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**Political Culture of High School and University Students.
A Comparative Analysis**

Ph.D. thesis

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Introduction

This study is a comparative analysis of the relationship of youth groups to politics. The research focuses on political culture of high school and university students, based on two surveys. Empirical data were gathered in 2002 and 2004 among students at Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca¹ and 12th grade high school students from Odorheiu Secuiesc².

The study compares two different groups from the point of view of 'active citizenship'. One of these groups is in a pre-political stage (they are not of voting age); so they are at the beginning of political adulthood. The other group has the potential to be politically active, i. e. to exercise their right to vote. The latter group presents a prominent set for an analysis of political culture, because of their mobility and structural role; they are active actors of the public sphere and, as prospective intellectuals, will become the opinion leaders of their communities (Habermas 1982, cited by Péter 2002).

Beyond the capacities of the two groups to be formally active in politics, there are additional differences relevant for this study. One of the characteristics is the different geographic location of each group: the high school students inhabit a small city in Szeklerland (a region of Romania with a strong ethnic Hungarian majority); the university students live in a large, ethnically more mixed city of central Transylvania. An argument for the comparison of the high school students from Odorheiu Secuiesc, with university students from Cluj-Napoca can be the fact, that majority of university students comes from small cities similar to that of high school students, and they spend only a few years in a large city. For this reason, these groups are not as different as they appear first. Furthermore, any new study would yield time differences, would solve only some of the problems and would result other kinds of dilemmas. Therefore, the researcher can take into consideration only the methodological limits resulted from the fact that age, study level and local specificities cannot be handled separately from each other.

Relationship to politics comprises interest in politics, media consumption, political awareness, opinions and actions. These enumerated dimensions form the *content of political culture*.

By the means of the revealed connections, the reader can figure out how democracy appears in the life-world of the students, what it means in everyday practice, how it correlates with prejudice, participation and initiatives. The paper answers the following questions: to

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what extent can the students be mobilized to solve problems related to them, directly or indirectly; in what does their citizen activism consist; what are their attitudes toward various macro-social institutions, towards civil sphere, in what extent do they participate in organizations; how do interest in politics, opinions and actions link to each other in the vision of the students.

The comparative study tries to answer three further questions:

- (1) What are the similarities and differences between the political culture of high school and university students?
- (2) Which factors do play a role in forming the political culture patterns of social groups?
- (3) What is the relationship between theoretical typologies of international literature and the empirical types being created in this study?

By the means of the revealed connections, the author tried to introduce new political culture types, comparing them with typologies widespread in international literature. The analysis does not focus on adaptability of a single theory. Research approaches of Western societies from the fifties and sixties and approaches of post-socialist societies from the period after the regime change served as starting points as well in planning. Based on these results the author aimed to formulate critics of the starting points, at the same time to offer an alternative model in explanation of youth's political culture of transitional society.

The political sociology studies that compare East-Central-European societies focus mainly on Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary (Toole 2000, Shabad – Slomczynski 2004, Rose-Ackerman 2007, Rivera 1996, Mateju 1999, Bidwell – Wójtowicz 2004). Although Romania appears in a few comparative studies (i.e. Gryzmala-Busse 2006, Letki 2004, Anderson et al 2005, Beliaev 2006, Mishler – Rose 2001, Whitefield 2006, Bădescu 2003), but there can be find mostly national, non comparative analyzes (Mărginean 1999, Mărgiean et al 2001, Mureanu 1999, Bădescu 1999, Tismăneanu 2008, Gross 2008, Kiss 2001a, 2001b, 2002, Péter 2002). Present study can be classified as part of the third group, which tries to utilize the experiences of the anterior mentioned types.

A part of the publications treats political culture in theoretical level. Another part of the articles affirms something about the political culture of a certain social group without specifying the empirical model on which it is based, while a third group of studies focuses on certain segments of political culture.

A considerable part of international literature cannot be applied/adapted to the Eastern-European processes, because it is valid for the societies characterized by evolutive society development and countable lifecycles. Therefore, new explorations are required in

post-socialist societies, suitable for local characteristics. The fact that a part of the studies from the national literature offers only simple data reports constitutes a problem for the researcher of political culture. These reports frequently show that their authors do not bring efforts in finding and exploring connections (and these are not expected neither by the contracting partner). Another problem of national literature is that it imports Western theories frequently, which cannot be implemented for the Romanian processes. Behind the import of Western theories it may lie the fact that it is more comfortable. When the researchers do not have the chance to use local antecedents and there are no connections proved by others, it is easier and energy safer to try a Western model, than to innovate, to discover, to create a new theory. The enumerated problems do not mean that important exploring studies are missing totally in national literature.

