza, 1980, 26.

<sup>612</sup> Barna, 24.

<sup>613</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>614</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>615</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

characteristics that he aimed to maintain, and thus he continued with the method of assigning work tasks to children. He also had children create and look after the large park of the institution and run a farm with vegetable plots and animals. Peterdi thus endorsed work because he thought it was good for children from a pedagogical and developmental perspective, and for this purpose he was ready to turn against official state directives that persisted in rejecting all that was connected to the pre-war practice of child protection.

Although education for work in this period grew out of necessity, teachers reflected on children's work in restoring buildings and turning them into residential homes as a necessary step in learning about the pleasure of work. The claim presented at the national level that children needed to experience the joy that accompanies the completion of manual work tasks before they could be persuaded and led on to the mental work of studying was reiterated at institutional level. Lajos Barna, one of the co-authors of *The Organization of Education in Residential Homes*, emphasized the importance of involving children in the manual labor of home building. In his report about the Residential Home of Balkány he stressed:

My conviction grew stronger about the fact that without making use of the enormous educational power of work we could not reach lasting results in our homes. If there was no such opportunity to do work it should be invented. Making a mental effort of a higher sort and conscious studying must stand on the educational basis of manual labor that produces results easier and faster. Especially before the formation of self-consciousness, we like to do work only in the event that we can see its results immediately, and it fills us with enthusiasm and noble self-esteem. With children who are not used to doing work, or more than that, who even feel aversion from work, it is much easier to make them experience the good taste of productive work through physical work than through mental work and studying that require a lot more patience and produce results only with time. The easiest way to make children study voluntarily and with pleasure is through physical work. This is what I have found to be the most suitable

path to reach our first and immediate goal, that is, to achieve the normalization of children and that they liked working and studying in the first place.<sup>616</sup>

Between 1949 and 1956 Barna participated in the restoration and opening of three residential homes where each time he practiced these principles. This passage reveals most clearly that directors were convinced about the “educational power” of the systematic practice of manual work tasks in “normalizing” children. Education for work was to turn children into “productive” and “useful” working members of socialist society. As I show next, this form of education carried specific gender and “racial”/ethnic connotations.

Finally, another effect of education for work was its contribution to the economic subsistence of institutions. During the “home building” period, which lasted up until about the first few years of the 1950s, children in residential care contributed significantly to the restoration of institutions where they lived. While these years are referred to as “heroic times” and are romanticized in retrospect by some of the teachers, children’s work many times replaced the work of masons’ and other skilled craftsmen which was difficult to obtain because of a lack of financial means at the time; children thereby made an important contribution to the establishment of these homes.<sup>617</sup> Meanwhile and also in later years, education for work included manual labor that helped institutions become self-sufficient. These tasks included, among others, work in parks, vegetable and fruit gardens and animal farms, small repair work, such as replacing broken locks on doors and windows, and repairing children’s broken shoes, as well as so-called self-supporting tasks, such as sewing on a button, making the beds in the morning, cleaning the sleeping quarters, helping in the kitchen and with service in the dining room.

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<sup>616</sup> Barna, 24-25.

<sup>617</sup> Peterdi, for example, remembered his work in the early 1950s as director of a residential home as “one of the happiest times of his life,” and said that “he could always take power and belief for his later work from the clear source of those years.” Peterdi, 49.

## The Gender and “Racial/Ethnic Implications of Education for Work

In shaping the character of children through education for work, teachers also put an emphasis on the necessity of “creating habits.” Peterdi, referring to children’s daily work in and around their home, for example, remarked: “They got used to it. The force of habit is powerful. It is a great power. And you have to keep creating and creating and creating habits. [...] And you have to take to doing things. You know, if you get used to doing something you keep doing it. So you have to get them [children] used to it. They have to take to doing such things as well.”<sup>618</sup> Peterdi saw education for work as a direct way of creating in children a habit of doing various kinds of work on a daily basis.

