

# Attitudes towards the rights of ethnic minorities<sup>1</sup>

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## Preamble

In this chapter dedicated to the analysis of the ENRI data, we shall approach the subjects' attitude towards the rights of ethnic minorities. This is a dimension of ethnic attitudes, together with measures like "social distance" or ethnic identity and, at the same time, it allows, together with the measures of national attachment, to make a difference between ethnic nationalism – a form of exclusivist national attachment - and civic nationalism, where the tolerant attitude towards cultural diversity is correlated with the attachment towards the national community which the individual is part of. More precisely, in this chapter I shall compare the averages of the attitude towards the rights of ethnic minorities calculated on different subsamples (Romania versus Hungary, Romanians versus Hungarians, etc.) and model the variation of this measure controlling for the predictors at individual level and at collectivity level.

## Theoretical incursion into the genesis of ethnic attitudes

The theories on the determinants of ethnic tolerance may be classified into individualist models which emphasize individual variables, on the one hand, and contextual patterns, on the other hand, where the explanation of reciprocal attitudes of the minority and majority employs variables which describe the situation in which the interaction between minority and majority occurs. The results of recent studies confirm the fact that ethnic tolerance cannot be fully explained, except by considering both individual and contextual predictors.

## *Individualist patterns*

In the early period of the studies dedicated to ethnic tolerance, Samuel Stouffer had stated (1955) that the intolerance is the natural disposition of individuals. Later on, the theories of social psychology (Tajfel, 1981) have brought important contributions to the comprehension of mechanisms by which the intolerance or, on the contrary, the acceptance of the different individuals, may occur as a product of individual characteristics or of micro-interaction effects.

The studies covering ethnic tolerance have, among their strongest findings, the positive relationship between the ethnic tolerance and the level of education (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Gaasholt & Togeby, 1995). One possible explanation would be that education sets

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individuals free from cognitive constraints, helping them to harmonize with the liberal-democratic principles of ethnic tolerance. The education's effect may interact with other determinants: according to (Gaasholt & Togeby, 1995), the less educated minority students (immigrants) of Denmark are, however, more tolerant than those of the majority group who have the same training level, due to their more intense participation in civic organizations, which might have, in their turn, the effect of soothing cognitive constraints.

The theories of social capital make us predict that the individual's richness of social resources is positively correlated with tolerant attitudes towards ethnic minorities. Generalized trust, understood as moral value, according to Uslaner (2002) and correlative with the optimism regarding the relationships with individuals is in contradiction with a conflictualist perspective of relationships and alterity. On the other hand, we know that generalized trust is correlated with generosity and altruism, therefore we expect this dimension of the social capital to have a positive effect upon the attitude towards the rights of minorities.

As for the effect of civic membership, the theory-based predictions are more subtle. Despite Putnam's theses, strongly arguing that voluntary organizations are veritable incubators for trust and tolerance (Putnam, 1993), more recent theoretical and empirical studies have shown that the type of association is more important than the membership itself (Rossteutscher, 2005). Associative membership may actually be an indicator and even a generator of exclusivist attitudes and practices, of isolation in bonding networks (this is the case of some ethnic, political or religious organizations). The higher intensity of voluntary membership in Romania than in Hungary, given the lower trust conditions in Romania than in Hungary, suggests that the membership in Romania is specific rather to similarity (*bonding*) networks, probably intensified by the ethnic competition as well, thus having a rather negative relationship with the ethnic tolerance. On the other hand, due to the plausible positive relationship – predicted by Putnamien theoreticians – between voluntary membership and tolerance, it is difficult to elaborate precise predictions concerning the effect of membership upon our dependent variable, as this is a result of the two contrary effects mentioned above.

We assume that the tolerance towards minorities is a trait of modernity, on at least two causal chains which relate the welfare to the attitudes towards alterity. A first causal chain is the one relating the subjective welfare to tolerance, through the already known mechanism of the cultural syndrome of welfare. (Inglehart, 1999). According to this hypothesis, the individuals with good social and economic status and a high subjective welfare shall have high levels of adhesion to post-materialist values, including that of tolerance towards ethnic minorities. Likewise we also expect the objective welfare to have an effect upon the dependent variable. Therefore, we predict that the score of the attitude towards minorities' rights shall also be correlated with other social and economic status indicators, such as the living conditions in the family of origin. Consequently, based on the theory of attitudinal modernization, we expect the residents in urban areas, considered to be more modern, who have access to modern information and attitudes that promote tolerance and acceptance of diversity, to have a higher tolerance towards the rights of citizens who are part of minority groups.