Uncertainties of the system, the changed and permanently transitional situation of the young generation, the questions leaved unanswered by the literature all justify the necessity of an explanatory study of youth approach to politics. New models in certain areas can be indispensable; while in others can have a complementary function. Another benefit of the studies consists in the fact that the reader can earn information about other aspects of youth life as well. The individuals do not relate themselves to politics differently than to other areas, they follow similar logical schemes and attitudes. Relation to politics of the youth differs from its relationship with other areas in the fact that politics is more far from them, they feel it less important from the point of view of their life, and they are less interested in it. Thus, while the readers find information about their attitudes to politics, they also earn knowledge about their everyday life-world. The analysis offers information not only about political culture of youth, but also about the social group. Relation to politics is one of the factors, which form the everyday life-world.

In addition to the mentioned arguments, studying political culture brings up not only explanation of phenomena related to young generation, but also to certain extent to understanding of Romanian political and civil social processes. Political attitudes, values, sentiments, skills, awareness, so the indicators of political culture influence considerably the way how political processes take place in a society (Mărginean et al 2001). The relationship between attitudes of the citizens and political processes is bilateral, as they reciprocally influence each other. Certainly, political culture is not able to explain the entire political life, but ignoring it can result in notable distortion of understanding political processes. Studying political culture can be useful also because it plays a role in sustenance of the independent group which undertakes conflict management and attitude control between individual and

state, so a decisive role in functioning of civil society (Mureanu 1999).

Theoretical and empirical antecedents

In the last few decades several studies about political culture were done. The studies can be classified based on time, geographic location, researcher's motivations, they can also be classified by subtopics, which are also related to time, location etc. The author considers as the main parameters the events from 1989, East and West, and the exploring and explaining goals of other authors, but this image can be clarified of course in every dimension. When a scientist tries to define the position of the analysis in the context of empirical antecedents, questions inevitably arise about selective linking to anterior research traditions.

Despite the large number of studies, the approaches found in the literature leave several questions open. In the few decades that the concept of political and civic culture has been in existence, there has been no consensus in defining it. This complicates the analysis. At the same time, this can be interpreted as the freedom of the choice. Namely, one can choose the elements that are the most useful to the chosen model.

The definition of political culture, of democracy and the concepts of political left and right side can be described as theoretical problems, which, over the last few decades have earned a good deal of theoretical and empirical meaning, in addition to a few controversial approaches. During selecting among the theoretical and empirical approaches, the author considers necessary to think over how certain typologies, means can be applied in a "foreign/different" research field.

Related to the concept of political culture the author was preoccupied with the approach of Almond and Verba, with its critics and with several standpoints of East-Central-European scholars, too. The analysis focuses on political culture from several aspects according to the approach of Almond and Verba. On one hand, this study analyzes '*political culture*' as '*process culture*', which can be measured as the perception of conflicts between social groups, and as attitudes against representatives of different nations. On the other hand, it is possible to talk about '*policy culture*', i.e. electoral preferences, the judgment of the institution, and mobilization. We can also create an image of '*system culture*', if we measure the acceptance of democracy, and Romanian democracy. (Almond – Powell 1996, Almond – Powell 1978, cited by Fuchs 1998 and Reisinger 1995)

On the area of political socialization, the paper discusses the approaches of two famous representatives of the American and French schools, and some of the views

widespread in Hungarian literature. The study also presents the roles of socialization agents and the heritage of the period before 1989.

As a not entirely independent form of socialization, the author discusses age particularities of the relation to politics, which factor plays an important role from several points of view in the study. The question is not only whether relation of young generation toward politics differs from that of the adult population, but it refers to the differences between the studied groups: do differ actually from each other young people belonging to minority and majority, teenagers and young people who are potentially active citizens more?

Methodological problems

The most important methodological dilemma consists in taking into consideration the methodological limits resulting from the fact that the age, study level and local specificities cannot be handled separately from each other. As it was mentioned in the introduction, the study compares two different groups from the point of view of 'active citizenship'. One of these groups is in a pre-political stage (they are not of voting age); so they are at the beginning of political adulthood. The other group has the potential to be politically active, i. e. to exercise their right to vote. From the point of view of studying civic culture, these differences between citizens' role seemed to be the most stimulating.

Three characteristics of the Eastern European democratic systems that differ from Western democracies were explored, which have significant methodological consequences on the analysis, the political orientation of the parties and inconsistencies in their political values (1), in society, the gaps between people are not along the political left and right side (2) and East-West, East-East differences in political culture (3). Finally, the specificities of Romanian transition were discussed, which can help the interpretation of data. The similarities and differences highlight the fact, what several scientists underlined: it would be an exaggerated simplification to draw a line between East and West, thus considering post-communist societies homogeneous.

The author considers three other methodological problems necessary for clarification, to decide, that (a) among whom, (b) with which method can political culture be studied, and (c) what essential methodological criteria should be kept. These are the following: On which level can political culture be studied: on individual or communitarian level? Which method should be chosen: qualitative or quantitative method? Can the normative pitfall be avoided: normative or cognitive-analytical approach should be chosen? The three areas are not

completely independent from each other. Definition of study frames and means depend on research traditions, schools, and approaches. There is no consensus in the international literature regard these questions. Taking into consideration the pro and con arguments the author choose quantitative method, and she tries to pay attention to the methodological limits, and to be careful when creating the conceptual framework, research design, and during explanation as well.