Although not described in gendered terms, children were to internalize gendered habits of work. Manual labor practiced within the framework of education for work followed a traditional gender break-down of work. Educators’ account of children’s work in and around residential homes reveals that most of the tasks accomplished by boys were outdoor physical work and small household repair tasks, while girls were to do indoor household work and study embroidery and sewing. Boys were asked to help with repainting the furniture, their beds, and the wooden cover of the corridors, for example, in the Children’s City of Tiszadob, as part of the redecoration of the institution for the celebration of its ten-year anniversary in the summer of 1956.<sup>619</sup> József Tar, a teacher at an all-boys home in Hajdúnánás between 1954 and 1956, stated that while children had to work in the vegetable and animal farm of the home they had no responsibilities with daily household maintenance work.<sup>620</sup> He said that there

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<sup>618</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Eszter Varsa, 16 June, 2008, Bicske.

<sup>619</sup> Csatlós, 32.

<sup>620</sup> József Tar, interview by Eszter Varsa, 3 December, 2009, Hajdúnánás. József Tar (1925-), retired teacher and residential home director. He was born, educated and has worked in Hajdú-Bihar County. He attended the

were cooks and cleaners employed at their home and they had the possibility to buy new clothes regularly, so that they did not need to repair the torn ones. This suggests that even in retrospect, Tar did not think of boys to have the need for learning about work tasks traditionally assigned to women in the past. Concerning girls, Peterdi reported that her students living in Bicske were encouraged to do sewing and embroidery: “Each child’s bed was covered by an embroidered bedspread prepared by them. The dormitory looked like a flower bed.”<sup>621</sup> Children were to learn from this kind of work that “when they had their own homes, even with little money but by doing some work of their own they could make it beautiful.”<sup>622</sup> Girls were also expected to make tablecloths to be donated to all-boys homes.

Meanwhile, depending on the economic circumstances of homes and the influence of individual teachers and directors, children took part in a variety of activities that in some cases broke with the traditional gender division of labor. Kövecs, for example, illustrating the contents of education for work as a method of shaping children’s character in an all-boys’ home, described how the boys were from time to time made to clean the courtyard of their home. He pointed out that teachers had an important role in making children realize that the courtyard was dirty and needed to be cleaned. “The teacher of course exerted an influence on children, saying something like: ‘How dirty is it here! Shouldn’t we do something about it?’ Then children would say: Uncle Béla, we are going to pick up the rubbish.” Kövecs also stressed that collecting garbage with the group of children under his supervision was to be an event other children and the entire home had to know about. “This had to be done in a spectacular way so that the news would be spread to other classes as well.” Collecting

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prestigious Teachers’ Training College of the Reformed Church in Debrecen, from where he graduated in 1948. For two years, he taught as primary school teacher in schools for children living in farms [tanyasi iskola]. Following his military service he was employed at a newly opening residential home for boys at Hajdúnánás in 1954. From 1957 to 1974 he was director of the institution. Between 1979 and 1989, his retirement, he also worked as child- and youth protection referent for the county council.

<sup>621</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>622</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

garbage in the courtyard was therefore not simply a form of work in order to clean up the home but, with the guidance of teachers it was turned into an opportunity to educate children about cleanliness and order in their immediate home environment. In this case, it is significant that the children in point were boys, as cleaning, that fell within the boundaries of what traditionally was women's household work, presented a progressive understanding of the gender division of labor. Kövecs mentioned that along with small repair work, such as mending the locks of windows, boys were also asked to help in the kitchen or learn how to sew on a button. He defined the content of education for work as "work that [was] in some way useful, either for the institution or for the child himself."<sup>623</sup> These accounts show that while usually passing on habits of work that retained the traditional gender division of labor some institutions also contributed to overcoming such patterns of work.

Behind teachers' use of the term "education" and "education for work" there were specific "racial"/ethnic biases that referred to Romani children in residential care. As mentioned earlier, documents related to the situation of the Romani population in Hungary dating from the period between 1949 and 1956 reveal that Roma were largely defined in terms of cultural backwardness and unwillingness to work. The new regime announced the "civilization" and "the education into human of the Gypsies" by means of compulsory primary school education and compulsory employment. The forced settlement of the so-called "wandering Gypsies," the employment of racial discrimination in the introduction of identity cards, the often humiliating enforcement of hygiene regulations and regular police violence against Roma was all part of the general understanding of their "education and reeducation" process. In the previous sections of my dissertation I pointed out that work was part of the assimilation process envisioned at ministry-level policy design concerning the Romani population of

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<sup>623</sup> Béla Kövecs, interview by Eszter Varsa, 07 May, 2008, Budapest.