We may assume the manifestation of a contextual political socialization effect, perceptible at the individual level, which may differentiate the attitudes of minority subjects – mostly Hungarians – from those of the Romanian majority. For example, the emancipating discourse of the Hungarian elite has strongly insisted on the rhetoric of equality and tolerance between majority and minority. This approach is instrumental for the Hungarian minority, considering the politically inferior statute of the Hungarian ethnic institutions in Romania. Considering the situation of the Hungarians in Romania, and especially the presumed effect of the exposure to this kind of discourse, the hypothesis that the Hungarians would support more the equality of rights between majority and minority is also plausible.

#### *Contextual factors*

The appeal to contextual variables is based on famous patterns, such as that of heterogeneity and inequality structural theory of Blau (1977) or those of a more operational nature of the ethnic attitudes of Allport (1979), Blalock (1967), Massey, Hodson & Sekulic (1999). They approach the nature of the effects of interactions between groups upon reciprocal attitudes and consider that the tolerance between majority and minority is the result of certain population settlements as well as of power distribution, especially if manifested in ethnic enclaves. In 1955, Allport had stated, in his famous work on the nature of prejudice, that one of the premises of the positive effects of contacts between different ethnic-cultural categories is the equal status of the groups in contact. The meta-analytical synthesis of Mullen and partners (1992) on the tests of Allport's hypothesis shows that the in-group bias increases in the same time with the relative status in the lab groups, but actually decreases in the field researches. Again a synthesis of the research results elaborated by Pettigrew (1998) suggests that the contact decreases the prejudice, but the results are not, overall, very conclusive for this purpose. While studying ethnic attitudes on a sample with more than 10000 subjects from Yugoslavia, before the outbreak of the ethnic violence which generated the destruction of the respective country, Massey et al. (1999) has found that the highest intolerance was manifested in ethnic enclaves and the most intolerant individuals were the members of majority living in enclaves dominated by the members of the minority, the exacerbation of the intolerance being explained through the resentments produced by the restrictions to their power. The minorities living in enclaves were also more intolerant then when being dispersed among majorities – a reaction to the power caused by the majority situation as well as to the anxiety of the status of being in minority.

All these researches suggest differences in the attitudes towards minorities, depending on the composition of the collectivities including majority and minority members. On the one hand, the contact between groups – here we take into account the Hungarians and the Romanians – could, according to Allport or Pettigrew, diminish the tensions. On the other hand, their relatively unequal status could generate the exacerbation of the intolerance. Therefore, we expect the intolerance to increase among Romanians, as the proportion of Hungarians grows, where, the same as in the Yugoslavian example, the resentment caused by the restrictions to the dominant status may generate the rejection of the out-group. Analogously, the reaction of the Hungarian subjects of the situation of majority should be one of lowering tolerance due to the increased

power generated by the enclave situation (if we follow the Yugoslavian example above). Important questions also generate the other possible combinations which include ethnicity and composition of collectivity.

### Quantification

In order to investigate the attitudes towards political, social and economic minority out-groups, we used a scale made of 6 items adapted from the scale of attitude towards minorities, initially implemented in the IEA Cived of 1999, and by us in the survey of the CNCSIS project “Teenagers – future citizens”<sup>2</sup>. The scale’s items were: *Here are several statements. Please indicate to what extent you agree with them: The children who are part of certain ethnic groups (Hungarians, Slovaks, Romas, etc.) have smaller chances than other children to a better education in this country; The adults who are part of certain ethnic groups have smaller chances than others to obtain good jobs in this country; All ethnic groups should have equal chances to obtain a good education in this country; All ethnic groups should have equal chances to obtain good jobs in this country; Schools should teach their students to respect the members of ethnic groups; The members of all ethnic groups should be encouraged to participate in elections for public positions.* The agreement or disagreement with these questions was recorded on a 5 steps Likert scale.