The list of problems mentioned in the theoretical and methodological chapters illustrates that it is a challenge indeed to enrich the controversial approaches of the literature of political culture. It is not easy to say something new about the complex problem, which has been studied for decades.

Based on the empirical results the author tried to approach analytically the political culture of the study population. The goal of the paper was to exceed the level of anterior partial analyses and to create new types, while redefining the relationship between the elements of political culture.

Hypotheses

The study regards political culture as an empirically comprehensible phenomenon in a matrix constructed of dimensions of interest in politics, media consumption, political knowledge, opinions and actions. It was supposed as extreme pure types full passivity (lack of interest, media consumption, political knowledge, opinions and action), respectively full activism (equally from the respect of interest in politics, media consumption, political knowledge, opinions and action), the possibility of occurrence of both of these is very low. In the author's perception, the types of political cultures that may be distinguished sociologically form a continuum. Out of these elements mentioned before, there seem emerge remarkably multicolored alloys, a part of which may be crystallized into models. For instance, a suchlike model may be described with the following characteristics: less interest, less media consumption, situation- and system-specific orientation and high-level activism. According to our assumptions, the young people who were examined are far more away from the model of the interested, oriented, well-informed citizen; however abstaining form expressing opinions and participation.

There were formulated four main hypotheses: the first one refers to the types of political culture, the second one is based on age differences and on ethnical differences. The study tries to answer to what extent differences between teenagers and those in their twenties,

respectively differences between majority and minority distinguish the study population. The third one builds on social background differences. Besides these, there are hypotheses linked to the influence of socializing institutions, which seem to be partially answered during the analysis.

Types of political culture. According to our assumptions, with the terminology introduced by Almond and Verba, the target populations are settled from point of view of their political culture between the types of the subject and of the participant, i. e. between the degrees of a passive and an active involvement in an existing political regime. In the same time, the image is more detailed, if we consider the problem from the direction of particular groups of citizens. Political culture is heterogeneous, there are groups more satisfied and more dissatisfied with the system, rather and less trusting ones in the institutions, rather and less interested in politics, ones that can be mobilized easier in certain situations and ones that can be less mobilized. By analyzing these dimensions we may form types, by which we can track practical occurrence of the theoretical types, respectively we can form our theoretical schema furthermore based on the obtained analytical types.

H1. The author supposed existence of four types (Table 1).

The starting points were the typology of Almond and Verba, respectively the one of Barnes and Kaase. The common element of these two approaches is the dimension of political activism. The dimension of information and opinions from the model of Almond and Verba, and the interest from that of Barnes and Kaase fit to the five elements proposed by the present study. This model can be located close to the civic culture of Szabó and Örkény, which contains the dimension of media consumption connected with interest to politics.

The names of these four types were borrowed from the works of Barnes and Kaase – who identify four models of political participation in a two-dimensional space – because the author tried to describe and analyze relations to politics of social groups living in the same historical-social context.

Barnes and Kaase, thinking in a bidimensional space, identify four types of political participation. The first is characterized by lack of interest and of action, call by them apathy. The second model is characterized by non-participation in politics, in which interest in politics is present, but political action is absent. The third model got the name of expressive action, which represents that political action is performed in the absence of interest in politics. This is the model, which, according to the hypothesis could be the most appropriate in the case of the examined pre-university population. Finally, the fourth model is instrumental action, in which both interest in politics and political action play an emphatic role.

Although the types of Almond and Verba were related to different society types and historical periods, parochial culture can be characterized by total passivity as it can be political apathy of Barnes and Kaase (Almond and Verba also introduce the category of apathy in question of congruency and incongruency of structure-culture).

Of these hypothetic types, the first can be homologized with the parochial and the fourth with participative political culture of the model of Almond and Verba. At the same time, we supposed multitude of transitional types between the two extreme types, respectively assumed that the first type, i. e. full political apathy, alienation, occurs at a rate that can be neglected among university students, and is likewise slightly considerable among high school students. This presumption was formulated on the base of our former research experiences.

Table 1
Hypothetic types of political culture

	Interest in politics	Media consumption	Political awareness	Political opinions	Political actions
Political apathy	0	0	0	0	0
Political non-participation	1	?	?	?	0
Expressive activism	0	?	?	?	1
Instrumental activism	1	1	1	1	1

Differences between youth groups. We supposed differences from the point of view of some particular dimension between students of the universities, and of the high schools, respectively. Furthermore, we also supposed that the percent of the groups, interested in politics with different intensity (more, moderate and less), active, informed politically in different extent offers in the case of the examined population. One source of differences may be a characteristic of age, i.e., whilst a population is still before his coming of the age in legal terms, the other one probably possesses already own experiences and is beyond his first political actions. Another source of differences in political culture between high school and university students may be their current environment: the fact that experiences, relationships, experiences, and influences differ by a small town and a city. Characteristics of age, education and of living environment cannot be separated from each other during the analysis.