Hungary. I underlined the fact that residential care was understood to be part of this process and that gave education for work specific “racial”/ethnic connotations. In this section I want to suggest that teachers identified the presence of Romani children in state care and specifically in residential care where children were instructed about education for work, as a significant step towards their general educational and cultural uplift.

In response to questions about the presence of Romani children, teachers were keen on proving that they profited greatly from institutionalization, and thus emphasized the positive influence of residential care in the education of Romani children. Peterdi, for example, referred to the difference that residential care education brought to the lives of girls of Romani background at his institution: “They came from the real depths of life. Most of them became good working people; they work and maintain a nice family; this is the majority, and this is a huge achievement considering where they came from. From Mátyás square .... You must know where Mátyás square is in [Buda]pest; it is a gypsy camp.”<sup>624</sup> In his view, it was the institution that overcame the cultural deficit of their “racial”/ethnic background.

Gyula Patkós, the former director of the Child Protection Institution of Szolnok County, talking about corporal punishment in residential care, pointed out that although “especially Romani children” had to be slapped sometimes, because “some of them were very aggressive...many Romani parents say thank you” for the education their children received in state care.<sup>625</sup> Like Peterdi, he also emphasized the effect of residential care on Romani children’s lives. “Many children have become honest industrial workers. There was a percentage that was impossible to be saved; you can find them at the bus stations; they have

<sup>624</sup> Ede Peterdi, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 23 April, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>625</sup> Gyula Patkós, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 14 April, 2003, Budapest.



become homeless.”<sup>626</sup> Peterdi’s and Patkós’ assessment of the impact of residential care on Roma and on the contrast between what they had achieved and the circumstances they had come from suggests that they supported state care as a means towards the “solution of the Gypsy-question.” Their opinion about the improvement in Romani children’s achievements as a result of residential care entails an understanding of the positive influence of the daily practice of work tasks and an overall education for work they received in state care.

Teachers’ reflection about education for work in residential care showed that especially until the early 1950s this activity significantly contributed to the economic maintenance of children’s homes as children participated in renovating buildings allocated for the purpose of residential care. Another aim of education for work was making children learn about the habit of work. It was supposed to contribute to shaping children’s character and gender roles by educating them about the necessity of daily work and participation in work activities.

Institutions usually maintained a traditional gender divide in the breakdown of work activities among boys and girls, with girls viewed as handier in traditionally female household occupations, such as sewing and decorating, and boys more adept in traditionally male areas of work, for example, furniture making, house painting or shoe-making. The necessity of doing manual labor and daily household work around these homes, however, contributed to some extent to creating among children a progressive understating of the gender division of labor. Residential care education was also to shape in specific Romani children’s character and contribute to the “solution of the Gypsy-question” by creating habits of work and “orderliness” among Romani children.

#### **6.4. Education for Work as Remembered by Former Students of Residential Homes**

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<sup>626</sup> Gyula Patkós, interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey and György J. Kollmann, 14 April, 2003, Budapest.

Between 2006 and 2010 I interviewed thirteen former residents of children's homes, eight men and five women, one of whom identified herself as being of Romani origin. Three persons used to be in state care in Budapest, eight in Szabolcs-Szatmár County, one in Szolnok County and one elsewhere in the countryside. There was one person among my interviewees who spent most of her childhood with foster families while all the others lived in residential homes, many of whom in various different ones during their youth. The recollections of former residents of children's homes reveal that they were conscious of the fact that a significant part of their daily activities were work tasks. Nevertheless, when asked about education for work specifically, most of them brought up predominantly positive memories. Interviewees understood that their free labor was used to maintain residential homes and their employees. In spite of the fact that children usually spent several hours each day at work, these former students recalled education for work in positive terms. Several factors may have influenced interviewees' reflections.<sup>627</sup> For example, childhood is generally supposed to be remembered in positive terms. Interviewees' memories show that in retrospect, some former students of residential homes value the period they had spent in residential care, or at least parts of it connected to certain teachers, events, or locations. Because of the generally negative connotations associated with a childhood spent in an institution or orphanage, interviewees may also have tried to compensate for this image by showing that they had already internalized the values of their education in their childhood and as part of that appreciated education for work as a method used by their teachers to educate them. Interestingly, men also recalled their participation in traditionally female household labor positively, and pointed out its usefulness in their lives. Interviewees were also aware and proud of their contribution to the economic subsistence of the homes.

