

Predictors of Attitudes Towards the Rights of Ethnic Minorities of Student Teenagers in a Romanian City

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Abstract

The article will endeavor to build a causal model of ethnic attitudes of students in grades 8 to 12 from a great Transylvanian city with a large Hungarian population. The theoretical model built at the beginning of the study was tested applying multivariate statistical techniques to data of a survey of about 2500 teenagers. My results show that attitudes about the rights of members of minorities are attributable to both individual and contextual factors. On the one hand, gender, cognitive constraints and self-esteem play an important role in this attitudinal make up. On the other hand, the relative positions on in-group and out-group in the special context of interaction – in my case the classroom – are playing important parts in determining how strong the biases will be.

Keywords: Ethnic Attitudes, Romanians and Hungarians, Teenagers, Transylvania, Path Analysis

Introduction

Explaining the birth of social attitudes is one of the main tasks of social psychology. Among this type of attitudes, a remarkable place is held by those referring to people of other ethnic belonging. The representation of people, members to other ethnic groups, is a critical topic in multiethnic settings, especially when these groups are in competition. In contrast with the permanent actuality of the subject of ethnic attitudes in Romania, especially in Transylvania, with a painful new start in an acute conflict that has happened two decades ago and which has gone through a dynamic path of recognition and/or competition ever since, the numbers of researchers dealing systematically with the processes of ethnic tolerance and intolerance socialization in Romania is rather low.

This paper will attempt to contribute to the development of an explanatory model of ethnic tolerance constitution via modeling the predictor of these attitudes in the case of secondary students – grades 8 -12 – enrolled in lower secondary schools (*gymnasium*) and high schools in a large Transylvanian city where an important Hungarian population lives along with the Romanian majority. I define ethnic tolerance as the willingness to provide economic, social and political rights to other ethnic groups. I will start my endeavor by setting up a theoretical framework of reference, then I will analyze the degree in which the variation of attitudes about minority rights can be explained using the various characteristics suggested by the theory.

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Theoretical sketch of the genesis of ethnic attitudes

Perspectives of causes of ethnic tolerance and intolerance can be classified into two broad categories: individualist models, which emphasize individual variables, on the one hand, and contextual models, on the other, in which the explanation of reciprocal attitudes of majority and minority employs variables that describe the situation in which the interaction between the two groups takes place. In the following pages I will describe the main positions and assumptions of these two relatively vague theoretical families with the aim of guiding the empirical effort.

Individualist models

In the early period of research devoted to ethnic tolerance, Samuel Stouffer (1955) asserted that intolerance is the natural disposition of individuals. His point of view was greatly reflective of the grim experiences of the Second World War and of the Cold War. Further theorizing in social psychology, especially Tajfel's famous works (1981) on social identity have later brought an important contribution to the understanding of the mechanisms by which intolerance or, on the contrary, the acceptance of those who are different, may appear as products of certain individual traits or of micro-interaction effects. Besides the assumptions of categorization, of the recognition of the likely impact of in-group/out-group differentiation, more recent developments of social identity theory have admitted the importance of psychological motivation of discrimination. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the main psychological motive of discriminative behavior is that of enhancing positive distinction and self-esteem. Researches done later have shown that people with lower self-esteem tend to manifest more often discriminative behaviors and attitudes, although a causal relationship was not firmly established (Brewer, 2003).

Gender also appears among the predictors of ethnic tolerance. Because they suffer higher levels of discrimination, girls perceive least ethnic discrimination or ethnic identification (Agirdag, Van Houtte, & Van Avermaet, 2010; Maxwell, 2009). Thus, in various contexts, men appear displaying more in-group and out-group biases as well as less tolerance concerning members of other ethnic groups.

Research on ethnic tolerance has among the most solid results noticed in the positive relationship between the dependent characteristic and education (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003; Gaasholt & Togeby, 1995). One explanation would be that education frees people from cognitive constraints, helping them to tune in with the liberal-democratic principles of ethnic tolerance. An alternative causal mechanism is invoked by the socialization theory: the negative correlation between education and nationalism or ethnic exclusionism is due mainly due to the dissemination of the democratic value systems through the education system (Coenders & Scheepers, 2003). I have found a similar argument when researching the covariates of acceptance of gender equality (Hatos, 2009). This socialization effect can be indicated by age, by school results or by the type of educational institution i.e. by the length of staying in school, by school engagement and by the educational success proven by the type of school the student is enrolled in – in the case of upper-secondary students.