Ethnic differences. We also tried to answer that hypothesis, whether do there exist differences of ethnic foundation in political and civic culture of Romanian and of Hungarian youth. Based on a survey performed among university students from Cluj-Napoca in the spring of 2001, we may state that there are no essential differences between them regarding

civic culture (Vâju 2001). However, in a former research about political ideologies, we have regarded as considerable between the students according to nationality. Due to this fact, we supposed that there could be found basic differences between students of Romanian and of Hungarian nationality. The structure of these images of the world is formed differently, they have different priorities, and other linkage points, models may describe them. In this sense, as we discover the gaps structuring these images of the world, the problem of coherence - incoherence would acquire a new light.

H2. Investigating differences and resemblances in age and ethnic differences, we tried to answer, which are those domains, in which prevail differences of age, and which are those, in which prevail ethnic differences. The study describes and explores differences in certain dimensions and in political culture resulted by the totality of these dimensions.

H3. Among the examined populations, we supposed differences in the function of the social background of the students. We also supposed that cultural and material situation of the family of the origin might influence the formation of the political culture of the young peoples. Hereby it is possible to test the debated empirical results of Gabriel, according to which socio-demographical factors influence interest to politics and opinions about politics.

Socialization hypotheses. In the respect of the role of the environments of socialization, we were interested on the one hand in the relationship towards family and other institutions of adult society, on the other hand correlations between other socialization agents (school, peer groups, church, civil organizations, youth subcultures), and between the attitudes that may be interpreted politically. We may draw an analogy between the roles played in family or other primary groups and the roles performed in political and economic system. Relationships within the family influence the degree of prejudice of a young person (Verba 1996).

H4. In line with the generally accepted view in the literature, we also have assumed the primary defining role of the family from the socialization environments in the formation of *political orientation* of the teenagers. Models from the family may influence the character of first *political actions* - as voting or not voting, concern or lack of concern about political issues. According to our hypothesis, amplification of the role of other socialization agents (school, political parties, churches, peer groups, and media) is less emphatic.

Connected with this, we can formulate the assumption that, as the role of the secondary agents of socialization is less emphasized, respectively the role of the family stays

stronger; the relation of young people to politics remains closer to that of the adult society. Therefore, if generational differences are low, that may indicate even the strong role of family socialization, though we have no adequate evidence to confirm this. Results of empirical studies from Hungary make plausible the effect of the political disappointment of adult society upon the reduction of their children's interest in politics. (Csákó 2004: 545).

Partial hypotheses have been formulated in introductions of individual chapters about elements of political culture.

Empirical datasets

In order to answer the research questions, the thesis analyzes two empirical datasets: a study of high school students from Odorheiu Secuiesc and another of university students from Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca.

– In 2002 a study titled '*Democracy?!*' was done among Hungarian and Romanian speaking students at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. The sample was based on gender, branch of study and year of study. In '*Democracy?!*' a total of 802 people were surveyed, 446 Hungarian speakers and 356 Romanian speakers. '*Democracy?!*' began from the experiences resulting from '*Civic culture I*' and one part of the questions were repeated. When the author speaks about *university students* during the analysis, she refers to this sample.

– The second study took place in 2004, among 12th class students from the ethnically Hungarian city of Odorheiu Secuiesc. In this city, there are seven high schools where the language of study is Hungarian. In total 27 classes were interviewed. The study focused on the whole target population, so the dataset includes 373 students (only those students who were absent at the time of the research are not represented here). This population will be mentioned as *high school students* during the analysis.

In addition to these datasets, the results of Hungarian and Romanian studies on a similar topic were taken into account.

What may we assert about the political culture of the students based on empirical data?

Recommendations of several researchers indicate the importance of studying political culture, according to which we have to supplement the stage of transformation of a non-democratic regime into a democratic one with the stage of consolidation of political culture. (Merkel

1999, cited by Pollack 2003; Fricz 2001). We see the necessity of this phenomenon in that fact, that although on the level of institutional transformation almost has been performed consolidation of democracy, changes in political culture are however a slower process. Therefore, the present paper tries to provide an image of the non-consolidated condition of the political culture of the groups of young people socialized into democracy being found in process of consolidation. In the background of this ambivalent situation, partly one can notice the difficulties in changing the register of the institutions of socialization.