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<sup>627</sup> There is a wide literature on the subject related to the making of oral history interviews. Memory is reflected on in this literature as a subjective instrument for recording the past, emphasizing that it is always shaped by the present and the individual's psyche.

Péter S., reflecting fondly about the character of Lajos Barna, director of the Residential Home of Berkesz, where he was in state care between 1954 and 1956, asserted almost as if repeating the director's conceptualization of the importance of education for work: "[At Berkesz], there was not a ready-made home. Lajos Barna considered home-building an educational tool. He placed children not in ready-made rooms, but created these rooms together with the children."<sup>628</sup> Former students also recalled home-building as necessary in the education of children in residential care. While this pedagogical agreement between former teacher and pupil might be influenced by Péter S.' appreciation of Lajos Barna, he nevertheless framed home-building as a means of education that was accepted by students at the time of its implementation in Berkesz.

Other aspects of education for work were also remembered positively by former students of residential homes. Interviewees mentioned with pride that they contributed to the economic subsistence and maintenance of the institutions where they were growing up. Gyula S., who was in residential care between 1953 and 1959, stated, for example, that "each class had their own vegetable plot and we, in fact, produced what was needed for the kitchen."<sup>629</sup> László V., in residential care between 1951 and 1965, reinforced this by saying that the Children's City of Tiszadob had its own vegetable gardens and animal farm within the local production cooperative where students learning to become agricultural workers did their practical training. "They could produce there many things and bring them back for the kitchen; cabbage, carrots, everything, everything that was needed at the kitchen. They bought potatoes and other items needed in larger quantities from outside but what students could produce

<sup>628</sup> Péter S., interview by Mrs. Mária Szendrey, 1 October, 2004, Budapest.

<sup>629</sup> Gyula S., interview by Eszter Varsa, 17 September, 2008, Nyíregyháza.

themselves...was done there as part of their practical training.”<sup>630</sup> László V., a trainee in shoemaking at Tiszadob, also recalled that there was a hierarchy among children learning a trade according to the extent to which their work was of use at the institution. “The baker trainees were skillful too because they were the ones who baked the bread and cakes. ...But carpenters were ahead of us as well, and they were pulling our legs and playing the big guys, saying they were carpenters, not just shoemakers. But we returned it by answering: ‘well, we will not make shoes for you then.’ This was the way we teased each other.”<sup>631</sup> For these former students, contribution to the economic subsistence of their homes was as a matter of importance to the extent that they valued each other according to the share they had from it.

Former students also evaluated positively daily household duties children had to do in and around their home. According to Gyula S., teachers tried to give children “so-called education for life.” He remembered, for example, that there was no cleaning-lady at the institutions he lived in, and he explained it in educational terms: “They tried to educate us already in some way about life; in order that children would have some practical relation to life.” He defined “cleaning, making order in the dining room, helping in the kitchen” as various forms of education for life.<sup>632</sup> László V. identified a similar set of daily work tasks as “education for self-reliance.” It was during children’s time to do “free activities” that they had to “learn how to sew, how to sew on a button, iron, and wash their clothes. That is, self-sufficiency, it was that teachers pushed us towards.” He also remembered how useful this knowledge was for him in a later period of his life: “I had what I learned at Tiszadob. I could sew on a button and I could mend a simple thing on my clothes if it was necessary. And we cooked dinner ourselves at the workers’ hostel.”<sup>633</sup> András S. also claimed the usefulness of the daily routine

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<sup>630</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

<sup>631</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

<sup>632</sup> Gyula S., interview by Eszter Varsa, 09 October, 2008, Nyíregyháza.

<sup>633</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

children were to follow in residential homes in terms of his adult life: “There was an order at the institution that we had to acknowledge. And thinking back to it as an adult, this was not bad. We learned how to accommodate and find solutions to things.”<sup>634</sup> The positive evaluation attached by these male interviewees to work tasks they remembered doing while in residential care suggests that they internalized the usefulness of education for work as related to household labor.