Moreover, it can be assumed that the manifestation of a contextual political socialization effect can be apparent at individual level and might differentiate the attitudes of minority students – mostly Hungarians – from those belonging to the majority group. Thus, the emancipationist discourse of the Hungarian elites has strongly emphasized the ideas of equality and tolerance between majority and minority in Romania. Such an approach is instrumental for the Hungarian minority considering the inferior political status of Romanian Hungarians' ethnic institutions. Considering the Hungarians status in Romania, and especially the presumed effect of exposure to such a discourse, it is plausible the hypothesis that Hungarians will support equality in rights between majority and minority on a larger scale.

The impact of education can interact with other predictors: according to Gaasholt (1995), minority

students in Denmark – mostly immigrants – with lower educational achievements are more tolerant, though, than their better achieving colleagues from the majority group due to their more intense participation in civic organizations which might have, again, an effect of lowering cognitive constraints. On the other hand, Coender's (2003) comparison between European nations suggests that the impact of education is influenced by macro-cultural factors like the democratic traditions of the country. This last plausible relationship cannot be tested with our data which is only at one country-level.

Heated debates aroused in the late fifties of the previous century when Lipset (1959) argued that working classes, more than any other social classes, are predisposed to authoritarian and anti-democratic attitudes including intolerance against out-groups. One would expect that, according to Lipset, the measure of tolerance be correlated with indicators of socio-economic status and social background with their various dimensions accounted in my research: educational capital, material and cultural capital, as well as external indicators of background material status, like situations of international migration and the absence of one or the other of the parents. However, as the many criticism of this theory have shown (Dekker & Ester, 1987), Lipset's theory resisted little to its many revisions. Therefore, my article will test if proof for the existence of such a 'working class authoritarianism' actually can be found in my data and if it resists checks for its robustness.

Contextual factors

Employing contextual variables to explain ethnic attitudes relies on famous models like that of the structural theory of heterogeneity and inequality of Blau (1977) or the more operational one of ethnic attitudes proposed by Allport (1979), Blalock (1967) and Massey, Hodson and Sekulic (1999). All of these theories approach the nature of the effects of between-groups interactions on mutual attitudes and consider that the reciprocal acceptance of minority and majority is the result of specific population arrangements as well as of power distribution, especially when happening in ethnic enclaves.

According to the 'contact hypothesis', as it is mostly known, diversity fosters interethnic tolerance and social solidarity. However, several conditions have to be fulfilled for interethnic contact to produce increased tolerance. Research testing the contact hypothesis provide more evidence in favor of the alternative argument, the conflict hypothesis (Putnam, 2007) according to which, usually, diversity produces an increase in in-group and out-group bias. Allport had already asserted in 1955, in his famous book on the nature of prejudice, that one of the preconditions of positive effects of interaction between different ethno-cultural groups is the equal status of the groups. In 1992, a meta-analytical synthesis by Mullen, Brown and Smith (1992) concerning the tests of Allport hypothesis shows that in-group bias is increasing in positive relationship with the group's relative status in laboratory settings, but decreases, in fact, in field investigations. Another research review, written by Pettigrew (1998), suggests that contact lowers prejudice without the results being, though, very conclusive in this regard. In an inquiry of ethnic attitudes made on a sample of 10.000 inhabitants of Yugoslavia, right before the ethnic clashes that led to the disappearance of that country, Massey and his collaborators (1999) conclude that ethnic intolerance is the strongest in ethnic enclaves, the most intolerant of all subjects being the members of the majority caught in enclaves dominated by the minority, this exacerbation being explained by the resentments and the restrictions to their power which their situation is inducing. Moreover, members of minority groups living in enclaves were less tolerant than in the situation of dispersal among members of the majority, which is a reaction to the power derived from their status of majority and to the anxiety of being member of minority, as well.