Although this topic traces back extended research antecedents, especially in international literature, we can find few examples that may be followed in the respect of operationalization of the political culture in the large number of approaches and traditions of research. A part of the studies are theoretical, another part of them gives an image of political cultures connected to political parties, a third part of them focuses on a particular dimension of political culture. In Romania, a part of the studies on political culture with reference to historical traditions notes about Romanian political culture (and about political culture from Romania), that it was imbued by collectivism (Haddock - Caraiani 2002). Another part of these studies, however is experimenting with adoption of Western typologies, does not “translate” them into empirical results from Romania, there are not performed the processes either of deduction nor or induction. Among these, we can mention for instance the works of Mureanu and others. Besides these types of studies, in the literature from abroad and from Romania of course such ones may provide clue from both theoretical and methodological points of view as well. However, due to the normativity of the individual approaches or the problems of applicability of the others, we have not tested one certain theory, but employed more empirical works as a starting point, with the aid of which, respectively with the revealed connections we are trying to add something to the research of political culture

During the operationalization of the subject, we take commensurability as an important point of view. On the one hand, there have been performed similar studies among high school students from Hungary and Romania, on the other hand, there have been performed two surveys of this type among the adult population of Romania, by which comparison became possible at some points.

I considered as important criteria differentiating the students the type of education, the material and cultural capital possessed by their family, respectively religiosity, so that we could reveal as well more deepen connections of orientation by the additive indicators created this way. In answering some questions, these factors did not prove of differentiating effect.

We would discuss the similarities and the differences in some dimensions of political

culture of secondary and university students, i. e. to discuss the role of age and ethnic characteristics in political culture. Subsequently, we answer the hypothesis concerning the differentiating power of social start situation, by which we partly obtain answers to assumptions of socialization as well. Finally, we would present analytical political culture types formed during the analysis.

Political interest and media consumption

On the base of the results we may declare, that youth before obtaining the right to vote are less interested in political events than university students. However, besides the more strong age differences the ethnic ones are also considerable. Namely, Hungarian university students are overrepresented in the group of those interested in politics “intensively”.

Ethnic characteristics in the dimension of media consumption from the respect of quantity of media consumption are not objective ones, though age characteristics are. Related to interest in politics high school students in their final year are less informed about politics. Their media consumption directed to the events of public sphere focuses on local channels and organs.

Political awareness

Based on research experiences, it does not prove to be safe of problems to define the concepts of democracy, of the political left and right, the own orientations, respectively settling the political parties of Romania in a ‘from 1 to 10’ left-right scale. The reasons are multiple, that partly the specificities of the Eastern European version of post-socialism, and partly the particularities of the political regime contribute significantly to the development of this revealed image. These troublesome concepts listed above served for measurement of technical competence during international comparative studies. Normativity as methodological problem deals mainly with this domain, we tried, aware of this very fact, to give an image about the political knowledge of the surveyed young people.

The facility of connecting values is a domain in which only differences of age proved significant: university students linked democracy to values belonging to this system more efficiently, for high school students this turned out to be more problematic. They hold multi-party system at least as an attribute of democracy. Political culture of the examined young people has very few segments in which ethnic characteristics would play the major part. One of these consists of the facility to define the concepts: Hungarian students provided more definitions than Romanian students did, but this correlation is not significant in the respect of

the political left and right. The so called orientation skill – which, because of the methodological problems emerged and discussed there, after all did not figure among the indicators of additive political knowledge – exemplifies age differences, and between majority and minority, we can observe inherent only in settling of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania.

In respect of political knowledge formed out of the facilities of connecting values and of definition there can be traced both age and ethnic differences. University students, within this category the Hungarian ones, proved more informed about concepts of democracy and the political left and right, than high school students. Consequently, these tendencies are formed the same way than in dimensions of political interest and media consumption.

Political opinions

The realm of political opinions is the most subjective dimension of political culture. We examined three components of it: system culture, attitudes towards institutions and judgment of the gaps. System culture is characterized by general support of democracy universal support and discontent towards its functioning in Romania. Relationship with institutions is the second area, in which ethnic differences proved stronger than age differences, not only in the respect of certain state institutions, but in general. The tendency is identical in case of both criteria: university students, inside this those who belong to majority, are overrepresented both in the group of those confident in institutions and of those not confident ones. Ethnic differences in judgment of the gaps bear no central significance, we can speak only about age characteristics, but youth belonging to majority and minority realize differently conflicts between certain social groups: a revealing instance of this is judging the gap between Hungarians and Romanians, comprehended more crucial by minority students. The quantity of opinions reflects age differences, not ethnic ones.

Political actions

The dimension of political actions consists of conventional and unconventional activities. Literature has not agreed in a full consensus in classifying individual types of action. We operationalized conventional action by measuring electoral behavior. Inclination to participate has a high rate among both university and high school students, and ethnic differences in electoral preferences may be traced out of the system-specificity of the political palette from Romania. We could have created an image of unconventional political action based on NGO membership and mobilization. Ethnical dividing line, beside the likewise considerable age

characteristics, proved to be most emphatic in the respect of NGO membership. Namely, more of Hungarian students are members of civic organizations, than their fellow Romanian students are. According to some approaches, passive membership also plays a role in emergence of citizen competencies. Mobilization, which may serve as an indicator of subjective competencies as well, can be characterized by both ethnic and age differences. In this respect, involvement of high school students in actions of collecting signatures is particularly strong. Hungarian population over-represented in the active group, while Romanian students over-represented in the passive group. From initiative and participative roles, as other research results also confirm, majority assumes participative role.