**Table 1. Distribution of answers to the items for the attitude towards minority rights (%)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree and disagree to the same extent	Agree	Strongly agree	DK	DA
1. The children who are part of certain ethnic groups ( <i>Hungarians, Slovaks, Romas, etc.</i> ) have smaller chances than other children to a better education in this country.	23.1	18.3	17.4	19.6	19.4	1.9	.2
2. The adults who are part of certain ethnic groups have smaller chances than others to obtain good jobs in this country.	15.0	14.2	22.6	22.6	23.7	1.7	.2
3. Members of all ethnic groups should have equal chances to obtain a good education in this country.	1.7	3.1	13.7	32.9	47.7	.8	.2
4. Members of all ethnic groups should have equal chances to obtain good jobs in this country.	1.9	3.6	13.8	33.1	46.7	.6	.2
5. Schools should teach their students to respect the members of ethnic groups.	2.9	3.1	14.3	32.4	46.6	.5	.2
6. The members of all ethnic groups should be encouraged to participate in elections for public positions.	7.2	6.9	25.8	26.7	31.0	2.2	.3

The above table proves the fact that the most generalized agreement is obtained by the statements stipulating principles of equal opportunities whereas the items containing negative assessments of the current reality have a lower agreement. The 6 item scale is highly reliable ( $\alpha > 0.8$ ) in both

<sup>2</sup>For an analysis with this scale, used for samples of 8 – 12 grade students of Oradea, see Hatos (2010).

subsamples. There are incomplete data for this scale in 61 cases (0.6% of the sample), so the imputation of missing values is recommendable. They have been replaced using multiple regressions. The final score of each subject was determined by adding the values for each item.

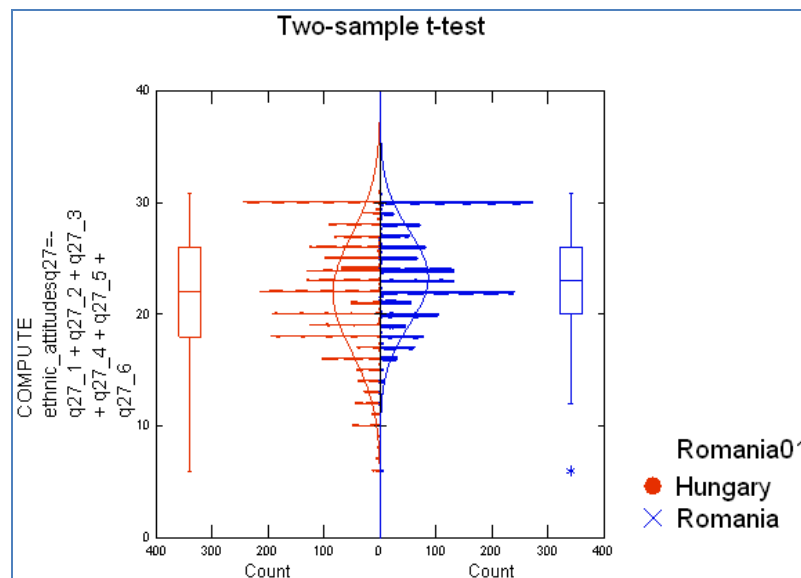
## Results

### Bi-varied comparisons

The comparisons between Romania and Hungary indicate a higher level of the acceptance of rights for ethnic minorities in Romania than in Hungary. Non-parametric tests show that the distributions between the two populations are different<sup>3</sup>

**Table 2. Attitude towards the rights of minorities per countries**

GROUP	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hungary	998	21.901	5.245
Romania	808	23.271	4.184



**Figure 1. Distributions of attitude towards minorities per countries**

Several correlations may be invoked in order to explain this finding: either the results are affected by the over-representation of the urban population in the Romanian sample - presuming that the tolerance towards minorities is higher in urban areas than in rural areas, or that the average attitude in Romania is influenced by the size of the Hungarian subsample in our sample, who are themselves in the situation of being minorities. The comparisons of the averages for the attitudes towards ethnic minorities confirm the second operational hypothesis: the average scores per countries are affected by the presence of a massive subsample of individuals belonging to an ethnic minority in the Romanian subsample: the

<sup>3</sup>p(K-S)<0,01; p(Shapiro-Wilks)<0,01

Hungarians. Naturally, the Hungarians from Romania have higher scores for the attitude towards ethnic minorities than the representatives of the majority in Romania. Actually, the differences between the Hungarians in Hungary and the Romanians in Romania are insignificant in terms of perception of the desirable treatment for ethnic minorities.