All the mentioned researches suggest variations in the attitudes regarding minority groups as function of the composition of the collectivities in which minority and majority group members are living together. On the one hand, between-group contact – I think first of Romanians and

Hungarians – can, according to the contact hypothesis, lessen tensions and increase tolerance. On the other hand, the relatively unequal status between groups can induce an upsurge of intolerance. Thus, I expect intolerance to be significantly higher among students of Romanian ethnicity placed in classrooms where Hungarians are in a majority where, as in the Yugoslav case, the resentments provoked by the limitations to their dominant status can lead to the rejection of the out-group. In an analogous way, Hungarian students in classes where they are in majority should be less tolerant as a reaction to the increase in their power that their enclave situation brings in or, on the contrary, they could be more tolerant, if we are to follow the Yugoslav model described above. Important questions are generated by the rests of situations derived from the other possible combinations which include ethnicity and the ethnic composition of educational collectivities.

Data and method

I have used the data set resulted in the 2007 survey of the research project entitled ‘Teenagers – future citizens’ (N=2988 grades 8-12, Grant A 497/2006 from the Romanian National University Research Council.) to test some of the predictions based on the theoretical blueprint. In order to do that I have modeled the variation in the score of attitude towards minorities recorded by teenagers who were at that moment students in Oradea according to a set of predictors retained from the theory. Novel in this approach is the introduction of a dichotomous variable which distinguishes classes with a Hungarian majority from the rest, which get the value 1 when the proportion of Hungarian students reaches at least 75%.

The dependent variable

The above mentioned survey included a scale designed for measuring attitudes about the rights of ethnic minorities which I have adapted from the questionnaire that was used in the IEA’s international research on civic education (Cived)². Then, the items were named, simply, attitudes about women and attitudes regarding minorities (Schulz & Sibberns, 2004).

Table 1: *The distribution of tolerance items (N=2988, grades 8-12, Oradea)*

	Totally against	Rather against	Rather in favor	Totally in favor	DK/NA
Members of all ethnic groups should have equal chances to a good education	2.7	5.5	28.2	52.0	11.6
Members of all ethnic groups should have equal chances to obtain good jobs	2.8	5.8	27.3	53.0	11.1
Schools should teach students to respect the members of all ethnic groups	3.3	6.8	28.2	49.2	12.4
Members of all ethnic groups should be encouraged to run for public offices	5.0	12.7	32.5	29.5	20.3

² The items in the IEA Cived survey were referring to immigrants. This is the reason international comparisons with our data are not possible.

Confirmatory factor analyses show that the above items are grouped along a single factor which corresponds to attitudes towards minorities. The alpha Cronbach of the scale is 0.72.

The relatively large number of missing values made the imputation of values, for those who answered *Don't know* or provided no answer, unfeasible. The attitude measure, constructed as a sum of the four items, was computed on a subset of 2488 cases, while the missing cases added up to 477 cases.

Other variables involved in the analysis are described in table 2.

Table 2: Independent variables in the analysis

Variable	Measurement	Description
Gender	Dummy (1=male)	Males: 47.2%
Age	Numeric	Average age: 16.1
Type or residence	Dummy (1=rural)	Rural residence: 26.6%
Ethnicity	Dummy (1=Hungarian)	Hungarians: 14.0%
Socioeconomic background		
Education of mother less or equal lower secondary	Dummy (1=yes)	Mother with low education: 7.6%
Education of mother - at least higher education	Dummy (1=yes)	Mother with higher education: 23.1%
Mother housekeeper	Dummy (1=yes)	Mother housekeeper: 14.7%
Education of father (1=higher education)	Dummy (1=yes)	Father with higher education: 23.7%
Material endowment of the family	Numeric – count of expensive goods at home. from a list of 7	Average of material endowment: 4.9
Cultural endowment at home	Numeric – count of cultural goods at home. from a list of 3	Average of cultural endowment: 1.19
Family structure		
Number of siblings	Numeric	Average of number of brothers: 1.4
Father absent	Dummy (1=yes)	Father absent: 4%
Mother absent	Dummy (1=yes)	Mother absent: 1%
Father left for work abroad during the last year	Dummy (1=yes)	Father abroad for work last year: 10.5%
Parents have divorced during the last year	Dummy (1=yes)	Parents divorced: 9.3%
Student adjustment and cognitive constraints		
Student's GPA in the previous semester	Numeric	Average GPA: 8.8
Type of school	Dummy (1=theoretical lyceum)	Theoretical lyceum: 49.5%
Self-esteem	Numeric – measured using a 6 item variant of Rosenberg's scale of self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965)	Average self-esteem: 18.8
Context		
Ethnic composition of the class	Dummy (1=above 75% Hungarians)	Students learning in classes where Hungarians are more than 75%: 11.7%