Surprisingly, some male interviewees also demonstrated an awareness of the gender segregation of work. They detailed the consequences of education for work in residential care with an eye toward their difference as men who were trained in household work. Gyula S., for example, stated: “It is not beneath my dignity to peel potatoes at home, or to cook a meal.”<sup>635</sup> He claimed that his willingness to participate in household work, which he attributed to the progressive character of education for work in residential care, placed him in conflict with social customs regulating life outside residential institutions. László V. went so far as criticizing the gender segregation of household work. He faced this as a problem within his own family and phrased it in terms of an educational difference between him, who was raised in residential care, and his sons, who were raised at home.

They in fact neglect this thing. They accept instead that mother should put in front of them everything, she has to arrange everything, mother irons the shirts, mother puts...I mean, everything, everything. And if I say: “Son, you tell your mother to give you this, to give you that. She almost cleans your dear ass,” I say to him. “But you would rather keep grumbling instead of opening the door of the wardrobe yourself. There is your clean shirt, there are all your things, and you could take them out yourself. Or, there is the food. You rather ask what is for dinner, and say that this is not good, and that is not good. [...] You are twenty-five years old now”, I tell him. “You should be more self-reliant by now.”<sup>636</sup>

<sup>634</sup> András S., interview by Eszter Varsa, 04 May, 2008, Budapest.

<sup>635</sup> Gyula S., interview by Eszter Varsa, 09 October, 2008, Nyíregyháza.

<sup>636</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykovács.

These men found their training and readiness to take their share in household work as a source of positive differentiation between themselves and other men who were not educated in residential care.<sup>637</sup>

Former students' internalization of the positive values their teachers attached to education for work was further reflected in the way they elevated even those work tasks that were used to discipline children. László V. remembered that all elements in cleaning their sleeping quarters had to be done perfectly. Children received points according to how clean and orderly their rooms were found at weekly reviews led by the director. "When we cleaned up the room and arranged our beds and wardrobes, everything had to be shiny, the shoes had to be shiny, the clothes had to be arranged in line in the wardrobe, everything."<sup>638</sup> Gyula S. also remembered that the work they did in the vegetable plots and in cleaning their sleeping quarters was evaluated, and the group that came in first was given an award. László V. maintained that reviewers were never rude: "If the bed was not arranged well, they threw [the blankets] up. 'My son, you have to learn these things,' they talked this way. Not in a rude way, just softly: 'Next time, you have to do it better.' And when they left, you had to redo your bed."<sup>639</sup> He claimed by doing this work children were "taught to be self-sufficient, to have their things in order, to be able to appear neat if they had to go somewhere. They learned to have clean clothes, to have them in a normal way, in order, and their rooms in order and neat."<sup>640</sup> Expressions, such as "in order," "neat" or "normal" show that in László V.'s opinion, children identified with the values set by their teachers.

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<sup>637</sup> Of course, I cannot exclude the option that my presence influenced interviewees' answers.

<sup>638</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

<sup>639</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

<sup>640</sup> László V., interview by Eszter Varsa, 22 September, 2008, Nagykálló.

The personal memories of former students of residential care conveyed an image of appreciation for the values they had received from their educators and the pedagogical methods their teachers used. This image of course does not reveal how they felt at the time and to what extent they identified with their teachers' ideas during their stay in residential care. What it does reveal, however, is the effort former pupils put into letting listeners know that they had received an education in residential care that they think about or make an effort to present in positive terms in retrospect.

In this chapter I claimed that as opposed to regular primary school education, the education of children in residential care centered on a rigorous training in education for work. Publications designed to instruct residential home teachers on the value of education for work revealed that it was regarded as a way to develop in children a socialist attitude toward work and familiarize them with manual labor. Children were to internalize perseverance and punctuality, the characteristics of the new communist subject, through work activities. The institutional-level observation of the practice of education for work showed that it was a subject taken seriously by instructors. They reflected on three goals it had in the education of children in residential care: teaching the habit of work, shaping children's character and gender roles and finally contribution to the economic maintenance of homes. Work tasks mostly had a gender segregated character but there were residential homes for boys where education for work brought about a progressive understanding of the gender division of labor. Children's preparation to be productive members of state socialist society via work was seen to be important to children's and especially Romani children's education and formed part of their daily activities. Former residents' positive memories and internalization of these values suggests that as an institution of education, residential care could be seen as creating productive citizens for the country's newly established state socialist regime.