**Table 3. Attitude towards minority rights per countries and averages**

Country	Settlement type	Ethnic attitude
Hungary	urban	22.87
	rural	20.19
Romania	urban	23.75
	rural	22.43

**Table 4. Attitude towards minority rights per countries and ethnicities**

Country	Ethnicity	Ethnic attitude
Hungary	Hungarian	21.84
Romania	Other (Romanian)	22.30
	Hungarian	25.55

Multi-variate models of the attitude towards the rights of ethnic minorities

To explain the attitude towards ethnic minorities (ethnic ideology), we have made block modeling regression, using three blocks of variables: 1) structural individual variables: gender, education level, marital status, ethnicity; 2) individual attitudes and behaviors: social trust, associative membership and life satisfaction; 3) contextual characteristics: Harfindahl's ethno-linguistic fractionalization index and the type of locality (urban or rural). Some contextual variables have not been included though in the modeling due to the risk of multicollinearity (the country – strongly correlating with ethnicity and the locality's total population – correlating with the type of locality).

The individual predictor models have had a low determination level (1.4% for the pattern including 1 and 2 variable blocks), whereas the introduction of the two context characteristics has generated a bounce of the determination coefficient to 9.6%. One may deduct from here that the attitudes of ethnic ideologies have a strong contextual determination. This finding suggests that the interactional hypotheses, such as the contract or conflict hypothesis, could be valid for explaining the ethnic ideologies of the Romanians and Hungarians living at the common border of Romania and Hungary.

Results of the multi-variate models

Quite unexpectedly, the gender, the marital status or the age do not seem to have significant effects upon the dependent characteristic.

The models consistently indicated negative parameters for Romanians. The parameters' significance increases at the same time with the introduction of the predictors in blocks 2 and 3. This could be the clue for a strong exclusivist, ethnic-nationalist type of ideology, generalized at the level of the entire Romanian population (ethnic Romanians), which affects the representation of the minority rights, irrespective of the social and economical statute or of the context characteristics. The sources of this ideology cannot be credibly investigated with the data used in our study.

Once with the introduction of the 3<sup>rd</sup> block variables, the training level seems to have a negative effect upon the tolerance towards minority rights: the results suggest that ethnic nationalism is stronger as the individual is more educated. This indicates the persistence of a romantic culture, probably perpetuated by the nationalist pedagogy as well which reproduces, to a great extent, the dominant ethnic nationalist ideology during the modernization period of the two countries.

The variables of the social capital – trust and associative membership – have an unexpected effect on the ethnic ideology. At the verification performed following the context variables, both trust and membership have negative effects, in other words, the stronger the trust and associative membership are, the more the tolerance towards the rights of ethnic minorities decreases. From this result, corroborated with the variation of the significance of the parameters of the two variables following the introduction of the contextual measures, we can conclude the following:

1. The recorded forms of social capital indicate rather exclusive, bonding-type options of sociability. This aspect is obvious in the case of associative membership, where we have already recorded the unexpected result of a more intense membership in Romania than in Hungary, a result which we have attributed, to a certain extent, to ethnic mobilization in the diverse ethnic contexts of the N-W Transylvania. As for trust, we can only assume the following logic – the generalized trust scale may in fact measure, to a large extent, strategic trust.
2. The relationship between social capital and the dependent variable is dependent on the contextual variables: the parameters of trust and associative membership are strongly affected by the introduction of the collectivity's ethnic composition and the collectivity type into the modeling. Consequently, the parameter of trust loses part of its significance whereas the membership parameter increases, both of these variations suggesting that the impact of the social capital is different depending on the social context where it is measured.

An interesting effect is that of subjective welfare upon the dependent variable: individuals with high levels of subjective welfare have higher levels of tolerance towards minorities' rights as well. This parameter, together with the ethnic one, probably explains the differences between Romania and Hungary regarding the distribution of the dependent variable.