Results

The main assumptions from the literature were tested using multivariate procedures: OLS regression in a first phase and path analysis secondly. I will start by presenting the results of the OLS regression, the discussion being completed with the results of the path model.

Although the data used are nested, checks for Inter-correlation coefficients, that suggest if the within group homogeneity of dependent variables is large enough to make a multi-level approach necessary, proved that the effects of clustering are rather weak. Thus, for the within schools inter-class correlation I have obtained a value of 0.041, while the within classrooms inter-class correlations insignificantly higher: 0.054. This might suggest that the variations in attitudes about minorities are accountable mainly to individual factors, rather than to contextual ones measured at the level of school collectivities. Moreover, based on these computations, I have rejected the necessity of using multi-level modeling in the further multivariate analyses.

The OLS regression tested the linear effects of all independent variables on the dependent one. For the sake of simplicity, I publish only the effects that are significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3: OLS regression of attitudes toward minorities (only significant effects are published)

	B	Standard error	Beta	t	Sig
(Constant)	11.455	0.714		16.039	0.000
Ethnicity (1=Hungarian)	0.789	0.312	0.127	2.534	0.011
Main ethnic group in the classroom (1-Hungarian)	-1.176	0.330	-0.185	-3.536	0.000
Mother's education (1=higher education)	-0.427	0.154	-0.073	-2.698	0.007
Mother's occupation (1=housekeeper)	-0.398	0.181	-0.074	-2.790	0.005
Parents abroad for work (1=father abroad)	-0.536	0.205	-0.063	-2.386	0.028
Gender (1=male)	-0.884	0.137	-0.181	-6.538	0.000
GPA in the previous semester	0.309	0.081	0.111	3.903	0.000
Self-esteem	0.062	0.022	0.075	2.757	0.006
Variables without significant parameters at the 0.05 threshold					
Type of school (1=theoretical lyceum)					
Place of residence (1=small town)					
Place of residence (1= rural)					
Absence of parents (1=mother absent)					
Age (in years)					
Parents have divorced during the last year (1=yes)					
Father's education (1=Higher education)					
Endowment of home with cultural goods					
Mother's education (1=Lower secondary)					
Number of siblings					
Father's occupation (1=worker)					
Material endowment of home					
Religion (1 = Neoprotestant)					
Parents abroad for work (1=mother abroad)					
Parents absence (1=Father absent)					

The above model has a relatively low determination coefficient ($R^2=0.08$) suggesting that, perhaps, a different approach for modeling attitudes towards minorities might be more feasible. Besides this frustrating result, the parameters are a little surprising. The most important effect is that of classroom ethnic composition: belonging to a class where most of the students are of Hungarian background brings an important lowering of the tolerance towards minorities score. Considering the fact that belonging to the Hungarian ethnic group translates into an increase of the tolerance of minority rights, this impact of the class' ethnic composition can be interpreted in at least two ways: either we deal with a radicalization of attitudes in the situation in which members of the minority are reunited in homogenous collectivities (enclaves) or the recorded effect applies mostly to Romanians and those belonging to other ethnic groups than the Hungarians which are enrolled in classes in which most of the students declare themselves Hungarians.