Social distance represents similarly both age and ethnic characteristics. Besides these, ethnic constitution of the settlements herein presumably would also cause differences. Hungarian students, particularly from high school, present a strong distance toward Jew and Gipsy people. Consequently, process culture, which is an indicator formed on the base of social distance and perception of gaps, may be characterized similarly by strong differences in age, besides in the ethnicity.

The aggregate of conventional and unconventional political activities is the third domain, in which ethnic differences are more emphatic than those of the age, Hungarian high school students being over-represented between the actives, and university students between the passives. This emerges from the considerable differences between NGO membership and mobilization, since electoral inclination is generally high.

In definition of policy culture, beside trust in institutions and mobilization, we investigated not elective preferences, because of their particularities in Romania, but we rather tried to approach the original operationalization introduced by Almond and his collaborators by the political value preferences. From this respect, only age differences are significant.

As a result, we found no domain, in which age differences would not be significant, but ethnical ones would be. Differences between majority and minority prevailed age differences in the respects of trust in institutions, judgment of some existing gaps, NGO membership and political activism. We consider that we would proceed with caution in answering the question whether which criterion would prove a stronger division line, that is why we don't assume far-reaching conclusions, but it appears so, that in some particular dimensions of the relation to politics there greater differences between teenagers and those in their twenties, than between those from majority and minority. We may mention as suchlike dimensions interest in politics, media consumption and political knowledge. Annick

Percheron and Anne Muxel, based on empirical researches performed among French young people, report political passivity among both teenagers and those in their twenties. This tendency, from the point of view of conventional political action, characterizes only a smaller group of the examined population.

Therefore we experience that young people are relatively slightly interested in politics, they can be characterized by moderately awareness, they are rather discontented with political life, (with the functioning of democracy in Romania and with the performance of the governments), they have less trust in political institutions, and they present an increased mobilization, both in the respect of electoral participation and in case of signature collecting in hypothetical cases. In connection with action we have to remind however, that on the one hand, high school students are more characterized than university students by the role of rather an participant, than of an initiator, on the other hand, the actions of collecting signatures, which serve as indicator of mobilization, were cases a part of which would have concerned young people also personally, thus in our reading they did not qualify as definitely political ones. We also analyzed NGO membership as unconventional political activities, but the data did not make possible, to discern active membership from the passive one. Interpretation of action models would demand subsequent researches, performed by qualitative methods and a more deepen analysis.

I have studied the relationships of the individual dimensions also decomposed into their elements as well. There exist elements between one can point out strong correlations, and there are such elements which develop independently of each other. As a whole, the five dimensions of political culture are connected with each other partially or totally. Dimensions of interest, media consumption and political knowledge have a bearing on each other totally in case of both populations. Certain elements of the complex dimensions of political opinions and actions correlate partially with other dimensions. For instance, trust in institutions and political value orientations are independent from media consumption among high school students. NGO membership proved to be independent from interest in politics, media consumption and political knowledge similarly in the population of high school students.

Social background as differentiating factor

The cultural situation of the emitting medium does not influence at all interest in politics and media consumption. Material status and type of the settlement of origin play somehow a more considerable role in the formation of interest and media consumption, but we cannot speak about a stratum-specific formation of attitudes towards politics.

Political knowledge correlates with the amount of the cultural situation of the family among the Romanian university students. Among high school students and Hungarian university students, technical competence is independent from the characteristics of the family background.

Among university students, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Romania develops in function of the material situation of the family. Trust in institutions from the part of Hungarian university students varies together with the cultural situation. The relationship of high school students with institutions are differentiated both by cultural situation, religiousness and settlement type. Namely, generally those who trust in institutions, are in a less favorable situation from the point of view of cultural situation, are religious people and live in the countryside. Among Hungarian university students, realizing the division lines correlates with the cultural situation. Conservative political value orientations feature rather villagers and those who come from a less favorable cultural situation.

NGO membership is independent of social background, mobilization is not, however. While unconventional action in Western societies present strata-specific characteristics, and is utilized by more educated strata, living in more favorable situation, initiative skills among the examined young people feature the students in a less favorable situation or coming from the countryside. Conventional and unconventional forms of action have appeared simultaneously in post-communist societies after a “break” of about a half century, process of transformation subsequent to the change of political regime has presented instances of both types of action. Thus, citizens on the one hand had to adapt themselves in a short interval to those changes, which in Western societies took place during a consolidation process of more decades, on the other hand these have become widespread in public conscience as devices of those strata who do not possess political power. Demonstrative actions of local particularities are an instance of this fact. As an example, we may mention the miner marches, which created a “specific tradition” in Romania around the change of the political regime.