## Chapter 7. Conclusions

My dissertation is a case study of the history of Hungarian child protection between 1949 and 1956. Based on my primary sources I identified three functions of child protection in this period: Child protection as an institution constructing 1.) material need and the morality of productive work; 2.) sexuality, motherhood and family life, and finally; 3.) education. The first two of these functions concerned the terms by which children ended up in state care while the third reflected on how children were approached once in residential care.

As opposed to a general trend in welfare state scholarship to fit former state socialist countries into existing categories of welfare state typology I was rather concerned about how the regulation and practice of child protection in early state socialist Hungary reacted to perceived social divisions and what gender-, “race”/ethnicity- and class-based notions were in turn traceable in these regulations and practices.

My sample of material revealed that the general shift in the welfare politics of state socialist Hungary that attached social provisions to employment affected a shift in child protection in the early 1950s. In consequence, the postwar, more general understanding of material need was reduced back to work inability. The early state socialist catch-up industrialization placed high emphasis on people’s participation in productive work. Meanwhile emphasis on the family combined with a lack of appropriate and sufficient socialized child care facilities put extra burden on women’s lives. Child protection regulations and practice not only reflect women’s increased responsibilities as both productive workers and those responsible for social reproduction but testify to case workers’ efforts towards regulating their lives in these two fields. I argued that the protection of abandoned/endangered children in the early 1950s



was a mechanism of controlling mothers' lives that extended over the spheres of production and reproduction.

Hereby, while I distance myself from theories of totalitarian state control I also resist calling this period a welfare society. Building on the theory of the politics of need interpretation, I approached the state as a multi-layered entity that defines and interprets people's needs not only at the level of national policy-making but also by institutional practice. This approach also allows for individuals' own negotiation of need. Accordingly, child protection was not just a terrain of case workers' regulative control but a space in which clients could maneuver to meet their needs.

Approaching child protection in early state socialist Hungary from a long-term historical perspective reveals that it has been closely related to the "solution" of the so-called "Gypsy-question" over several decades. The idea that Romani children needed to be removed from the endangering environment of their parents was an inheritance of this history that could be traced in the early state socialist handling of the subject and later, from the early 1960s onwards, increasingly became the central guiding principle behind the social assimilation of Roma into majority Hungarian society. The ideology of the equality of communist subjects based on participation in productive work resulted in the importance of Romani children's education in residential care.

Emphasis on productive work is also the key to understanding the image of Roma constructed by the early state socialist practice of child protection. Roma were to assimilate into mainstream working class society by their employment in the state socialist sectors of economy. At the same time, existing prejudices against Roma about their "unwillingness to

work” contributed to seeing them in terms of work avoiders who needed to be educated about the necessity of participating in productive work. Romani mothers, like non-Roma were viewed as central to this process, disciplined by case workers towards “proper motherhood.”

As opposed to a general agreement among Hungarian sociologists about the disappearance of all forms of welfare work especially in early state socialist Hungary, my case study of child protection testifies to case workers’ active presence in the lives of their clients and steps taken towards the professionalization of social work.

This study of course covers only a section of the post-World War II history of Hungarian child protection leaving several other areas left open for research. Among these, the forced placement of children of political prisoners into state care could be of interest. I found several references to the institutionalization of these children under altered family and given names that point towards child protection becoming a battle field of control and resistance. Comparative analysis could also examine the possible similarities in child protection developments in former “Western” and “Eastern” locations of Cold War history.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1. Children in state care, 1949-1956**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of children in state care</b>	<b>With foster or biological parents</b>	<b>In residential care</b>
1949	25,940	17,406	6,323
1950	24,356	16,132	8,267
1951	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1952	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.
1953	25,050	13,750	11,300
1954	23,310	11,670	11,640
1955	19,330	7,580	11,750

*Szociális intézmények, 1950. évi adatok: A KSH jelentése [Statistical Data on Social Institutions from 1950: Report by the Central Statistical Office]. Budapest: KSH, 1951, 12; Gyermekvédelem 1955: A KSH jelentése [Child Protection in 1955: Report by the Central Statistical Office], Budapest: KSH, 1956, 2.*

**Table 2. Children (above 3) in state care in Budapest, November 1951**

<b>Type of placement</b>	<b>Number of children</b>
Foster care	1,735
Free foster care (for adoption)	93
Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County	93
Donát-Street Temporary Home	36
Residential homes	2,002
Vocational school homes	1,530
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,489</b>

Calculations by Mrs. Dési-Huber, director of the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, Dési-Huber Istvánné hagyatéka [The Posthumous Documents of Mrs. Dési-Huber], Budapest Főváros Önkormányzatának Módszertani Gyermekvédelmi Szakszolgálat [The Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest].