Table 4: Average of attitudes toward the rights of minorities according to the ethnic composition of the class

				Attitudes toward the rights of minorities
Class with a Hungarian majority (>75%)	No	Student's ethnicity	Other	13.48
			Hungarian	14.26
	Yes	Student's ethnicity	Other	12.05
			Hungarian	13.22

Table 4 clarifies the puzzling effect of ethnicity and class ethnic composition. Hungarians and the others (98% are of Romanian descent) have similar values of the score of attitudes toward the rights of the minorities when they are in majority. Minority status, relative to the composition of the classes, affects in different ways the attitudes of Romanians and Hungarians. (Considering the size of Romanians in the 'Other' group, one can call it the Romanian group, for the sake of the argumentation.). Accounting for a minority, Hungarians in classes with sizeable Romanian component have scores of dependent variable which are larger than in any other cases, while Romanians in Hungarian enclaves proved the lowest scores of tolerance of rights of minorities. When they are in majority, both Romanian and Hungarian students display similar ways of perceiving the proper distribution of rights for the majority. If we reject an uncontrolled socialization effect, one can speculate that the relative status of persons belonging to the two ethnic groups, when they are in collectivities in which the in-group is in numerical majority, or at least is large, are similar. Referring to Massey's theory. I infer that for Hungarians, classes with a majority of the in-group members do not function as enclaves.

These results partially confirm the expectations based on the contextual theories of Allport and Blalock on the dependence of tolerance. Students from the lower status group, i.e. the Hungarians, increase their levels of tolerance when they are dispersed in the majority group, while those with the higher status are frustrated or resentful when they are captive in enclaves of minorities. Moreover, the attitudinal reaction of Hungarians which are in a minority position suggests that the rhetoric of ethnic tolerance is instrumental for the members of the minority groups in settings in which they are in smaller proportion than the majority.

Measures of background educational capital also have a surprising impact upon the dependent variable. There is an apparent paradox here since both the holding of a higher education degree by the mother and her occupation in low status jobs have the same effect of increasing intolerance. This might be justified by a non-linear relationship between the status of the family and ethnic attitudes, a working hypothesis which finds proof in the analysis of the relationship between the education of the mother and the dependent variable.

Table 5: Averages for attitudes about the right of minorities by levels of education of mothers

		Attitudes about rights of minorities
Last school finished by mother	Less than 8 grades or equal	13.23
	9-12 grades, including baccalaureate and vocational school	13.47
	Post-upper secondary school, technical school, college	13.64
	Higher education	13.39
	I don't have a mother	13.28

The table shows a reversed U shape relationship between the two variables. Thus, the most intolerant students are those from families poorest or richest in educational capital, while tolerance is at maximum for students with mothers with middle level certificates.

Tri-variate analyses of the above relationship, controlling it for ethnicity or the father's education, do not help in clarifying the situation and thus the impact of the mother's education on ethnic attitudes remains an interesting open-ended question³.

On the other hand, the parameters of the occupational status of parents confirm our hypotheses: low status of the mother, working abroad in case of the father, corroborated with the above mentioned effect of the mother's low status show that intolerance is rather inherited in low status families, a result that probably also reflects the fact that tolerance is a cultural effect of well-being, as the theorizations of Inglehart (1999) emphasize. The significant effects of the mother's status indicators, compared to those of the father's, which are all non-significant, could also raise questions.

Surprisingly, on the other hand, being male has a strong effect on the dependent variable: boys are much less tolerant than girls, this being, in fact, one of the strongest effects. At this level of the analysis I can only speculate that intolerance is part of gender role, competitive and aggressive, which is systematically internalized by the boys in our country. Such an effect had been already recorded in a systematic manner in the IEA data of the CIVED survey from 1999, where it was emphasized that girls are readier than boys to admit access of immigrants to various entitlements. In this regard, Torney-Purta and his collaborators (2002) are forwarding several hypotheses: either girls are educated to be more conformist, or are expecting in a lesser degree than boys to be in competition for jobs with members of other ethnic groups or, finally, because they have suffered some forms of discrimination are more able to show empathy from this perspective. From this last perspective, could the great discrepancy in attitudes between boys and girls at this early stage in their life reflect the imbalance in power between the two gender categories? Or is it rather an indicator of anticipatory socialization: preparing the girls for a life of discrimination and exclusion entails making them more tolerant and less resentful?