The results of modeling where we control the contextual variables, apparently confirm the contact hypothesis. The ethno-linguistic fractionalization index has a very strong impact upon ethnic ideologies: the more diverse is a collectivity from this point of view, the more tolerant are the individuals of the respective collectivity, even when we control the subject's ethnicity. The reverse effect, predicted by the theory of power and status, is not confirmed. According to the logic emphasized by the regression

patter, for example, the Romanian ethnicity subjects become more open-minded for granting certain rights to their fellow citizens who belong to ethnic minorities as the communities where they live are more diverse.

On the other hand, the effect of the residence type is again unexpected: the acceptance of minority rights is inhibited in the urban area, as compared to urban areas. This, together with the effect of the education, explains the small aggregated disadvantage of the Hungarian subjects as compared to the Romanian ones.

However, the results of these analyses should be treated prudently, due to their limited validity. The data has been gathered using multi-stage sampling, being thus grouped according to the localities initially selected at the first sampling stage. This aspect raises the issue of intra- and inter-specific variation. If the inter-specific variation, quantified through the inter-correlation coefficient, exceeds the 5 % threshold of the total variation, it is necessary to use the hierarchical (multi-level) linear regression for the analysis of the data. In this case, the real impact of the contextual variables shall be better known, as well as the effect of the interactions between context and individual variables.

#### Main findings

- The acceptance of minority rights is significantly higher in Romania than in Hungary. This is due to the scores of the Hungarian subjects in Romania. Actually, no differences have been recorded from this point of view between the Romanians in Romania and the Hungarians in Hungary.
- Multi-varied patterns suggest ethnic nationalist ideology is widespread, indicated by the negative effects of the level of education and of the urban residency upon the tolerance towards the rights of ethnic minorities.
- The data indicate a negative effect of the civic membership upon ethnic tolerance. Corroborated with the results which show a more intense voluntary membership in Romania than in Hungary, we have the proof for positive effect of the membership - due to reactive solidarity in conditions of ethnic competition. In this case, the membership is of bonding type and encourages the ethnic type of exclusivism.
- Multi-variate models confirm the contact hypothesis regarding the explanation of ethnic attitudes: the measures of ethnic tolerance increase at the same time with the ethno-cultural (Harfindahl) fractionalization index of the investigated locality.
- The above results should be received from the perspective of the limits of the statistical data and of the techniques used. More thorough analyses should validate the data of the comparative investigation, on the one hand, and, on the other hand should apply statistical techniques corresponding to the type of available data.



**Table 5. OLS regression patterns for the attitude towards minority rights**

	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	22,900	0,427		53,668	0,000	23,519	0,788		29,860	0,000	28,682	0,867		33,068	0,000
Gender (male=1)	-0,325	0,239	-0,033	-1,359	0,174	-0,346	0,238	-0,035	-1,451	0,147	-0,303	0,228	-0,031	-1,328	0,184
Education (university diploma=1)	-0,245	0,328	-0,019	-0,746	0,456	-0,172	0,333	-0,013	-0,517	0,605	-0,948	0,325	-0,073	-2,915	0,004
Marital status (never married=1)	-0,253	0,317	-0,020	-0,799	0,425	-0,287	0,315	-0,022	-0,909	0,364	-0,364	0,302	-0,028	-1,205	0,228
Ethnicity (Romanian=1)	-0,624	0,273	-0,057	-2,286	0,022	-0,899	0,294	-0,082	-3,060	0,002	-2,799	0,404	-0,256	-6,933	0,000
Age of respondent	-0,001	0,008	-0,002	-0,070	0,945	0,000	0,008	0,000	0,008	0,993	-0,005	0,008	-0,014	-0,601	0,548
Associative membership						-0,065	0,071	-0,024	-0,921	0,357	-0,143	0,068	-0,052	-2,097	0,036
Trust						-0,188	0,043	-0,117	-4,365	0,000	-0,084	0,042	-0,052	-1,996	0,046
Life satisfaction						0,044	0,027	0,042	1,643	0,101	0,090	0,026	0,086	3,434	0,001
%Hungarian											-3,944	0,513	-0,291	-7,690	0,000
Urban											-2,663	0,245	-0,260	-10,878	0,000
	R <sup>2</sup> =0.003					R <sup>2</sup> =0.013					R <sup>2</sup> =0.096				

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