**Table 3. The yearly inflow of children at the Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County, 1949-1956**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Boys</b>	<b>Girls</b>	<b>Total</b>
1949	1,934	1,510	3,444
1950	3,023	2,220	5,223
1951	2,081	1,433	3,514
1952	2,557	1,863	4,420
1953	2,087	1,446	3,533
1954	1,645	1,161	2,806
1955	1,938	1,435	3,373
1956	1,710	1,264	2,974

Data from the Archives of the Child Protection Methodological Services of Budapest [Budapest Főváros Önkormányzatának Módszertani Gyermekvédelmi Szakszolgálat], the present-day successor institution of the former Child Protection Institution of Budapest/Pest County.<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>641</sup> Special thanks to the director of the archives, Balázs Temesi, for providing me this data.

**Table 4. Residential homes of the Municipal Council of Budapest, 1952**

Name	Location	Type	School grade	Number of children
<b>Outside Budapest</b>				
Residential Home of the Municipal Council of Budapest	Bicske	girl	1-4	190
	Zamárdi 1.	girl	2-4	100
	Zamárdi 2.	girl	5-8	120
	Fonyód	girl	3-4	70
	Pilis	girl	5-8	90
	Bélatelep	boy	1-3	100
	Bakonyoszlop	boy	1-3	100
	Szőlősgyőrök	boy	2-4	100
	Szob	boy	5-8	140
<b>In Budapest</b>				
Mayer Ferenc	XII. Városmajor u. 31.	boy	4-8	136
Vasvári Pál	XII. Budakeszi u. 48	boy	5-8	102
Makarencó	XII. Cinege u. 10.	boy	5-8	50
Fővárosi	XII. Hegyhát u. 35.	boy	4-8	110
József Attila	XXI. Sallay Imre u. 13.	boy	5-8	45
Kaffka Margit	XII. Bánffy u. 3.	girl	6-8	90
Koltói Anna	XII. Szarvas G. u. 50.	girl	5-8	100
Hóvirág	II. Tapolcsányi u. 4.	mixed	kindergarten	100
Greec	VIII. Róbert K. krt.	mixed	1-8	
Hűvösvölgyi	II. Vöröshadsereg u. 167.	girl	1-8	160
Ady Endre	III. Szél u. 11.	boy	1-4	180
Ságvári Endre	VI. Bajza u. 53.	boy	5-8	114
Szabadság	XVIII. Ságvári u. 59.	mixed	kindergarten	50
Móra Ferenc	III. Kavics u. 9.	mixed	kindergarten	80
Szabadlevegős	XII. Diana u. 4.	mixed		80
Erdei iskola	XII. Diósárok u. 40.	mixed	1-8	200
Fővárosi	XII. Szilassy u. 3.	boy	3-4	48
Hárshegyi	II. Hárshegy u. 9.	girl	5-8	180
Mátyás kir. úti	XII. Mátyás kir. u. 8.	boy	5-8	160
Total				3,224

Report about the Residential Homes of the Municipal Council of Budapest, Municipal Archives of Budapest, XIII. 102. a. 53.k. January 11, 1952.

**Table 5. Active wage earners, 1949-1956**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Total number of active wage earners (1000)</b>	<b>Number of industrial wage earners (1000)</b>	<b>Percentage of industrial wage earners</b>	<b>Number of agricultural wage earners (1000)</b>	<b>Percentage of agricultural wage earners</b>
1949	3,910	1,188	30%	2,138	54%
1950	4,077	1,298	31.8%	2,105	51.6%
1951	4,225	1,424	33.7%	2,082	49.2%
1952	4,306	1,581	36.7%	2,053	47.6%
1953	4,349	1,685	38.8%	1,934	44.4%
1954	4,400	1,803	40.9%	1,910	43.4%
1955	4,470	1,825	40.8%	1,952	43.6%
1956	4,503	1,861	41.3%	1,991	44.2%

Based on *Statisztikai Évköny 1949-1955 [Statistical Yearbook, 1949-1955]*. Budapest: KSH, 1957, 57.

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