The rest of the parameters are in convergence with the theory: tolerance increases in line with cognitive sophistication, as the parameter of GPA shows, and with self-esteem as well, supporting thus the thesis that intolerance appears as a consequence of a psychological motivation to solve a low self-esteem.

Several unanswered questions remain regarding our research issue. Thus, the fact that the mother's education has, in contrast to the education of the father, a significant effect is an interesting specificity. The same is true in the case of the relationship of the parents' educational capital and tolerance where we have evidence of a negative correlation which is, however diminished by the student's own academic accomplishments. A possible explanation could be formulated in terms of competition for status positions: the negative reaction of those from educated families may reflect the frustrations that competition for status brings about if it is biased by restriction of access to various positions due to ethnic monopoly in ethnically heterogeneous collectivities.

Further studies will have to address the methodological limitations of our verificationist exercise. The most urgent requirement is to adequately test the impact of ethnic composition of educational collectivities, taking into consideration the clusterization effects, though the ICC's at both levels – of class and schools – are rather low. On the other hand, most probably non-random missing values, with large frequencies for some variables including the dependent one, could have distorted the regression parameters. Finally, some of the variables might have been affected by reliability issues due to prestige reactions – like indicators of socio-economic status or of academic accomplishment.

3 I have tested this relationship also using the data of the first wave of the research, that were collected in 2006 and the results proved to be slightly different: the correlations seems to be rather negative, such as students whose parents hold higher education degrees are the least tolerant. In the 2006 data, the relationships are similar for the mother's and father's education.

Path model

A methodological problem that can be overcome by our data set is that of clarifying the causal relations among variables for which the cross-sectional character of the data does not incur insurmountable difficulties. Path modeling therefore allows a welcomed clarification. The model created on the basis of theoretical grounds and of the conclusions supported by the OLS regression does not change dramatically what I have already underlined: the context of interaction and the relative status in these situations, ethnic belonging and gender are the most powerful predictors of attitudes about the rights of members of ethnic minorities. Being a boy, for instance, poses a double menace to tolerance: a direct one, indicated by the effect of gender on the dependent variable and an indirect one through the massive negative impact of being of male gender on academic results.

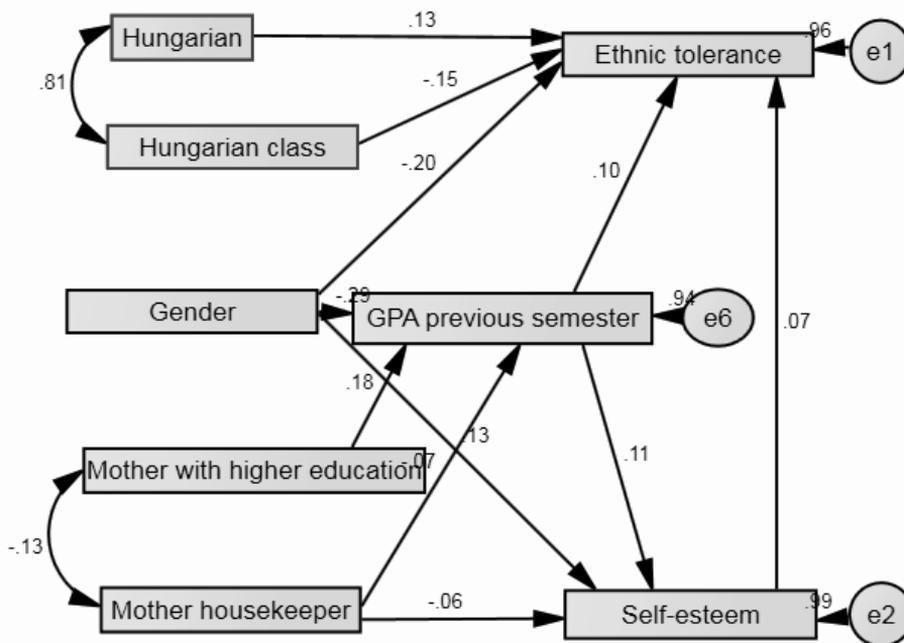


Figure 1: Path model of ethnic tolerance (CFI=0.987, RMSEA=0.034)