Types of political culture

Kaase compares the hardship of measuring political culture to “trying to nail jello to the wall” (Kaase 1983, cited by Dalton 1996). We have also experienced this fact during our work.

It is at the same time an issue and a problem of research and of society, that political culture of post-socialist societies and within them that of the investigated populations is also in a process of transition from non-democratic, state-dependent, respectively from traditional

political cultures towards democratic political cultures. If we accept the approach of Dahrendorf, and shaping of democratic political culture has already begun at the change of the political regime, then at the very moment of our research we find ourselves at the beginning of the second quarter of a sixty years long process.

East-Central-European societies, in adaptation of Western pattern and models, have to face, as their researchers also have to, that, due to peculiarities of post-socialist societies, there needs to form models that would be applicable to these local situations, and which would be susceptible to build in and manage as well the pre-modern, modern and post-modern elements present concomitantly.

I applied several different methods to outline types of political culture. One of these methods was cluster analysis of the five dimensions discussed above. The group of the politically silent students, characterized by political apathy appears only when we form five types, insofar we apply the four-partite divisions widespread in literature, because the number of the totally passive young people, behaving as citizens of parochial political culture of the division performed by Almond and Verba, it is so low that can be neglected. We can trace the group characterized by distancing from politics (every fifth student may be included here), which is interested towards politics, is characterized by moderate media consumption, is less informed about the concepts of political left and right and that of democracy, its political opinions are moderate (forms opinion about 2 fields of 3) and is characterized by abstention from action forms. This group resembles at most the type of 'subject' from the approach of Almond and Verba. Furthermore, we can find a version of that type, which is called by Barnes and Kaase 'expressive activism' in creating the typology of interest and action ordinals express curve activism. This group is not interested in politics and is not informed from the media, possesses medium or moderate amount of information about the concepts of democracy and of political left and right, has an opinion about the institutions of political life and is characterized by moderate activism. These types, in addition to involvement of new dimensions, also differ from the widespread approaches all over the literature in that fact, so that individual dimensions are expressed not by dichotomic variables, but indicators of three categories. The most populated group (every third student) is inhabited by those who turn out to be active from every point of view of political culture. These are described by Almond and Verba 'participative' type: they bear an increased interest in politics, they are oriented intensively, are well informed, they form an opinion upon every domains and they act frequently. Besides these groups enumerated above there it is delineated a further, intermediary group (every fourth young person), characterized by moderate behavior from

every extent: it is interested in politics, it is oriented with moderate regularity, possesses moderate amounts of information, is moderately active and has opinion about political life. Inasmuch we try to create only three groups, then this moderately participating group is assimilated into the groups retreating from politics and into that one which may be characterized by expressive activism.

Table 2
Types of political culture (0-passive, 0,5-moderate, 1-active)

	Interest in politics	Media consumption	Political awareness	Political opinions	Political actions
Political non-participation	1	0,5	0	0,5	0
Moderate participation	1	0,5	0,5	1	0,5
Expressive activism	0	0	0,5	1	0,5
Instrumental activism	1	1	1	1	1

Every second one of the Hungarian university students proves to be very active from every dimensions of political culture, while from high school students only every fifth and from Romanian university students only every fourth. Age and ethnic differences between the studied populations are equally significant.

Table 3
Types formed by cluster analysis of the dimensions of political culture (in percentage)

	High school students	University students	Hungarian university students	Romanian university students
Political non-participation	22	17	21	17
Moderate participation	36	31	20	33
Expressive activism	23	19	9	22
Instrumental activism	19	33	50	28
Cramer V and case number	,202*** N=(867)		,213*** (N=624)	

The size of cluster groups displays differences only by gender. Boys are underrepresented in the group of those who are politically non-participative.

Since typologies of both Almond and Verba, and of Barnes and Kaase operate with dichotomic variables in the respect of dimensions of political culture, we contracted the categories of the five units. Subsequently, by the means of addition and recoding, we obtain

the following proportions.

Table 4
Types formed by additive variables of the dimensions of political culture (in percentage)

	High school students	University students	Hungarian university students	Romanian university students
Political non-participation	10	23	18	25
Moderate participation	15	11	5	13
Expressive activism	42	20	25	19
Instrumental activism	33	46	52	43
Cramer V and case number	,262*** N=(867)		,124*** (N=624)	

Characteristics of political culture types created additively display a large-scale agreement with those of the groups obtained by cluster analysis. In respect of age and ethnic differences there is outlined a tendency similar with the experiences of cluster analysis, but differences between groups that are studying at different levels of educations are more emphatic than ethnic ones. Groups contracted by this latter method do not differ from the social start situation.

