Support for multiculturalism in contemporary Bulgaria: The beneficial effects of national identity and minority presence.

Emilio Paolo Visintin¹, Eva G. T. Green¹, Diana Bakalova² & Yolanda Zografova²
¹University of Lausanne
²Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

Introduction
Bulgaria is historically a multicultural society with established ethnic minorities. The population of 7,364,750 is composed of the Bulgarian (ethnic) majority (84.8%, 2011 census) and a number of ethnic minority communities among which Bulgarian Turks (8.9%) and Roma (4.8%) are the largest. Despite a long-lived cohabitation of ethnic communities in Bulgaria, discrimination, prejudice, and scarce contacts among different communities are observed. Bulgarian constitution recognizes equal rights of all Bulgarian citizens, regardless of their ethnic, gender, religious, etc. belonging/affiliation and the right of ethnic minorities to preserve their culture and religion and to study and practice their mother tongue. Nevertheless, multicultural requests by the ethnic minorities have faced harsh resistance by the national majority.

Aim of the study
The aim of the study was to investigate individual- and contextual-level predictors of support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities, considering the point of view of the ethnic Bulgarian majority. We analysed data from International Social Survey Programme ISSP 2003. The contextual-level units of analysis were the 28 Bulgarian districts.

Ethnic identification should be negatively related to support for multicultural rights (H1).
Ethnic conception of the nation – belief that the national group has an essentialist core that is determined by ancestry and ethnic belonging (e.g., Brubaker, 1992) – should be negatively related to support for multiculturalism (H2).
National identification – representing identification with a common ingroup (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) – should be positively associated with support for multicultural rights (H3).
Anti-Roma symbolic prejudice – belief that Roma are responsible for their disadvantaged position and denial of ongoing discrimination (e.g., Sears & Henry, 2005) – should be negatively associated with support for multiculturalism (H4).

Individual-level predictors
Two main approaches on the effects of ethnic diversity on intergroup attitudes:
- Ethnic competition theory (e.g., Scheepers, Gijsberts, & Coenders, 2002) and intergroup threat theory (e.g., Stephan, Ybarra, & Morrison, 2009); large ethnic diversity elicits competition for resources and negative intergroup attitudes.
- Intergroup contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011): ethnic diversity offers opportunities for contact and, consequently, reduces prejudice. Factors favouring contact or threat effects:
  - Temporal dimension: higher probability of threat effects when intergroup cohabitation is recent.
  - Proximal vs. distal context: more chances to have contact effects in contexts where members of different communities have the possibility to meet and get to know personally.

The fact that ethnic minorities are historically part of Bulgaria (cohabitation not recent) and the relatively small unit of analysis (proximal context) suggest to expect contact effects: the presence of ethnic minorities within Bulgarian districts should promote support for multiculturalism (H5).
Ethnic diversity – more ethnic communities living in the same area – may be particularly beneficial for intergroup attitudes, and thus lead to support for multiculturalism (H6).

Demographical multiculturalism may thus favour ideological multiculturalism (see Berry & Sam, 2013).

Method
Multilevel regression analysis
Participants: 920 ethnic Bulgarian respondents (50.4% females, mean age = 50.84).
Dependent variable: support for multicultural rights of ethnic minorities (7 items, KR-20 = .81).
Individual-level predictors: ethnic identification (1 item), ethnic conception of the nation (3 items, α = .63), national identification (1 item), anti-Roma symbolic prejudice (3 items, α = .66).
Individual-level control variables: gender, age, educational level, perception of own economic status.
Contextual-level predictors: within districts percentage of Bulgarian Turks and of Roma.
Contextual-level control variables: within districts percentage of immigrants, of unemployment, and of right wing voters.
Support for multiculturalism varies across districts: ICC = .126.

Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Model 1 Individual-level predictors</th>
<th>Model 2 Individual- and contextual level predictors</th>
<th>Model 3 Level 2 interaction</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual-level predictors</td>
<td>Gender: -1.60 (.81)</td>
<td>-1.33 (.80)</td>
<td>-1.58 (.77)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Age: .02 (.07)</td>
<td>.04 (.07)</td>
<td>.03 (.07)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Economic situation: 8.08 (4.64)</td>
<td>11.03 (4.83)</td>
<td>10.11 (4.72)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Educational level: .03 (1.43)</td>
<td>.08 (1.44)</td>
<td>-.14 (1.47)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>National identification: 3.67 (2.09)***</td>
<td>4.78 (2.08)*</td>
<td>4.74 (2.09)*</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Anti-Roma prejudice: -.12 (.71)</td>
<td>-.13 (.70)</td>
<td>.53 (.65)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contextual-level predictors</td>
<td>Proportion of Roma: -.93 (1.20)**</td>
<td>-.93 (1.20)**</td>
<td>-.93 (1.20)**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of Turks: .81 (.59)</td>
<td>.81 (.59)</td>
<td>.81 (.59)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Proportion of Turks to proportion of Roma: .56 (.37)***</td>
<td>.46 (.14)***</td>
<td>.46 (.14)***</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Individual-level explained variance: 11.47%</td>
<td>11.47%</td>
<td>11.47%</td>
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<td>Contextual-level explained variance: 6.64%</td>
<td>40.40%</td>
<td>50.08%</td>
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<td>Deviance change: 84.97***</td>
<td>11.91**</td>
<td>4.29**</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Notes. Model 0: Intercept only. Unstandardized coefficients are reported. Standard errors are in parenthesis. *p < .10. **p < .05. ***p < .01.
Contextual-level control variables, added one by one to Model 3, had no effect on support for multiculturalism.

Conclusions
- National identification was positively and ethnic conception of the nation was negatively related to support for multiculturalism: importance of building an inclusive national identity, where ethnic minorities are considered part of the nation, without discrimination based on ethnic identity.
- Anti-Roma symbolic prejudice was negatively related to support for multiculturalism: importance of reducing modern forms of prejudice.
- The percentage of Bulgarian Turks (the ethnic minority toward which attitudes are less negative) within Bulgarian districts favored support for multicultural rights.
- Support for multiculturalism was particularly high in districts with high proportions of both Bulgarian Turks and of Roma: beneficial effects for intergroup attitudes of living in ethnic diverse areas.
- Distinct level findings suggest support for contact theory other than for ethnic competition and threat approaches.
- Demographical multiculturalism favored ideological multiculturalism.

References

Correspondence concerning this poster should be addressed to Emilio Paolo Visintin.
Email address: emilio.paolo.visintin@unil.ch