Nonetheless, the path model suggests that, in contrast with the OLS regression's results, socio-economic status does not have a direct impact on the investigated attitude but one that is mediated through academic achievements and self-esteem. In other words, tolerance for the rights of members of ethnic minorities has a class component. We can, therefore, talk about 'the intolerance of the popular classes' which is explainable, according to my results, through the serious cognitive constraints that affect the students from social categories with lower educational and economic capitals. My very important result from the above path diagram is that 'working class intolerance' is not produced directly by a deprived social environment but mediated through channels of psycho-sociological adjustment, indicated here through academic performance and self-esteem.

Table 6: *Parameters of the path model*

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
GPA	<---	Mother housekeeper	-0.170	0.049	-3.478	***
GPA	<---	Male	-0.518	0.034	-15.046	***
GPA	<---	e6	0.832	0.012	68.255	***
GPA	<---	Mother with higher education	0.370	0.041	8.980	***
Self-esteem	<---	e2	2.907	0.038	76.742	***
Self-esteem	<---	GPA	0.348	0.071	4.924	***
Self-esteem	<---	Mother housekeeper	-0.500	0.152	-3.293	***
Self-esteem	<---	Male	0.763	0.113	6.733	***
Ethnic tolerance	<---	e1	2.407	0.037	65.799	***
Ethnic tolerance	<---	Hungarian	0.938	0.254	3.696	***
Ethnic tolerance	<---	GPA	0.280	0.067	4.176	***
Ethnic tolerance	<---	Male	-0.984	0.110	-8.944	***
Ethnic tolerance	<---	Self-esteem	0.056	0.018	3.153	.002
Ethnic tolerance	<---	Hungarian class	-1.182	0.274	-4.307	***

***<0,001

Conclusions

The variables that I have used in my multivariate models have limited capacity to explain the variation of the attitudes towards the rights of the members of minority groups in the sample. However, from the OLS regression and the results of path analysis several important inferences, regarding the theoretical assumptions, can be made.

Thus, both contextual and individual factors - ethnic belonging, ethnic composition of classroom, gender and academic achievement have sizeable impact on the willingness to recognize the rights for minorities. The results generally confirm the psycho-sociological literature that highlights that contact has an effect upon in-group/out-group biases depending on the relative status of the groups which is also partially a function of the composition of groups in which interaction happens. Members of minority groups are the most tolerant, proving the internalization of the liberal discourse of tolerance which is instrumental for status preservation, while members of the majority, which found themselves in minority enclaves, are the least tolerant, as a reaction to frustrations generated by the restrictions to their power and status.

Yet, the effect of gender is the strongest in the path model, highlighting either the pervasive attitudinal effects of the widespread patriarchal culture in which Romanian teenagers are socialized or the known effect of 'girl tolerance' which springs from their general weaker social position and possible anticipatory socialization for a social career of discrimination and exclusion. On the other hand, the strong impact of GPA emphasizes the fact that tolerance is a function of eliminating cognitive constraints when democratic principles are taught. Another significant result is that, if one can talk of a 'working class intolerance', as Lipset proposed several decades earlier, it is rather mediated through measures of psychological and social adjustment – in our case academic accomplishments and self-esteem – which are the actual direct effects of socio-economic background.

Several important limitations apply to the above mentioned conclusions. First, the data used in the analysis are not exactly complete to fit the requirements to assess the contact hypothesis. Interaction settings measured in the data – ethnic composition of the classroom – do not cover all the plausible contexts for interethnic interaction of our subjects. Thus, my data set did not contain data on the ethnic makeup of the neighborhood or of families' social networks. Extending

the analysis to this aspect could help shed more light on the soundness of the contact hypotheses. Secondly, as one can infer, the number of cases corresponding to some of the situations referred to in my research are rather low for robust conclusions. This is, for example, the case of Romanians that are students in classes in which the majority of the students are Hungarians: their number is 30, which is 1% of the entire sample.

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