László Péter, upon the base of the results of the research Civic Culture I. performed in 2000, characterizes university students from Cluj-Napoca by the term of ‘hybrid political culture’. He does not create a model in his study, but reaches to this induction through the analysis of dimensions of awareness, attitudes and actions. In the following, we reconsider that this assertion in what extent is valid for the examined population. Péter borrows the concept of ‘hybrid political culture’ from the typology of Almond and Verba, which contains also parochial elements as a mixture of ‘subject’ and ‘participant’ types. Among the criteria of the ‘subject’ type we can mention inaction in awareness, which in the approach of Barnes and Kaase may be characterized by abstention from action, though by interest in politics, and can be situated most closer to the type called ‘politically non-participative’. According to Péter, university students from Cluj-Napoca present at the same time passive-parochial characteristics and signs of the culture alloying passive-participative characteristics. (Péter 2002). On the base of these three dimensions, university students from Cluj-Napoca were characterized in 2000 by moderate awareness, low level of social tolerance, trust in institutions presenting traditional authority and mistrust in institutions of democratic pluralism; political action outside electoral participation is constrained to adherence; NGO

membership is limited to a passive membership. These characteristics largely suit the majority of the investigated high school and university students. This virtually contradicts the result, according to which the most numerous group formed out of the populations (at least one third of the students) proved to be very active from every aspect of the analyzed dimensions of political culture. However, if we consider the obverse side, then two third of the students are characterized by expressive action, rejection of politics and moderate activism.

The major difference between theoretical types suggested in the hypotheses and those represented analytically consists of the fact that the group which can be characterized by political apathy does not figure at all among the investigated populations, however it emerges a kind of citizen with moderate participation kind of between the groups rejecting politics and that one characterized by expressive activism.

One can notice the resemblances and differences between the typologies widespread in literature and the outlined types based the work of Barnes and Kaase. On the base of the four-partite division, the type of the citizen defined as unconcerned by Milbarth or a very passive by Simon does not appear in the examined populations. The politically non-participative may be corresponded with the 'spectators', respectively the 'passives' from the types of the mentioned authors. The citizen with moderate participation may be related with the 'abstaining' type of Fuchs. The type of the expressive participant does not appear in the divisions of the mentioned authors. Instrumental activism may be corresponded with the 'gladiator' from Milbarth's typology and with the very active citizen behavior pattern from the terminology of Simon.

Evaluation, constraints of the present study, further research suggestions

We could give an ambivalent answer to the question whether uncertainty or opportunity characterizes better the situation of a researcher trying to get around in the rich predecessor literature. For instance, opportunity provided by characteristics in definition of the particular concepts produced several instances of uncertainty.

Several factors may stress the merit and the benefit of the present study. One of these would be that it provides an image as about the changing political culture of a young population consisted of several groups as about a whole, respectively it details all the five dimensions of this culture. Another one would be its attempt to answer the role played in political culture by the differences between teenagers and those in their twenties, respectively between majority and minority. During the planning of our research and during the analysis

we have taken into account more several theoretical starting points. We tried to adapt these to the particular local relationships this way, so that we could employ the methodology utilized in international comparative studies. The author tries to reflect upon the applicability of the approaches widespread in international literature of specialty, for instance, she tries to re-evaluate definition of policy culture according to peculiarities of the political regime from Romania. Finishing this work was also motivated by the fact that a part of the studies upon political culture are theoretical works, an other part of them focuses on a particular dimension of political culture, another part of them does not operationalize political culture, thus in these case we cannot find out what empirical models serve as a basis for the respective researchers to characterize political culture.

A major constraint of the study emerges from the particularities of the investigated populations, as we do not possess further research data from the investigated period, we have no opportunity to differentiate age, study level and local particularities.

The majority of empirical predecessors approach political culture by quantitative methods, partly this was the reason why we decided in the favor of a research by questionnaires. This had the cost that, though we could have grasped the image of a larger population, we did not succeed to reveal deeper motivations behind actions or inactions, the actions themselves, the particularities of involvement into civic institutions, the meaning of individual concepts in acceptance of young people, the effect of socializing institutions. This is the exact reason why we succeeded answering hypotheses concerning socialization only partly, respectively relying on anterior research experiences. Consequently, partial, defective answering of socialization hypotheses means a following constraint of the study. In the course of subsequent studies, awareness revealed by quantitative methods would be supplemented by interviews made with the given institution of socialization; respectively we should investigate more emphatically the role of agents of socialization also during the research of youth groups. This dimension would serve alternative explanations, for instance, that of the large scale of trust in institutions. That is, inasmuch relationship with institutions is scarcely based on knowledge and experiences, behind these opinions there may stand attitudes learnt in family, peer group, school and media.

Finally, we would like to emphasize the importance of that methodological point of view, that instead of simplification of individual dimensions of political culture into dichotomies (as presence/absence of interest, etc.) it would be more appropriate to nuance in them future studies. However, the researches would face in the case the multitude of combinations and fragmentation of investigated populations into several types.

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